

**Restoring Your Heart  
Training Manual**

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*Restoring Your Heart Training Manual 6.30.15*

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In an effort to recognize that both men and women are co-heirs of God's grace, we have chosen to use alternating gender pronouns in this document. However, we do recognize and embrace gender-specific roles in Scripture.

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# Introduction

## Created in God's Image

God has put in all of us a sense, an inward feeling, that we were created for something better, greater, and grander than what we now experience. He has "set eternity in the hearts of all men" (Ecclesiastes 3:11). We sense this because it is true. We were created for something better. God created us in His image (Genesis 1:26-27), made us a little lower than Himself, and crowned us with glory and honor (Psalm 8:5).

However, we also know that our lives fall short of this glory and honor, and we long for something more. We also know that we will experience the completion of what we were created to be only in eternity. The good news is that we can also receive greater fulfillment in this life. Jesus calls this fulfilled life, the abundant life (John 10:10). To experience this fuller, better life we must become disciples of Christ. We must set our hearts to follow Him fully and to put off the things that trap and entangle us in this world.

This manual discusses some of the ways we can become entrapped and damaged by sin. It also discusses how to become free to follow Christ more fully and completely. In Addendum A, *A Biblical View of Restoration: Isaiah 61:1-4*, you will find a discussion about how Jesus' ministry applies to people with emotionally based problems.

## The Source of Our Struggles

We live in a fallen world that is imperfect and unable to give us all the things that we need to live healthy, productive lives. The Bible says that Satan is the ruler of this world (John 12:31) and that unbelievers are blinded by him (II Corinthians 4:3-4) and under his power (Acts 26:18). He is compared to a thief who "comes only to steal and kill and destroy" (John 10:10). Therefore, we can conclude that the world is a dangerous place in which to live. Part of the reason the world is so dangerous is that it is composed of fallen people. We are all born into this world in a fallen state (Psalm 51:5). In that fallen state we are separated from God and greatly influenced by an internal nature, which the Bible refers to as the sin nature (Galatians 5:16-17) or the earthly nature (Colossians 3:5). Before a person becomes a Christian, she is said to be in bondage to that nature or a slave to sin (Romans 6:6).

When a person becomes a Christian by turning from her sin and trusting Christ for salvation, God begins to transform her to become like Christ (Romans 8:29). This transformation process, which is called sanctification, is an ongoing, lifelong process that is not completed in this life. God gloriously completes it when we go to be with Him.

This growth process is not completed in this life because we continue to have a sin nature as long as we live. Although we can make progress against sin during our lives,

we will not be able to fully overcome it. We are no longer enslaved to sin. We have a choice, but the influence of sin is still very strong. Thus, we see that the source of our struggles is our own fallenness and the fallen world we live in that is under the dominion of sin and Satan.

## Correcting an Imbalance

Although Christians universally agree that our three enemies are the world, the flesh, and the devil and that these three interact (Ephesians 2:1-2), sometimes we underestimate the impact of the world on us. In particular, we underestimate the impact of the unhealthy environments that we grew up in and have to continually deal with because of the fallenness of individuals and the world. Christians and non-Christians alike are sometimes hurtful in how they deal with one another. Unwise actions and attitudes are often not deliberate, and indeed, many times we are not even aware that we are making mistakes as we interact with others. However, merely the fact that we are human means that we are fallible and will make mistakes.

Often we in the church have failed to understand the full extent of the damage present in people's lives resulting from their past and current living environments. For this reason, we have often not done enough to help people deal with the emotional damage they have suffered. This neglect is not deliberate, but grows out of a lack of understanding about how emotional damage occurs in a person's life, how it affects a person, and how healing takes place.

Many pastors do not know what to do to help the hurting, wounded people in their congregations. They continue to hope that the traditional teachings of the church will eventually bring about healing, but they often don't. These hurting people do not seem to get better, and in fact, some of them actually get worse. Many may eventually give up and drop out of the church altogether.

It has been estimated that 20% of the people in the church are struggling with such severe problems that they never make much spiritual progress. Their problems are often obvious to everyone. The bulk of church members, about 60%, are able to grow spiritually but are hindered in significant ways because of unaddressed emotional issues. An example might be a person who suffers from low self-esteem and the fear of others to such a degree that she is never able to share her faith with another person. People in this group often do not understand why they are struggling. The remaining 20% grow in spite of their problems. However, they do have some emotional issues that affect them, and they would benefit from dealing with those issues.

It is not just church members that struggle with unaddressed emotional issues. Christian leaders also are affected. One church leader who was responsible for overseeing hundreds of churches in his denomination indicated that many of the pastors he works with need to work through emotional issues in their own lives.

We in the church need a more comprehensive understanding of how people develop emotional problems, and we need to provide instruction, support, and opportunities for healing. This lack of understanding is often the result of an inadequate view of sanctification. We assume that when a person accepts Christ the impact of her past has been wiped out. The Bible says, "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come" (II Corinthians 5:17). This verse has been used against those who stress the need to deal with the past. Certainly becoming a Christian and gaining the resources that Christ provides gives us the potential and power for change. It is incorrect to say that our past has been wiped out and no longer affects us. We are a product of our past. Our past is exactly what sanctification begins to heal, restore, and change. The transformation that Christ works in us is a transformation from what the past has worked into us. So, in essence, being transformed by Christ is dealing with our past.

When Romans 8:13 tells us to "by the Spirit... put to death the misdeeds of the body," it is telling us to put to death the things we did and learned in the past. So we must learn how to deal with the past in an effective way. It is not enough just to try to stop sinning. We must come to understand what is driving particular sins in our lives. A real key to this is to understand how the past has affected us and how it is presently affecting us. Sanctification involves two parts. One part is to build a relationship with Christ and learn how to minister with Him. A second, and often missing, part is to deal with the damage from our past that has occurred because of our own sinful choices and the sinful choices of others.

## **The Purpose of this Manual**

The goal of this training manual is to provide information for church leaders and laymen so that they are equipped to help people struggling with emotional issues recover from their past and begin to grow spiritually. More specifically, this manual is designed to help lay people learn some important concepts that will help them as they lead *Restoring Your Heart* groups in their churches or homes. We believe that there are a number of things a leader of a group needs to understand and be able to do to be effective in helping others in the restorative process.

It is not our intent to train people to be counselors, although a certain amount of counseling always occurs naturally as one person seeks to help another. These groups are not a substitute for personal counseling, and they will probably only constitute one aspect among many of a person's restoration. These groups are not support groups, although they will provide emotional support. Instead, they are issue-oriented groups designed to teach people how to begin to heal emotionally by leading them through a restorative process.

Following is a list of areas, concepts, and skills we feel a person must have in order to be an effective *Restoring Your Heart* (RYH) group leader:

- Understand how emotional issues develop and how people get better
- Understand the relationship between spiritual growth and emotional healing
- Understand important aspects of the healing process
- Understand the scope of problems a person may be suffering from and the limitations of *Restoring Your Heart* groups
- Understand how to help people restructure their thinking
- Understand healthy relationships and family systems
- Have the calling, skills, sensitivity and emotional health to lead a *Restoring Your Heart* group
- Have experience in how a *Restoring Your Heart* group functions

The remainder of this training manual provides helpful information needed to assist *Restoring Your Heart* leaders as they go through the WDA *RYH* training process. Upon completion of their training, the manual will be a helpful reference tool.

# Sample

# Chapter 1

## Understanding Emotional Issues

Emotional problems usually begin in childhood, and they primarily begin with unresolved pain. Painful things (events, situations, circumstances, words, etc.) can be disruptive to our lives. If the pain is unresolved it is even more disruptive. According to Scripture, pain that comes into our life through suffering and tribulations is supposed to bring good into our life, and indeed it does, if we are able to process the pain and let it be our teacher. When we deal with painful things in appropriate ways, it eventually brings positive results to our lives even though it may take time. For example, if a teenager experiences serious emotional trauma, it will take a long time for him to heal from the damage. With the proper help he can heal and grow from it. However, if he does not deal with it (by denying the pain, minimizing it, etc.), the trauma will probably generate serious problems that will affect him the rest of his life.

Pain can be our enemy, but it can also be our ally. Without pain, we would injure ourselves seriously. Dr. Paul Brand and Philip Yancey, in their book *Pain: The Gift Nobody Wants* (1) (the gift being our ability to feel pain), give tragic illustrations of lepers who are unable to feel physical pain. When they injure their bodies, they are not immediately aware of their injury because they don't feel any pain. As a result, they unknowingly continue to hurt themselves to the point that they destroy parts of their bodies.

Pain not only warns us to stop dangerous activities, it also teaches us valuable lessons and shows us where our limitations are. In Roman 5:3, Paul says that "we rejoice in our sufferings" and then goes on to describe the fruit of suffering. If we replace the word "pain" for "sufferings," the verse would read like this, "We rejoice in our 'pain' because we know that 'pain' produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." This verse indicates that if we do not suppress our pain, but feel it and learn from it, it will produce positive benefits in our lives. Pain, when handled correctly, can have a positive impact on our lives.

Problems occur when we are unable to process pain in a safe environment. Addendum B, *Development of Emotionally-Based Problems*, is a three-column chart that explains how unresolved pain creates problems in a child's life. These carry over into adulthood and may cause life-controlling problems. (You may want to take out this addendum and refer to it as you continue reading.) It is important for hurting people to understand the sources of their pain if they are going to deal effectively with their past. They are also in danger of repeating their experience with their own children. The first column of the chart (far left) deals with some of the ways pain comes into a child's life. (For most people, these issues begin in childhood. However, these problems can result

from unresolved pain that begins in adulthood.) This next section, “Sources of Pain for Children,” will explain this left-hand column more thoroughly.

## Sources of Pain for Children

The growing-up process is painful. It is not easy learning to make our way in this world. It is the parents’ responsibility to protect their children from dangers in life but protection from all pain is not possible. As painful things happen the parents should provide a safe environment for their children to work through their pain and learn from it. Adolescence is often an especially difficult period, but there will be many other times throughout a child’s life when he will have to face loss and disappointment.

The following is a list of ways parents may make life more difficult for their children. Parents may not provide a safe environment for their children, or they may ignore their children’s needs, or they may add to their pain by not providing a way to work through pain and learn from it. (See Column 1 of Addendum B, *Development of Emotionally-Based Problems*.)

1. **Active Abuse**—Active abuse occurs when an adult or peer inflicts harm on a child. This may not be done deliberately or knowingly. The word “abuse” is used to denote the impact on the child, not necessarily the intent of the person harming the child. The following are several examples of active abuse:
  - a. **Physical Abuse**—This refers to deliberately depriving a child of physical resources necessary to meet his needs or physically harming him through excessive physical punishment. Physical abuse includes actions directed toward the child such as punching, jerking, choking, or kicking. It also includes threats of violence or abandonment, as well as witnessing violence done to another. Spanking is not necessarily physical abuse, but it can be if it is too harsh or extensive.
  - b. **Sexual Abuse**—Statistics tell us that one out of three girls and one out of seven boys have been sexually abused by the age of 18. These statistics hold true for those raised in a Christian background. Frequently, when this is talked about in a church setting, people acknowledge that they were sexually abused, but they usually have not begun to deal with it.

Sexual abuse causes more damage than other forms of abuse if left unattended. It is extremely hurtful to a child, and if there is sexual abuse in a person’s background it may add as much as two years to their healing process. There are many forms of sexual abuse that do not involve penetration of any sort. They include sexual touching or fondling, exhibitionism, inappropriate sexual talk, teasing about sexual body parts, showing a child pornography, sexual kissing, knowledge inappropriate to the age, witnessing parents’ sexual

behavior, and violations of sexual privacy or boundaries of children. Sexual abuse may occur with same sex or opposite sex parents, siblings, relatives, neighbors, teachers, church leaders, or friends. (See page for an additional discussion of sexual abuse)

- c. **Verbal/Emotional Abuse**—Words can hurt as much or more than physical pain. Often physical hurts will heal while the emotional wounds continue to hurt the child. What is said and how it is said is very important. Scripture warns us to be very careful with our words (James 3:9,10 and Ephesians 4:29). There is no faster way to exasperate or embitter children than to abuse them verbally (Colossians 3:21 and Ephesians 6:4).
- d. **Emotional Incest**—Emotional incest is anything done by an adult that places a child in an adult role. This may involve role reversals, where the child has to take care of the adult instead of the adult caring for the child. It might involve giving a child adult responsibilities, such as raising other children or having the entire responsibility to clean the house, do the laundry, or cook the meals. Emotional incest also occurs when an adult looks to a child for emotional support rather than being the child's emotional support. When these things happen, part of a child's childhood is stolen from him.
- e. **Negative Existential Messages**—These are messages that a child receives about himself, others, life, and God that are negative and inaccurate. These messages may be unspoken, but the child still perceives them through the attitudes and actions of others. Some examples are "All men/women are bad," "I'm no good," "People of other races are inferior/ superior," "God is a divine policeman waiting for me to get out of line," "You cannot trust anyone," etc.

There are three messages typically present in a dysfunctional home:

- "Don't feel" (e.g. "I'll give you something to cry about" or "Just get over it.")
- "Don't think" (e.g. "Just do what I say.")
- "Don't talk" (e.g. "Children are to be seen and not heard" or "Don't sass me/talk back.")

These three messages tell children that they are "non-people" instead of communicating that they are people who need to be treated with respect.

- f. **Suppression of Independence**—Suppression of independence is a common problem among Christians. Well-meaning parents may over-control, over-correct or over-protect their children. The long-term goal of parenting should be to empower children to be able to think critically, take responsibility, and

live independently. Being too controlling or too rigid or doing too much for children will cause them to have difficulty developing normally. They will either have trouble establishing their independence or seek independence inappropriately.

- 2. Passive Abuse/Neglect**—By passive abuse we are referring to the ways parents may fail to meet the needs of their children. God created us with needs: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. Thankfully, He has provided ways for us to get those needs met. A primary way of getting needs met is through healthy relationships with other people. For the child, parents are the most significant agents in meeting needs, and when parents neglect to meet their child's needs, the result is pain. The child who is neglected does not receive what he needs to live a healthy life.

For example, if a child does not get enough positive attention, he may develop poor self-esteem or act-out in negative ways to get attention. The effects of this lack of attention in his childhood may carry over into adult life. He may not know how to give positive attention to his own children, thus passing on the neglect to the next generation. Unfortunately, in our society this type of passive abuse is quite common. If both parents work, or if they are distracted by other matters, they sometimes leave their children to raise themselves.

It would be easy for parents reading this section to feel that they have ruined their children because of parenting failures. Every parent has made mistakes, but the truth is that most parents have done far more good than harm to their children. God is a gracious God. He overcomes parents' failures by providing avenues of healing for children. He also overcomes parental failure by continuing to change the parents themselves. As parents deal with their own emotional issues and become healthier, they can model for their children how to deal with emotional issues.

- 3. Poor Choices by the Child**—Pain does not come into a child's life only through outside sources. It also enters because of a child's poor choices. Because he is a child, he has an immature perception of the world and, therefore, will make unwise, harmful choices at times.

All children make poor choices sometimes. However, a child born with a strong will tends to push every limit and question everything. This child will undoubtedly get hurt. The goal of parenting is not to over-control this child or to try to protect him from the consequences of his choices. It is to help him go through the hurts, face the consequences, and learn from them.

- 4. Personality of the Child**—The personality of the child also influences how much he is damaged by the struggles of growing up. All personalities have strengths

and weaknesses and can get hurt. However, some children are more sensitive than others, and they will get hurt more easily and more often. Those who fight and refuse to give in will also get hurt.

3. **Role in the Family**—It has long been recognized by psychologists that each person in a family has a certain role, a part to play in the family. Some of the most commonly acknowledged roles are the hero, the scapegoat, the mascot and the lost child. (2)

Some of these roles are more easily hurt than others. The “scapegoat” is a child who often gets in trouble because of his rebellious attitude. Even if he does not do anything wrong, he often is blamed for the current problem. This role frequently causes significant emotional injury. Another risky role is the “lost child.” This child can be shy and quiet and avoids trouble. He gets hurt because he tends to fade into the background and to get ignored and neglected. This child may be isolated and become depressed.

The biggest factor leading to the continuation and deepening of emotional problems is the child’s perception that there is no way to deal with his pain. The only way to heal from the painful things that happen is to work through the pain in a safe environment and learn the lessons it can teach. When a child is unable to do this, it begins a negative chain reaction rather than a healing process. Parents are the primary source God has provided to help children work through the painful and difficult parts of life.

### **The Results of Unresolved Pain**

There are many potential sources of pain in a child’s life. If a child does not learn how to work through his pain in a safe environment then, as the pain builds up in his life, he will do unhealthy things to cope with it. In fact, when a child cannot deal with pain and learn from it, a predictable negative chain reaction is set off. The child must do something to survive the pain. There are four common reactions in a child’s life.

1. **The Child Adapts to Survive**—There are two common adaptations that the child might make to deal with pain:
  - a. **Addictions**—An addiction is anything used to medicate pain: to eliminate it, dull it, or distract a person from it. A person may use something to make himself feel better, like drugs, alcohol, sex, food, spending, etc. Or he may use something to dull the pain, like sleep, drugs, or alcohol. Finally, he may use something to distract himself from the pain, like work, cleaning, shopping, TV, video games, etc. An addiction is an external focus that helps a person avoid what is going on inside.

Of course, some of the things to which we can be addicted are not bad in and of themselves. They can be normal and beneficial. What makes them bad is how and why they are being used. If they are being used to avoid dealing with problems or to avoid feeling negative emotions, they are unhealthy attempts to escape.

As pain builds up for a child, he begins to look for a way to medicate it. The forms of addiction available to young children are usually fairly benign, but as a child gets older the options become more dangerous.

**b. Unhealthy Defense Mechanisms**—The child may develop unhealthy defense mechanisms to keep from getting hurt again, including such typical defense mechanisms as denial, dissociation, over-eagerness to please, hyper-vigilance (that is, hypersensitivity to people, emotions, etc.), mistrust of others, and denial of a need for others. These mechanisms help the child survive but ultimately cut him off from the real help he needs. This, of course, leads to more pain.

An example of a child using an unhealthy defense mechanism is the child who decides to never get relationally close to anyone, because every time he does, he gets hurt. As he distances himself from people who hurt him (which is appropriate), he also cuts himself off from the safe people in his life from whom he needs attention. This isolation prevents him from getting his real needs met and, therefore, leads to more pain.

- 2. The Child Suppresses Emotions**—If a child cannot process his emotions and thereby release them, what happens to them? They get stored (buried) inside him as stress. This internal stress builds up and usually becomes evident in one of three ways: explosion or overreaction, hypersensitivity, or lack of feeling.

One indicator that internal stress is building up is that there is an explosion or an overreaction to the things going on around him. Suppose a child “loses it” when he reaches a stress level of 10. If he has an internal stress level of “7” all the time because of buried (suppressed) pain, it will now only take a “3” event to get a “10” response. This is an overreaction to the present situation.

A second indicator that emotions have been suppressed is hypersensitivity in areas in which the person has been hurt. If a little girl was abandoned by her parents, as an adult she may feel that her husband is not going to return every time he goes to work, although he has never given her any reason to believe that he would not return. This is caused by hypersensitivity to the unaddressed emotional hurt in her life.

A third indicator of buried emotions is that the child has few or no feelings. A child may numb his feelings and choose not to have feelings rather than to face them. For this child, negative feelings seem too overwhelming to deal with. A classic example of someone numbing his feelings is the person who talks about an emotionally charged subject in a detached, non-emotional way.

- 3. The Child Develops False Beliefs**—There are a number of wrong beliefs that a child may develop when he does not have an adult available to help him work through and interpret things that happen to him. The child develops an experiential belief system, a belief system based on his experiences. This belief system tends to override any intellectual system he learns later. He will believe what he feels more than what he or others assert intellectually. Typical false beliefs are: “I am all alone,” “No one will protect me,” “I cannot trust anyone (including God),” “I should have known better,” “It was my fault,” “I deserved it,” “It is just a matter of time before it happens again,” “I can’t stop this,” “There is no way out,” “Not even God can help me,” “I will never be happy,” “I am a burden,” “God can never love or accept me,” or “I have no value.”
- 4. The Child Develops a Shame-Based Identity**—If enough negative things happen to a child without any resolution, the child begins to think there is something wrong with him. He concludes that because bad things keep happening to him, he must be bad, broken, or defective in some way. He does not just *make* a mistake; he *is* a mistake. This can be worsened if a parent, authority figure, or even a peer tells him he is a mistake. Eventually, a tape of self-depreciation and defectiveness plays in the child’s mind whenever he does anything wrong. These messages play back in his mind: “I can’t do anything right,” “I’m dumb,” “I deserve what is happening,” and “I deserve to be punished.”

In summary, when a child is unable to resolve the painful things that happen in his life and the pain begins to build up, it sets off a chain reaction. To deal with the pain the child may turn to addictions to medicate his pain or to unhealthy survival mechanisms to keep from getting hurt again. He may bury his negative emotions on the inside, develop a false, experientially based belief system, or develop a distorted, shame-based self-image.

### **Typical Adult Problems that Result from Unresolved Pain**

The child takes all these unhealthy ways of living into his adult life with him: the wrong and ineffective behaviors, the buried emotions, the false beliefs, and the distorted self-image. This causes even more pain. If these issues continue to go unaddressed, the problems will get worse.

Interestingly, these very problems often show the person his need for Christ. Coming to know Christ usually brings many positive changes into the person’s life, but the types

of problems mentioned here tend to lurk in the background and usually do not get resolved until they are addressed directly. This is why new Christians often seem better immediately after conversion, but problems surface (or may return) as time goes on. It is not that Christ does not make a difference; He does. Ultimately, He is the answer. However, we must apply Biblical principles to these emotional issues to resolve problems.

The second column of Addendum B, *Development of Emotionally-Based Problems*, lists some of the typical problems an adult will face when the emotional issues of his past go unaddressed. This list applies to Christians as well as to unbelievers. The problems listed in the middle column are really symptoms of the underlying issues that are described in the first column. These issues (Column Two) are what bring people into counseling and into *Restoring Your Heart (RYH)* groups. People need help to understand the root problems (Column 1) and to learn the skills necessary to overcome these problems. They also need support from others through the process.

The following is a short description of each problem listed in Column Two of Addendum B. This is not a complete list of problems that might occur. People may experience one of the symptoms, several of them, or all nine.

1. **Relational Problems**—A person's survival mechanisms, addictions, compulsions, and emotional immaturity will interfere with relationships. As a result of unresolved problems, a person may not have the relational skills to interact with others in a healthy way.
2. **Poor Decisions**—Because the person does not think correctly about himself, his emotions, his needs or life issues, he will often make poor decisions that add even more pain to his life. For example, it is not unusual for this person to be out-of-control financially. In spite of being intelligent, he seems to lack the ability to think wisely about finances.
3. **Full-Blown Addictions**—Addictions that may have existed in seed form in a child's life now take on a life of their own and get worse. The pain increases, so the addictions worsen. People can be poly addicted, using several things to deal with pain. Usually they use whatever is most accessible and convenient at the time.
4. **Needs Still Not Met**—Addictions, wrong beliefs, unhealthy survival mechanisms, and the inability to deal with emotions prevent a person from recognizing and getting his needs met. For example, if a person is not able to acknowledge and feel his emotions, he will not be aware of his own needs, because it is our emotions that often alert us to our needs. Even if a person is aware of his needs, the other problems listed here may hinder needs being met. It

is only through a healthy relationship with God and with others that a person can get personal needs met.

One result, when a person does not get his needs met, may be that he becomes driven. Everything he does is focused on getting his needs met. People who live this way are often totally unaware (consciously) of their needs. They don't realize what they are doing. If a person's beliefs are wrong about what will meet his needs (and they usually are), then he is destined to get on an endless treadmill of doing things that do not successfully meet his needs. Most of us know people like this: they are very needy and draining to be around. Yet they may totally deny that they have needs. Their attempts to meet their needs may turn into addictions as they become increasingly compulsive.

5. **Abusive Relationships**—If there were abusive relationships in a person's past, he may unwittingly seek out similar relationships as an adult because these kinds of relationships feel "normal." Each of us has several relational systems in our life: original family, present family, work family, social family, church family, etc. A person may set up dysfunctional relational dynamics in each of these systems, similar to those he had in his original family. Of course these relationships are unhealthy and only produce more pain and problems. It is not uncommon for a person to go from one abusive relationship to another, repeating the same pattern over and over.
6. **Depression**—If a person lives with internal stress for a long time and also experiences many of these external problems (Column 2), the stress may become too much. It can cause a breakdown in the chemical balance of the brain, and the result will be clinical depression. This type of brain chemical imbalance usually needs to be treated with an antidepressant medication. Clinical depression has become prevalent in our culture, but unfortunately, many people who are suffering from it do not even know it.
7. **Numb or Primarily Negative Feelings**—Negative emotions and positive emotions are integrally connected. Therefore, if negative emotions are suppressed, a person may eventually also lose the awareness of positive emotions. The most difficult emotion to suppress is anger. If anger is suppressed, the person will often be left with only the feeling of numbness. When a person reaches this point, he is to some degree disconnected from reality.
8. **Poor Relationship with God**—All relationships are affected by the issues mentioned above, including our relationship with God. The problems that began in childhood (Column 1) usually lead to distorted views of God or negative feelings towards Him. For example, the need to be in control may make it hard to give up control to God and trust Him. It may be difficult for a person to believe

that God loves him. As a result, a person may stop growing spiritually or may even regress.

- 9. Feeling Out of Control**—As problems intensify, a person increasingly feels out-of-control, even though he may be very controlling. The impact of childhood problems and the resulting adult difficulties often do not significantly hinder a person until he gets into his thirties or forties (although this can occur earlier or later in life). His coping mechanisms enable him to get through his teens and twenties, but as the stresses of life increase and build up, a person's life slowly begins to disintegrate. He "falls apart." It is at this time that marriages and families fracture or the person has some form of emotional breakdown.

## The Healing Process

Thankfully, healing is possible for we know that nothing is impossible with God. The following is an overview of the healing process in two parts. First, we will discuss some of the essential elements of the healing process, and second, the order in which restoration normally takes place.

It is important to point out that restoration is not about blaming problems on parents or others. It is about everyone, both children and adults, taking responsibility for their own words and actions. Even though someone does or says something hurtful to a person, that person is still responsible for anything they might say or do in response.

### The Essential Elements of the *Restoring Your Heart* Process

The third column of Addendum B, *Development of Emotionally-Based Problems*, describes elements of the healing or restorative process. The following is a brief description of each element:

- 1. Stop Abusive Relationships**—Before restoration can begin, any abusive relationship must be stopped, either by intervention or by separation. If a person stays in an abusive relationship, it will take all his energy to survive, and there will be little energy left to work on restoration. The goal is to create a situation where restoration can take place.

There may be resistance in the Christian community to separation, even when serious abuse is taking place, and a person (especially a spouse) may be encouraged to endure abuse or stay in a dangerous situation. Often separation may be necessary to save the relationship or the marriage before the situation becomes intolerable. Separation can put appropriate pressure on those involved to get help. Church discipline passages in the New Testament (I Corinthians 5:1-13 and Matthew 18:15-17) teach the use of separation to cause positive results.

There is a legitimate time and way to persevere and forbear with one another. Scripture urges us to do so, developing patience. Unfortunately, the person who is the victim of abuse is often unable to recognize it. Therefore, he may need the input of others to identify the abuse and decide on a course of action.

- 2. Control Addictions**—If a person has severe addictions, he will not be able to work on emotional issues until these addictions are under control. This is especially true with drug and alcohol addictions. Severe addictions consume a person and prevent him from being able to deal with his emotions, since addictions medicate emotions. Therefore, addictions must come under control before a person can make any headway in restoration.

Some difficult steps may need to be taken to control the addiction. Some kind of in-patient care might be necessary or a 12-step group that deals specifically with the type of addiction the person has.

These first two elements (stopping the abuse and controlling addictions) must be completed before the last seven can be addressed adequately. If there are serious problems in these first two areas, they prevent any real progress in restoration. The last seven areas listed below can occur simultaneously during the restorative process, but for purposes of discussion, we have separated them.

- 3. Learn to View and Express Emotions Properly**—Since not being able to deal with emotions properly started this negative process, this is one of the primary issues that must be addressed. Many people need to learn how to get in touch with their present emotions before they are able to deal with buried emotions. They also must come to understand both what their emotions mean and how to deal with them appropriately.
- 4. Grieve Pain and Losses**—As a person becomes aware of his buried pain, he needs to learn how to process it and release it. This is called the grieving process. He needs to learn how the grieving process works and then go through this process a sufficient number of times to deal with all the buried pain from the past. The goals of the grieving process are forgiveness and the release of feelings. Grieving losses will significantly reduce internal stress and the ill effects of buried emotions.
- 5. Understand Needs and How to Get Them Met Appropriately**—People who suppress their emotions usually suppress or deny their needs as well. It is important for a person to become aware of his needs, realize that needs are acceptable, and learn appropriate ways to get them met. Most people who have significant emotional issues have little awareness of what their real needs are or how to get them met. Each person must take responsibility for his own needs and getting them met. It is not an issue of selfishness but of stewardship.

6. **Learn to Distinguish Between Healthy and Unhealthy Thinking and Behavior** — We all tend to see our original family as normal since we knew nothing different. This is true even for a person who grew up in a dysfunctional family. Since we are strongly influenced by our family of origin, we tend to repeat the same thinking and behaviors in our current relationships. Therefore, it is important to compare healthy and unhealthy family systems and relational patterns so we can recognize what is unhealthy and can make good choices rather than follow our programming.
7. **Develop a Correct View of Ourselves, Our World, and God**—Scripture says that the truth will set us free (John 8:32) and that we are to be transformed through the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2). Underlying most unhealthy behavior is a distorted belief system, and it is important to correct the wrong and distorted views. We may even be unaware of our belief system, but it is there. Most people live consistently with what they really believe. When a person’s behavior is inconsistent with his stated beliefs, there is usually another belief system (probably unconscious) that competes with his stated beliefs. This leads to inconsistent and confusing behavior. A person’s underground belief system must be unearthed and replaced by the truth.

To change a person’s belief system several steps are necessary. First, the wrong beliefs must be identified, and then the correct beliefs must be clarified. Internalizing correct beliefs requires that the person intentionally act on the new beliefs over time.

8. **Develop Healthy Relationships and a Healthy Support System**—All people need a safe and caring support system where they can be totally honest about who they are and be totally accepted at the same time. Most people who are struggling emotionally are also isolated from others and have few supportive and empathetic voices in their lives. The church needs to be that kind of support system. Only when people can be fully honest and transparent can the wounds begin to heal. One of the first things a person in restoration needs to develop is a personal support system.
9. **Learn to Grow Spiritually**—A person with many emotional issues usually struggles with his relationship with Christ. Much attention needs to be given to this relationship. The more Christ is involved in the restorative process, the faster healing will occur. Each person in restoration should be encouraged to have a personal quiet time, participate in a Bible study, and be in a discipleship relationship.

### **The Order of the Restorative Process**

Another way to look at the restorative process is to focus on the order in which it occurs. The diagram in Addendum C, *The Restorative Process*, shows this order. The

processes on the left side of the diagram usually must be well established before a person is able to focus attention effectively on the right side of the diagram. The left side deals with working through the grieving process by going into (or feeling) the pain and processing it. The right side deals with the rebuilding process, in which a person gains the skills he needs to live a healthy life and impact the world for Christ.

Point A in the diagram describes a person who is having significant difficulties in life. He may be addicted, feel out-of-control, be depressed, and have relational problems or some combination of these symptoms. This person is often in denial about the nature and severity of his problems. Point B describes someone who is determining the direction of his life, has healthy relationships, and is overcoming his problems. This person is growing spiritually and affecting his world for Christ.

No one wants to be at point A. Everyone wants to be at point B. But how does one go from point A to point B? It is commonly thought that there is a slow upward process of putting off the old and putting on the new. However, experience has shown that for those who are deeply wounded, a different route must be taken. They must first face their pain and grieve it before they can begin rebuilding their lives. In order to get better, wounded people must first allow themselves to feel their pain. They need to come out of denial and identify the real issues in their lives, especially their losses. Addictions and unhealthy survival mechanisms need to be given up. They need to take responsibility for the unhealthy choices they have made and behaviors they have been doing and to discover what is driving them. They need to grieve the losses in their lives and learn how to handle emotions correctly.

All this will take time because it involves a learning curve. There may be a long period of grieving, depending on how much pain has been buried. In the process, the person will learn how to grieve pain, deal with negative emotions, use healthier coping mechanisms, and overcome addictions. Usually, as a person deals with these issues, he begins to feel better about his life and has a closer, growing relationship with Christ.

The second part of healing is the rebuilding part (Point B). Many of the unmet needs in a person's life come about because he does not have the skills to maintain healthy relationships or to impact his world. His needs will be met primarily through good relationships with God and people and through being able to impact the world for good.

There are several developmental tasks a person needs to complete before he has the skills to relate to the world in a healthy way. Ideally, these tasks are completed in childhood. However, if they were not completed as a child, they need to be completed as an adult so that the restorative process will move forward.

## Four Developmental Tasks

Psychologist Erik H. Erikson (3) and others after him identified four “developmental tasks” in their studies of childhood development. This section is a brief summary of the information in this field of study. The section on “Sorting Out Good and Bad” and some of its unique insights comes from the work of Henry Cloud in his book *Changes That Heal*. (4)

1. **Bonding**—Bonding, which begins in infancy (0-9 months), is the process by which children learn to connect with the people who care for them. Through thousands of interactions with parents, the child develops a sense of connection with them. If all goes well, the child will see himself as an extension of them and not as an independent person at this point. Throughout this period, as parents take care of and play with the child, several messages are normally and naturally internalized by the child:

- I am loved.
- My feelings and needs are OK.
- I can trust others to meet my needs.

Once these messages are internalized, the child can start to move away from his parents (separate) and still believe these messages without needing to have them constantly reinforced. However, if adequate bonding does not take place or if these messages are distorted or replaced later on, the child will probably have problems connecting with others as an adult. He will not be able to accept love, will not trust others, or will be unaware of his feelings and needs and thus deny his need for others.

To heal from these bonding problems an adult needs to become involved in a safe group of people where he can be honest and be accepted for who he really is. Within that context he should be able to begin connecting with people and eventually with God. It is usually necessary to successfully connect with people before one is able to develop a close relationship with God.

2. **Separation**—Separation is the beginning of the process in which children form their own individual identities. This normally happens between nine months and six years of age. During this period children begin to pull away from their parents and experiment with individuality. As they become more mobile, they can do more things on their own. Children are normally able to pull away and still feel connected and secure if they have internalized the bonding messages.

If a person fails to form a separate and strong sense of identity, he may face some of the following problems:

- A general lack of self-understanding and direction in life (identity confusion)
- Relational problems, such as being too dependent on others, being too isolated from others, feeling too responsible for others, or becoming a caretaker of others
- Significant boundary problems, such as:

Allowing others to take advantage of or overpower him

Taking advantage of or overpowering others

In order to heal from these problems a person needs a safe group of people who will encourage him to become aware of his true feelings, needs, and desires. Within this context, the *RYH* group needs to encourage members to avoid taking responsibility for others' feelings, needs, and desires and to begin taking responsibility for their own feelings, needs, and desires. They need to understand what healthy boundaries are and begin to experience them. By establishing boundaries, they will better define who they are and who they are not.

3. **Sorting Out Good and Bad**—A person who does not complete this task makes too big a division between good and bad. He tends to see things as “all good” or “all bad.” Everything looks black or white—there is no gray. The essence of the problem is that he cannot tolerate bad in himself or in others. The reality is that nothing or no one in the world is all good or all bad. Everything contains a mixture of good and bad.

If a person makes too big a division between good and bad, he will tend to have one or more of the following problems:

- **Deny the Good**—This person has the tendency to see himself as bad and blame himself for everything bad that happens. He denies his worth or his ability to contribute anything good. This person may exalt others as better than himself or judge others as bad also.
- **Deny the Bad**—Since this person cannot tolerate bad in himself, he may deny the existence of bad in himself and blame others for anything bad that happens, while justifying himself. This person has difficulty acknowledging his own faults.
- **All Good to All Bad**—This person sees people and situations as “all good” at first, but later, after experiencing problems, sees the same people and situations as “all bad.” The truth is that people and situations are both good and bad at first, and both good and bad later. As a result of this distortion, this person may initially see a new relationship, church, or job as perfect, but later

as intolerable, as reality sets in. As a result he keeps changing relationships, churches, and jobs, searching for the “perfect” situation.

Healing will take place as this person begins to see himself as he really is: both good and bad. He must also give himself grace. Problems sorting out good and bad usually result from not getting enough grace growing up. The best place for healing to occur is within a safe group of people where the person can talk about his “bad” self and have other people love him as he is, less than perfect.

This person also needs to see other people and situations from a more realistic perspective. He needs to develop more tolerance for the bad that is in the world and needs to realize that the ideal does not exist in a fallen world. Not only is he both good and bad, but so is everything else. He needs to practice seeing both the good and bad in a situation, institution, or person.

4. **Gaining Independence**—This last developmental task normally occurs in adolescence. During adolescence a child moves away from a dependent relationship with his parents and other adults, where he has less authority, freedom, and choice, and into an “equal” relationship with them. This process happens slowly. In America it is seldom totally completed until the age of 26. It is supposed to be completed when the child leaves home and moves out of a dependent relationship with his parents. Some adults never complete this task, continuing to be dependent on their parents and other adults or continuing to feel less mature than other adults.

If this task is not completed, several of the following characteristics are usually present:

- An inordinate need for approval
- A fear of disapproval
- A fear of failure
- A need for permission
- Feelings of inferiority
- A loss of power (often given away to others)
- An over-dependence on others
- An idealization of people in authority

To complete this task a person may need to do several of the following:

- Begin to see himself as an adult, equal to others, with all the rights, privileges, and authority of other adults
- Begin to question and disagree with authority figures in an appropriate way
- Start making his own decisions without checking with others first
- Pursue and develop his talents in order to develop areas of expertise

For further discussion of how Jesus' healing ministry incorporates the developmental tasks, see pages 31 - 35.

### **All of Us Need Restoration**

We all are wounded in some way. We grew up in imperfect homes and have dealt with things in our lives imperfectly. In addition, there is often little permission in the world or in the church to admit that our wounds exist, and little teaching about how to deal with them.

The degree to which we have been wounded can be considered on a continuum. No one is 100% wounded—he would be dead—and no one is 0% wounded. People who are in the 60%-70% range are just surviving. People who are in the 20%-30% range are coping fairly well with life, but have some issues they need to address.

Everyone can benefit from identifying and working on areas of his or her life that have been negatively impacted by unresolved pain or unmet needs. As we become more self aware and thereby healthier emotionally, we will be able to connect better with God and become healthier spiritually. An additional benefit of healing from past issues is that we can better understand others and the ways they struggle.

### **Finding Help**

Most of us are unable to deal with emotional issues by ourselves. We need the help of others to gain insight into our lives and encouragement and support to work through issues. Some of us may begin working on issues because of a crisis in our life, but then stop when the crisis subsides. We need others to nudge us to keep working and not to settle for less than what is needed. It is also helpful to work on issues with others who are also working on their lives. It is encouraging and enlightening to know that you are not the only one who is struggling. Groups can be very helpful to this process.

There are a number of options available for finding help. The following list of options may be used individually at different times or in combinations:

- Study
- Personal Counseling

- Support Groups—These groups usually focus on a single issue that all group members have in common (e.g. death of a child, divorce).
- Addiction Groups (12-step groups) —These groups focus on a specific addiction.
- *Restoring Your Heart* Groups—These groups focus on dealing with past issues and learning how to process emotions.

### **Reason for Hope**

We know that with the help of Christ and those who know how to deal with emotional issues, we can all overcome many of the struggles in our lives. Jesus came to heal us as well as to help us grow. It is quite common that as people heal from emotional issues they will begin to experience tremendous spiritual growth as many of the barriers in their relationship with God diminish. The critical first step is to recognize these issues and begin dealing with them.

# Sample