TRANSFORMATION OF THE INNER MAN/SANFORD

Consider the possibility that Adam and Eve may have succumbed to the temptation to eat of the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil simply out of fear—fear of growing into maturity without something going for them—some knowledge, some understanding, some way of controlling life. Perhaps what most caused them to choose to eat of the tree of knowledge was simply fear of standing open ("naked") to life, trusting God blindly; fear of becoming daily something new, with no handles, only trust. Perhaps it was even fear of failure, not knowing the rules of the game. Such knowledge seemed "desirable to make one wise" (Gen. 3:6). How? By appealing to that in man which fears vulnerability to life without the seeming controls of cunning and clever manipulation.

The immediate result of turning from trust and openness before God to fleshly knowledge was hiding by cleverness, "The woman whom *Thou* gavest to be with me, *she gave me* from the tree, and I ate" (Gen. 3:12, italics mine). All this is to say that flight and burial are not the propensity of a few weak ones; they are basic to *all* mankind. Flight is the sinful inclination of the best of us at all times. We choose, and must choose, again and again, every day, to be open to life, to choose God, to choose to risk, to be vulnerable, to pay the daily price of life.

14

Bitter-Root Judgment and Expectancy

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)

Do not judge lest you be judged yourselves. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it shall be measured to you. (Matt. 7:1-2)

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. (Gal. 6:7)

Burt and Martha came to me (John) for counsel. Burt thought the problem was pure and simple—Martha was too fat, and he couldn't stand it! Martha felt awful about herself but claimed it wouldn't be so hard to get the fat off if Burt would just quit criticizing her all the time. A few minutes of questioning revealed some root causes. Burt had grown up with a mother who not only became obese, she was slovenly. She failed to care for her appearance. The house was poorly kept. And she would use the toilet with the door open and the children running in and out. Burt judged his mother for her appearance and habits. His bitter-root judgment and consequent expectancy was that his wife would become obese and slovenly.

Martha had grown up with a father whom she could never please, no matter how much she tried. He always found something to criticize; at least that was her perception. Whether her father was actually that critical was not what was important to me as a counselor. What was crucial was that

she had judged her father. Since she could not honor her father in that area, life would not go well for her in all similar aspects of life (Deut. 5:16). Her bitter-root judgment and expectancy was that the man of her life would always be critical of her; she would never be acceptable or be able to be pleasing to her man.

When Burt and Martha met, Martha was a slim and beautiful girl. They fell in love and married. In a little while Martha became pregnant. As she grew in size, so did Burt's difficulty to appreciate and compliment her. After delivery it took a while to lose the weight. Burt became increasingly upset and critical.

Burt now was sure he had married someone like his mother (though he couldn't have consciously admitted that inner realization). He found himself increasingly critical and scolding. But that was of course what Martha already expected would happen! Under attack, she became agitated and insecure, so she ate more, for comfort—and grew heavier. As Burt became angrier and more critical, she became more upset, more nervous, more hungry and fatter. All of this affected her ability to keep herself and the house neat. Their judgments and reactions spun to more and more painful levels, until at last she was living with an angry demon and he was living with a blimp!

What created such a destructive spiral? It was not merely psychological expectancy. It is true that he expected his wife to become fat and she expected to be criticized. But psychological expectancy by itself lacks sufficient power to have overcome their determinations to lose weight and to stop criticizing. They had already seen what they were doing to each other before they came. Being Holy Spirit-filled Christians, they had set their wills to quit. They came because they found themselves powerless to stop. They knew they needed help.

The law of judgment *does* have that kind of power. When Burt judged his mother, the law which declares that the measure he metes out he must receive, went into effect. When his judgment dishonored his mother (regardless of whether

she merited his judgment, even if his judgment was true) that meant that Deuteronomy 5:16 ensured that life would not go well for him in that regard. Most cogently, his judgment was a seed sown which by law had someday to be reaped. Just as a tiny mustard seed grows to produce a large tree, so a seed of judgment sown increases the longer it remains unrecognized and unrepented of. So we sow a tiny judgment and reap again and again, larger and larger in life.

Every time we do a deed or hold a judgment in the heart, that can be compared to throwing a ball against a wall. If a physicist knows the weight and size of the ball, the distance to the wall, and my hurling power, he can predict when and with what momentum the ball will return. That is natural law. We comprehend that easily enough. But God has not made one law for the natural and another for the spiritual. All things are governed by the same basic laws. The law expressed in physics is, "For every action there must be an equal and opposite reaction." In chemistry it is expressed, "Every equation (or formula) must balance." In moral and spiritual life it is, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" (Gal. 6:7 KJV) and "Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get" (Matt. 7:1-2 RSV). All things will come to resolution and balance (justice). It is one basic law, described differently in each field.

The law of sowing and reaping, however, adds another dimension. We do not sow one seed and get back one seed. All things increase in God's kingdom. God desires increase in all beneficial things. The first command given to Adam and Eve was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth (Gen. 1:28). The man who buried his talent was excoriated by our usually gentle Lord Jesus for not at least putting his talent where it could increase—"Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest" (Matt. 25:27). The longer a judgment continues unrepented of and unconfessed, the greater increment it gains. We sow a spark and reap a forest fire, or sow to the wind

and reap whirlwind. When the Word says, "The measure you give will be the measure you get," I think perhaps it means "in the same regard or area of our life," rather than the same amount (otherwise the Word would contradict itself).

The lovingkindness of God our Father is that He moves on us again and again to prompt us to do some good thing. When we finally act, He lets us reap an hundredfold as though it were all our own idea. He sends servants on earth and in heaven to persuade us not to do some bad thing; but when we do it, He moves heaven and earth to cause us to repent and confess so He can reap all our evil for us in His Son Jesus on the cross!

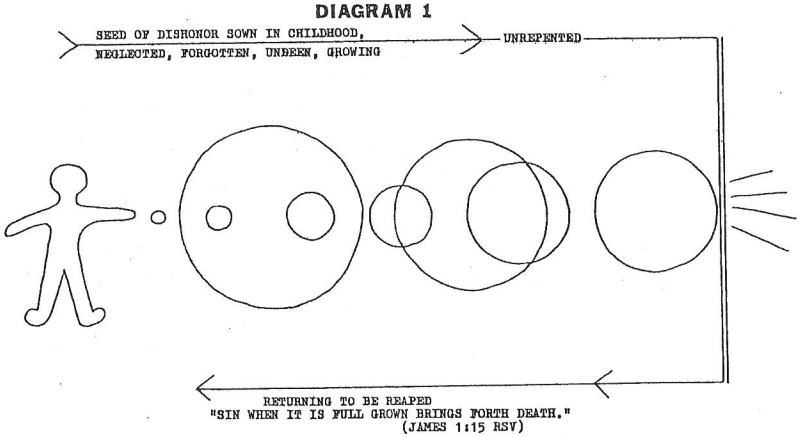
The law of sowing and reaping was eternally in operation for all the universe before Adam and Eve were created. Before the entrance of sin, the law was designed to bring multiplication of blessings—and it still does so today. But the advent of sin meant that the same law from then on rebounds to destruction. Therefore, the Father, knowing from the ground plan of creation what men would do, planned to send Jesus to reap the evil we deserve. In the following diagram, we can see how our judgments return upon us. Proverbs 13:21 says, "Adversity *pursues* sinners, But the righteous will be *rewarded* with prosperity" (italics mine). The Law of God actively *causes* reward and punishment to come upon us, as surely as any other natural law exacts its due (see diagram 1 on next page).

The seed we sow may be tiny—an anger, a resentment held against some family member as a child—and forgotten. The longer it remains undetected or neglected, the larger it grows. So we may sow a ping-pong ball and reap a nine-story bowling ball!

The grace of Christ on the cross delivers us, as diagram two shows. Colossians 2:13-14 says, ". . . having forgiven us all our transgressions, having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." There is no cheap grace. Every sin demands resolution.

Forgiveness does not mean God looked the other way or changed His laws. Jesus said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). The full legal demand of the law of sowing and reaping was fulfilled in pain upon the body of Jesus in anguish in the heart and soul and spirit of our Lord upon the cross! (See diagram 2 on next page.)

DIAGRAM 1



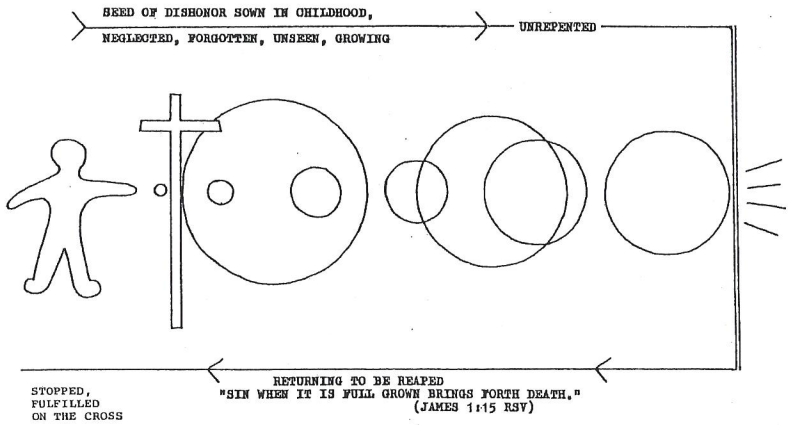
Nevertheless, the cross is not automatic. If we do not repent and confess, we reap in full despite the fullness of mercy available at a moment's utterance.

Since Burt had judged his mother for obesity, he was due to reap obesity—who would be a more likely person through whom to reap than his wife? His judgment helped first to draw to him a woman who was likely to have a weight problem; then it pushed Martha to gain weight. His necessity to reap what he had sown was therefore returning to him like a mighty wind. For Martha, that was like standing in a hundred-mile-an-hour gale, pushing her to fulfill his legal requirement by gaining weight.

But Martha had her own set of judgments, which first drew her to marry a man who was likely to criticize, and then pushed him to do so. Her seed sown ripened and was reaped through Burt.

Burt and Martha, like most couples, found that they were designed to grind against one another's problems. His judgments exactly matched what she was most likely to become, and her judgments matched his carnal tendencies.

DIAGRAM 2



Burt and Martha are not unique. We have found bitter-root judgments and expectancies in every couple we counsel! Bitter-root judgments are the most common, most basic sins in all marital relationships—perhaps in all of life. These three simple laws affect all life: 1) Life will go well for us in every area in which we could in fact honor our parents and life will not go well in every area in which we could not honor them; 2) We will receive harm in the same areas of life in which we have meted out judgment against others; 3) We will most surely reap what we have sown. We regard these laws as the most powerful keys God has revealed to His people for the healing of relationships. These three laws are the basis of almost all our counseling.

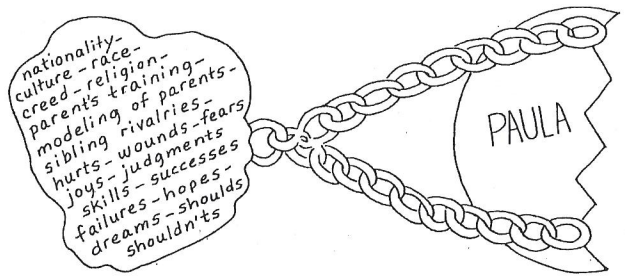
Most couples enter into a relationship with little or no awareness of what they are bringing with them in the heart, or what power those unconscious forces have to influence, drive, and control perceptions, attitudes and behavior. Let diagram *A* represent me (Paula) at the beginning of my marriage with John.

A.



I have pictured myself as an incomplete part of a whole circle; I had some awareness that I was imperfect, unfulfilled, needing completion. But like most young brides I felt I was beginning my new life rather clear, clean and fresh. I had no idea what a large and complex bundle I was bringing into that new life. Like multitudes of Christians, I did not understand that though my sins had been forgiven, I was still the shape of person my experiences in life and my reactions to them had made me to be. I did not know I would be inclined to "see" my husband and relate to him according to the attitudes and expectations of my old nature until in Christ I could experience an interior cutting free from the past and a growing into the new life. The weighty contents of that bundle dragged me down to prevent uninhibited sharing of myself.

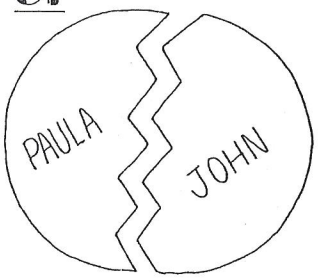
B.



They were also at times the trigger points for ammunition to be hurled John's way.

Another factor had to be dealt with. I held an ideal image of who John was and had to be in order to complement me.

C.

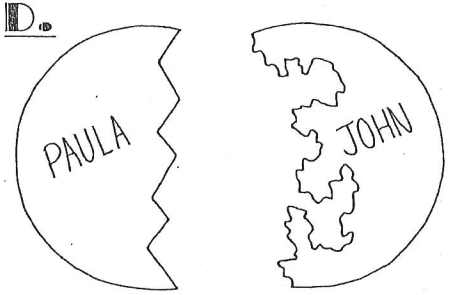


IDEAL IMAGE

Notice that the diagram pictures me as being incomplete but rather symmetrically balanced (I *tried* hard to be the person I thought I was, and liked to think I had succeeded in some measure). It was my hope that John's shape of person would fit mine comfortably. Where I had weaknesses and undeveloped areas I earnestly hoped he would be strong and capable so as to fill and strengthen me. Where I had areas of natural skill and strength I hoped he would have the decency to stand back and give me room to express myself. I thought our coming together should be as effortless and painless as possible.

We had not been married long before I discovered that we were not at all shaped for a struggle-less coming together as one. It seemed to me that the picture looked like this (John saw it the other way around):

D.

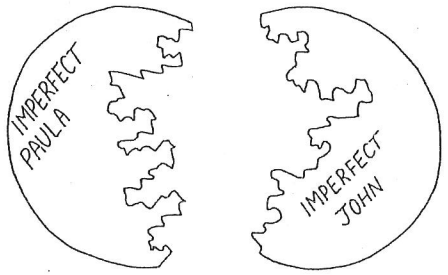


LIGHT DAWNING

It was obvious that the closer we moved to one another the more we were going to have to make adjustments. It took awhile for the two of us to realize that we were both a mess and that it was part of God's plan in calling us together that we should grind blessedly against each other's natures and so become polished and perfected.

God gives us a beloved enemy to force us spiritually lazy people to face what is undealt with in our flesh, else we would go through life ever congratulating ourselves that we are okay without Him.

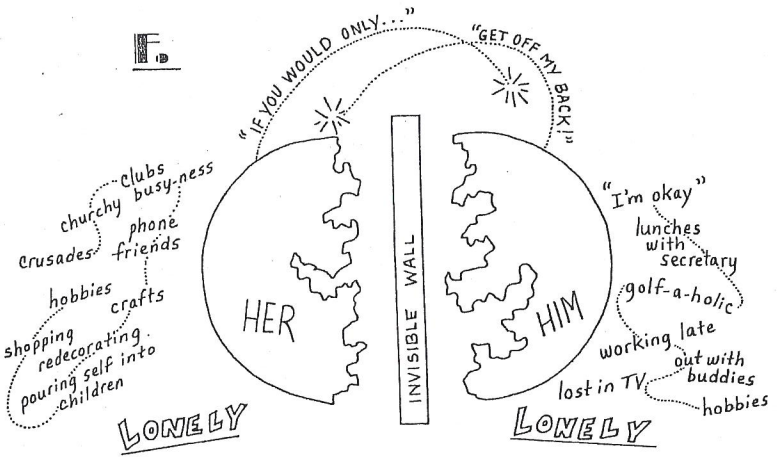
E.



REALITY

Unfortunately what happens in many marriages is that when couples begin to grow close enough to one another that the grinding and polishing process is going on in earnest, they withdraw from the pain, erect defensive walls to hide their vulnerability, and find themselves in a marriage that looks like this:

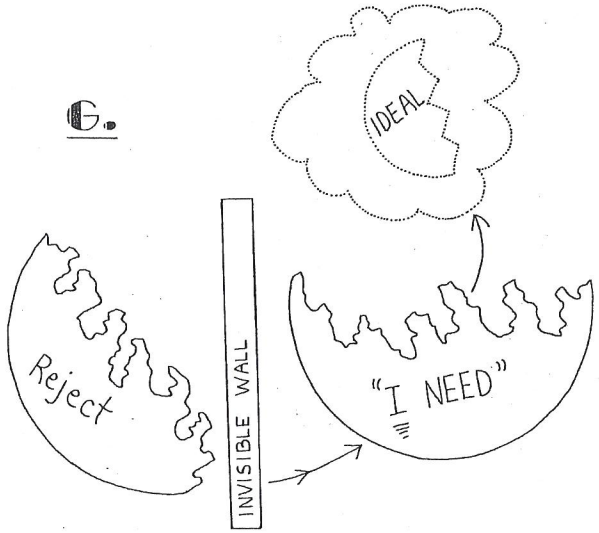
F.



DEFENSE, FLIGHT

He lives on his side of the wall spending more and more time at the office, immersed in hobbies, playing golf, anything to avoid prolonged exposure at home where it hurts. And he looks for places to express himself where there is no threat to his ego. She pours herself into her children, spends her time at crafts, clubs and church, and talks to her women friends about the things she no longer feels it is safe to confide in her husband. Being together becomes excruciating as it seems only to accentuate the loneliness they both feel in isolation from one another. Occasionally they may throw rocks at one another from behind the wall, "If *you* would only change, I'd be all right!"

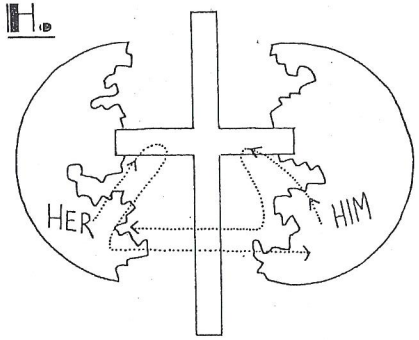
The world's culture feeds them continually with lies. "If it *feels* good, it is right." "Love is warm and fuzzy and makes you *feel* tingly all over." "If you were really in love you'd be living happily ever after." "If you aren't happy in a relationship, get out of it." Their marriage certainly doesn't feel good, and they begin to think, "We must have made a mistake. I have the wrong partner. God never intended for us to be together."



RATIONALIZED COP-OUT

And so one or the other (or both) wanders from the marriage in search of that "ideal partner," that "soul mate," who must be out there somewhere. The wandering partner may indeed find someone who initially makes him "feel good." But because he has not let the Lord deal yet with the things in his heart, he will choose that new relationship with the same eyes, the same sensitivities, the same criteria which equipped him for choosing in the first place. And should he marry a second time, the moment the new mate begins to penetrate his heart, he will find himself repeating the same patterns all over again. More cogently, the same necessity to reap seeds of judgment not yet stopped on the cross will most likely still draw a mate through whom to reap, usually more detrimentally. In this way some people go from marriage to marriage to marriage—right on to dead-ended frustration, "I guess I'm just not marriage material." (By the same token people go from church to church and from group to group and from friend to friend, searching endlessly for someone to make them feel good with no challenge to grow and change.)

There is only one answer for any marriage or any vital relationship. That is to exchange that dividing wall of hostility for the cross of Christ. *It is to stop all demands that the other change.* It is to die daily to self, to continually ask the Lord, "What in *me* is contributing to the breakdown of this marriage?" "Lord, why doesn't my mate get better by just living with me? What is there in *me* that needs to die?" "Bring me to death." It is to confess, "Lord, I can't be loving to John. But you can. Give me the love you have that I may give it to him." "I can't forgive. But you can. Express your forgiveness through me." It is to ask the Lord to enable



SOLUTION

compassionate identification with the other's hurts and fears, and wisdom to minister to those. It is to "forget what lies behind" (Phil. 3:13-14), by identifying it and dealing with it on the cross of Christ so that it no longer has any power and "press on toward what lies ahead" by embracing each step of God's sometimes painful plan to transform your life as you live *with* your mate and work *through* problems together. It means choosing to be vulnerable and trusting the Lord to defend and protect.

If one partner in a marriage refuses to enter into that process of transformation in the Lord, all is not lost. The unbelieving partner is sanctified through the believing partner (1 Cor. 7:14). What happens in the heart of one affects the other, if not consciously, at least beneath the level of consciousness. Eventually it will bear fruit. The more immediate effect of one partner's finding a stopping place on the cross is just that; the vicious cycle is stopped. The remaining partner may continue to behave in the same old habit patterns, but those ways find no place to land in the Christian. They can no longer hook into sensitive trigger points.

I, (John) was raised with a mother who was hypercritical. I judged her for that. My bitter-root judgment was that the woman of my life would always criticize and seldom affirm me. My mother also made me work long hours, and then gave little comfort or appreciation for it, and so my bitter-root judgment was that any woman close to me would expect me to work long hours, and then be unhappy with me anyway, and insensitive to my needs.

I (Paula) was raised with a father who was a traveling salesman, gone two weeks at a time. Though my mind said, "I'm proud of my daddy, he is working for us," my heart sang a bitter tune, "Oh yeah, why isn't he ever here for me when I need him?" I was covertly angry at men. My bitter-root judgment was that the man would always be gone from me. What better place to reap that than to marry a workaholic pastor!

It takes little imagination to see how we were designed to

grind on each other. I (John) would work long hours for the church (whose symbol is mother or woman) and find myself constantly criticized both by the church and Paula. Paula would be angrier and angrier the harder and longer I worked to please. The power of law is such that had I not possessed a built-in workaholic structure, Paula's seed sown would have pushed me to become a workaholic, or in one way or another to be away from her. Her anger made me ask myself, "Who wants to come home to a buzz-saw anyway?" My necessity to reap bitter judgment guaranteed that Paula would criticize had she not already been so disposed.

Not only was John a workaholic, he was always late. In the first years of our marriage John came home from calling on parishioners habitually late to dinner. I would get after him, and he would promise to watch the time and try to arrive home promptly. But neither my scoldings nor his determinations helped. He seemed to have some kind of block about time. It was just something not to be noticed. We ruefully laughed about "Indian time," while I hurt and hurt and grew angrier. Then we learned about bitter-root judgment and expectancy patterns. I repented (by faith alone) of angers I had never yet (nor ever have) felt against my father, but supposed must be there, and asked the Lord to haul to the cross my bitter-root expectancy that my man would always be late. Then I could begin to remember a little, red-haired girl sitting disconsolately waiting for her daddy to come home on the weekend, being more and more disappointed as the seemingly endless hours dragged by. This was the more difficult to see because my father was in fact always punctual. But a little girl's grasp of time is not that factual. I repented and asked for a new heart. John soon found himself easily coming home on time—no sweat, no struggle.

My (John's) bitter-root expectancy from my judgment of my mother was that I would be criticized even when doing my best. And since no one can perform well under a critical eye, I had often as a child blundered absent-mindedly or stupidly and had been criticized roundly for it. So both by judgment

necessitating reaping and by psychological expectancy, I looked for the woman of my life to criticize me, and expected to blunder into it continually. That trait was nicely matched by the fact that Paula was raised with three younger brothers. The first two especially were normal, rambunctious boys who were always into something which embarrassed their righteous older sister. They loved to tease her unmercifully—like running in to throw earthworms in her bath water! Being adventurous, they got into a plethora of "dumb" scrapes. And who was it who did the dumb things which caused the teacher to make the entire class stay after school? Boys, of course. Who stuck her long, red braids in the inkwell? Who threw paper wads and splattered ink? Boys! Paula's bitter-root judgment was that boys (men) would always do dumb things and get everybody into trouble. How better to reap that than to marry an immature, head-in-the-clouds, mystic, dreaming, absent-minded preacher?

During the first years of our marriage, I suffered "hoof-in-mouth" disease. I was always saying some dumb thing. I preached on Sunday morning. Paula preached on Sunday afternoon! "Do you *know* what you said to those people?" It was so bad that each Sunday morning Paula would say, "You aren't going to say something startling today, are you?" and then of course I had to, just to declare independence. I even found myself continually inverting words much to my consternation and embarrassment, like instead of saying, "Look up 1 Peter 3," it would come out, "Look up 1 Threter Pee."

Then I was called to teach out of town, away from Paula. Much to my surprise out rolled uninterrupted wisdom, with no dumb-dumbs. I thought, "Hallelujah! I'm healed. Wait till I get back home!" Only to fall right back to spoonerisms and all kinds of blunders. Finally the Lord revealed that Paula's bitter root was defiling me ". . . and by it the many become defiled" (Heb. 12:15). She repented of her judgments on her brothers and other men and boys, and asked that the Lord give her a new heart, crucifying the expectancy that men would do dumb things. Since then I have never suffered more than the

normal goofs anybody makes, and they are my own, not her reaping.

My (Paula's) bitter-root judgment and expectancy that the man would leave me matched John's workaholic nature in another way. John would always be finding someone to help, too much sacrificing family time for others. Though that was actually out of order (God was calling him to first priorities, his wife and children), John had that one neatly masked under noble serving for God. God wasn't calling him away from home. As a boy he had had to be out milking cows, feeding chickens, and doing chores while the rest of the family played and visited, and had formed a bitter expectancy that life would always go like that. That perfectly matched my judgment of men. It was so bad that even on vacation, five minutes after setting up our own camp, John would be out walking through the campground finding someone else to help—and I was furious!

Law is so powerful that the requirement to reap what was sown can overcome our strongest good natural capacities. My mother (John's) was part Osage Indian, part English. Both cultures have produced very reserved people, and it was not easy for her to express emotion or affection. I judged my mother for not giving enough affection. So the expectancy was that I would be a suffering-servant martyr who would work long hours, only to be criticized and then not receive enough expressions of love. But I married a butterball of affection! In seminary I had determined to be a secluded scholar, but Paula would come and sit *on* my books *on* my lap and express affection to me. I protested—while lapping it up! In five years that didn't happen any more. Paula was no longer that affectionate. Why? My bitter-root judgment had to be reaped. Law overcame her good intentions. My necessity to reap (plus psychological expectancy) *kept her from giving affection.*

My (Paula's) father was seldom home to protect me. Those three rambunctious brothers gave me a hard time (no tougher than normal, actually quite healthy teasing, as brothers will do). But my heart was bitter. No man would be there to defend

me. I would have to do it all myself. John grew up with stern English training to lay down his life to protect a woman. He had seen his father live that in many ways for his mother emotionally. And there is scarcely a stronger or more fierce trait in Indian nature than for a brave to defend his squaw! By both inheritance and training it was one of his strongest characteristics to defend a woman, especially his wife, against all attack. He found himself totally bemused that something almost always blocked so that he seldom was able to defend me. I had sown seeds, and the reaping was so powerful it overcame his strongest good intentions.

Women who are raised with alcoholic fathers, and judge them for it, often either marry a man who is already an alcoholic (they are used to that, and it confirms their judgment), or their man sooner or later becomes one. And so it goes—weak father, weak husband, poor providing parent, poor providing husband, cold and distant father, so is the mate, etc. If the husband does not fit the pattern, either the little girl did not judge and so is not forced to reap, or having judged, has been delivered from reaping by the grace of God.

Men whose mothers were domineering attract the same, unless grace intervenes. Men whose mothers often left them with baby sitters, or by sickness, marital separations or death, find wives who do the same to them. And so it goes—cold, insensitive mother; cold, insensitive wife; etc. If the condition is not exactly the same, the parallel is unmistakable. Again, not the actual history is important but whether the child judged the parent. Reaping is then inevitable. Either Jesus is allowed to pay the full legal demand and so set us free, or we reap, usually through the mate.

When one receives Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, all that bitter-root system is dealt a death blow. But observe that St. Paul was writing to *Christians* when he *commanded, "See to it* that . . . no root of bitterness springing up . . ." (Heb. 12:15, italics mine). Note the words "springing up," like a plant suddenly appearing from a hidden root. He did not say, "Lop off visible branches," nor "Deal with the obvious." But

rather to see to it that no (hidden, beneath the surface, problematic) root become manifest and cause trouble.

Sometimes, repentance prior to accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior has reached to a bitter root, so that the moment of conversion is also the moment of deliverance. Most often, however, vast subterranean tap roots and spreading, hidden tributary shoots remain untouched until we obey St. Paul's command to get at them.

We wish we could train every Christian counselor, on principle, to look for bitter roots in each counselee in every interview. Physicians are trained to examine meticulously for certain possible conditions routinely, especially in first interviews. So also do dentists, chiropractors, and other professionals. Paula and I routinely ask questions concerning early childhood, checking to see whether bitter roots lie behind conditions.

"You say your husband never listens to you? Tell me about your father. What was he like?" After a few basic general questions such as, "Did he give you affection? Was he 'home' when he was home? Did he stay with your mother? How did they relate to each other?", we will ask, "Could you talk with your father? Could he hear and understand you?"

In nearly every instance in which a husband will not listen, we find the same began with her father. "Oh, he was always too busy. He never listened to me."

"Your wife is always sicker than she really is, and it grates on you, and you can't make yourself help her like you should? What was your mother like?" "How was your mother's health?" It is amazing how often the response is, "Oh, she was always complaining about this or that ailment, and taking to her bed," sometimes accompanied by, "She made dad wait on her hand and foot," or "I hated that."

If his statements are: "My wife can't keep the house neat," or "The laundry's never done," or "She's always shopping and spending too much money," or "She gossips too much. Always talking." Our questions will be: "How did your mother take care of the house?" "Did your mother keep your clothes clean

and ready when you were a little boy?" and so on. Usually we ask several other general questions first and then slip in the relevant ones so as to camouflage our intent, lest the counselee answer dishonestly.

If her statements are: "He won't ever take me out anywhere; just sits in his darn ol' easy chair and falls asleep," or, "He never notices whether I look nice," or "He never disciplines the children; he just abdicates and leaves it all up to me." Our questions will be: "Did your father do things with the family? How about picnics, or fishing trips—things like that?" "Did your father like to do things around the house, or did he get lost watching TV or sleep a lot?" "Who wore the pants in your family?" "Did your father do the disciplining, or your mother?"

Sometimes it was not the father who failed a daughter and was judged, but the mother; but the grown wife is reaping through her husband. Or sometimes we reap through the children, or another who lives in the home or nearby, or a boss, or pastor, or colleague at work. Sometimes likewise a son may have judged his father but reaps through his wife.

Sometimes patterns of judging and reaping are not so obvious or so neat and clean. For instance, a little girl may have felt greatly rejected by her father. Questioning reveals, however, that her father seldom was gone from the home, had no great obvious vices (such as alcohol, violence, or a critical tongue), attended church regularly, was a good moral man, etc. But perhaps he was inattentive, or one who fled into books, or seldom spoke. A girl may just as easily take those simple flaws as rejection, but finds it difficult to fault her father since love and loyalty cover feelings of hurt (James 5:20). All of what she can remember is rosy. She may marry a man who insists on remaining in a teen-age gang mentality, frequently leaving her in order to go out with the guys. Or he may be alcoholic or a workaholic. Whatever the surface manifestations, it is the same root—one way or another he fails to take note of her, and she feels rejected.

As much as we wish we could train every counselor to look

for bitter roots, *we would hope to induce each to look for cross-over patterns.* We could almost make it a hard and fast rule: Whenever one partner has a bitter root, the other will have something exactly matching! A counselor ought to suspect that possibility simply by the law of attraction and repulsion. We manage to attract to us and are ourselves attracted to those whose characteristics closely match or oppose ours. After watching this phenomenon through twenty years of counseling hundreds yearly, Paula and I are still amazed at the consistency of law and of human nature.

Sometimes it is not through others we reap but through mother nature, circumstances, or our own selves. For instance, I (John) have seen cases in which several generations suffered business failures, sometimes by ineptitude but often by accidents, economic depressions, weather, etc. Generational sin (Deut. 5:9) may not fully explain the strength of such a pattern; whereas bitter-root judgments by sons upon fathers may turn out to be the main way that particular generational pattern continues to descend.

In cases in which a person is reaping upon himself, another law usually is foundational. "Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things" (Rom. 2:1). It is also an irrevocable law that when we judge another, we doom ourselves to do the same thing (or something so similar the root cannot be missed)! For example, a wife who exclaims, "My mother was always shouting at us kids. I swore I would never act like that. And now I'm doing it just like she did, only worse!"

A young man came whose father had been an alcoholic who was unfaithful to his mother. The counselee had hated those things in his father, and swore that he would be different. He loved his wife dearly. He had become a Holy Spirit-filled Christian, attended church regularly, read his Bible, and loved Jesus. Now seemingly inexplicably, he found himself compulsively going out to drink, and had already

committed adultery. Guilty, worried and confused, he came to us. A few minutes of questioning revealed the bitter-root pattern of judgment. Though Christian, he had never distinctly repented of his judgments against his father. That doomed him by the power of law to do exactly as his father had done. Jesus of course longed to protect him from himself, and after he fell, Jesus longed to set him free; but free will prevented our gracious Lord until the young man could see his roots and repent specifically. Under our counsel, he did so repent, and was set free.

Sometimes bitter roots lie hidden far beneath levels of what we have commonly thought of as "rememberable" incidents. One lady came whose behavior totally baffled her. She loved the Lord and her husband. She believed the Bible, belonged to a solid evangelical church, and was Spirit-filled. Now she too found herself compulsively leaving her husband to go out drinking. She had become involved in a fully adulterous affair with an alcoholic married man whom she did not even like or want to be near! Her husband was a gentle, loving, born-anew, Spirit-filled man. "Whatever in the world am I doing?" she cried out, "And why?"

So I asked more questions and discovered that she had been adopted at birth. Her natural mother had never been married, and at forty had dated an alcoholic married man! Her natural father had never told her natural mother that he was a married man. When she became pregnant and informed him, he vanished from her life by returning to his wife and refusing to acknowledge any connection with her. Her mother had carried her nine months in shame, in days when condemnation was much more severe than today, and medical proofs of parentage were unknown. Sometime during the nine months, she determined she would have to give up her child for adoption. She did so, and Ann had never known, outside the womb, any other than her gracious, loving, God-fearing adoptive mother and father.

By now the reader must understand that in our spirits we know and comprehend whatever is happening around us in

the womb, as John the Baptist knew Mary was pregnant with our Lord and leaped for joy (Luke 1:41-44). In her spirit in the womb she had judged her father and her mother for fornication, her father for drinking and adultery and for rejecting her mother and her. That doomed her to: a) reject someone (her husband) as she was rejected; b) drink; c) commit adultery. Not all tiny judgments we make have such power. Some may be cleansed away by the blood of Jesus immediately (1 John 1:7). But deep-set, virulent judgments do have such power. As she had hated being in that womb of shame during the nine months and had hated becoming a person, so her girl child forming within her triggered into her hatred of herself, and she subconsciously projected her self-hatred onto her baby.

When we explained to her the laws of bitter-root judgment, she could see how her compulsion had taken hold of her. The Holy Spirit revealed the reality of her life to her heart and we prayed for forgiveness and death on the cross to all bitter-root structures. From *one* session of counsel and prayer results were immediate and full (perhaps because she had such good faith)! She brought her adoptive mother to rejoice and confirm, and to pray for her older sister, who was also adopted, who could not understand why she too hated her daughters. Her husband also came. By now can the reader fail to know what questions I asked him and what were the answers? Of course, though he had been a devout Christian for many years, he had a matching bitter-root judgment and expectancy that his woman would leave him and be unfaithful!

The most pathetic thing Paula and I see daily in Christian counseling is that day by day, year after year, good Christian people are driven by forces of which they have no awareness! We are not speaking merely of libidinal psychological forces. Those are bad enough that most any psychiatrist or psychologist could agree with that statement. All kinds of counselors have discovered the truth of Ecclesiastes 1:18, "Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge

results in increasing pain." Beyond such grief is a depth of pathos for Christian counselors, for we see not merely psychologically but the invincible operation of inevitable laws of judgment, especially of sowing and reaping, acting with impersonal, unrelenting force in human life (short of the cross of Christ). The pathos is because Christians ought to believe, should know and see and let Jesus Christ do what He came to do—to set them free.

But Christians have failed to see. If this book has no greater purpose than this chapter, it is enough if Christians will only come to see how the law of sowing and reaping affects them drastically day in and day out, in multifarious details in common daily living.

Paula and I wrote of bitter-root expectancy in *Restoring the Christian Family* (chapter 11) and have spoken of it everywhere for years. (It may also be found in the two four-tape series, "Restoring the Christian Family," "The Refreshment of Forgiveness," and the single tape: "Bitter Roots Revisited"). We have learned to our chagrin that most who read or heard failed to grasp the point! They thought we were speaking only of psychological expectancy. In small part we were. Bitter-root expectancy is a psychological construct in our carnal natures by which we expect a self-fulfilling prophecy to happen, like always being criticized or rejected or left out of things. By it we do indeed coerce people or manipulate unconsciously until they do that bad thing to us which proves our judgment, "I knew it!" "I knew it would happen that way. It always does."

Such psychological expectancies do have some power in our lives. But compared to the laws of which we actually were speaking, psychological bitter-root expectancy is like a flickering candle flame beside an atomic blast! It is the Law of God which alone possesses limitless power!

The inability of most to hear told us something else more wounding. We wrote about it in chapter 4, "The Base of Law" —that most people cannot and do not think in terms of the operation of God's law in their daily lives. They do not see or

understand how what they did as little children (or as adults) can still be like a boomerang swishing to return with ever greater momentum in their present or future. Not comprehending that *every* action in life must reap a result, they find themselves continually being hit on the blind side and smashed by events, and wondering why. Life seems unfair. It is to help the Body of Christ see in order to repent and stop the reaping of destruction that we write this chapter. Oh, that men will hear!

Let us repeat what we said in chapter four, that no law of God is an inert, dead thing. The laws of God will operate whether we know of them or are ignorant, approve of them or disapprove, love or hate them, believe or disbelieve. Therefore, God's impartial laws will affect us whether we unintentionally activate them by judgments as children, or intentionally sin as mature people. It makes no difference. Law is law. If we disbelieve, what we think or feel about the reality and effectiveness of the laws of God will have about as much effect as a gnat trying to knock down the Empire State Building! The laws of God will roll right on controlling the universe no matter what our puny minds think or don't think.

The law of sowing and reaping is so simple it is deceptive. We just don't think anything that simple can be that real, that pervasively powerful and effective. Perhaps for that reason St. Paul warns, *"Do not be deceived,* God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he *will also reap"* (Gal. 6:7, italics mine). It is impossible to hold a judgment or do a deed without setting in motion forces which absolutely must return to us. If a man were silly enough to believe with great certainty that he could fly, the law of gravity would not be affected one whit! He would plummet as surely as the foolishness of his technique allows. Only the operation of devices within other laws enables a man to fly. Just so, a thief will eventually reap, no matter how brilliantly he escapes human detection. A secret adultery will result in destruction of the soul and in later reapings no matter what modern "feelosophies" say. *The law of sowing and reaping guarantees unconditionally that no one ever gets away*

with anything at any time in any place!

If a Christian counselor sees that the law of sowing and reaping is so effective, he is prepared to use it as a key for understanding human life and dilemmas. But in counseling we must remember to include the dimension of time in our reckoning, and to explain it to the counselee. Reaping is not immediate. As a farmer must wait first for seeds to die and rise, then to grow, then to bloom, then to form in the head, only at last to mature, so reaping in all of life must wait. For counseling one difference is crucial. A farmer not only can see his plants growing, some tending may be required. But since in the case of bitter-root judgments sown in childhood, most commonly seeds sown are forgotten, and seldom can the shape of bitter-root judgments be seen in earliest childhood, perhaps never having been fully consciously admitted, it seems inexplicable when reaping arrives as a whirlwind when the sowing to the wind was so long ago, so small, and so hidden or forgotten. People condemn one another and themselves for failure. It seems unfair that sins of judgment sown in infancy destroy adult relationships. But that is because we attach blame to a process in which there is none, only impartial law.

When man was created and set in the garden to take care of it, law already had long regulated growth. In that innocent order, all things did indeed work together for good (Rom. 8:28, now only by the cross, then without need of it). The good deeds of Adam and Eve rebounded to increase the blessedness of Eden, and there were no sinful things setting in motion terrible later reapings. The entire universe was designed to upbuild itself in love (Eph. 4:16).

But since law is impersonal, when Adam and Eve opened the door to sin, every succeeding generation has reaped the result. That means that infants come into a fractured and sinful world with hearts already corrupted by Adamic sin, and so make judgments and hateful reactions which must later be reaped in vast increase—*by the same law which would have brought ever-increasing blessing had Adam and Eve never sinned!* God does not blame. He knew before anything was

ever created that men would fall, and that the very laws which He had built to govern all things in blessedness would then be turned to bring destruction. So from the ground plan of creation he predestined Jesus to reap all harm, to pay on the cross all the price demanded by His own impartial law.

We must understand, especially as counselors, one vitally important fact. Human free will is so precious to our Lord that He will not let the efficacy of the cross be applied to us without our consent. It is as though He has brought us a present on Good Friday, but wrapped it up until our own invitation allows our own Easter morning to open it to personal application. In each detail of our life it is the same. Our gentle Lord is always standing outside some new sequential inner door, softly knocking, but the only latch is on our side. Bitter roots are normally not taken care of until we invite Jesus to accomplish that specific task. Our compassionate Lord hurts more, not less, in the waiting till we do. He pays the price even for our tardiness in confessing.

Is it fair that a tiny child should live with an angry, violent father and reap thereby a life with similar bosses, or with a husband who acts out the same, only worse? Of course it isn't. Whoever said, since the Fall, that life was fair? On the other hand, should our infants reap, all undeserved, all the benefits of our fathers' fathers—house and health, technology and medicine, appliances, clothing, rich foods, knowledge and spiritual blessings, and then be exempted from reaping the harms that come in the same package? God is just and fair. Life on earth since the Fall of Adam and Eve is not.

So it is that the tiniest children, who hardly can be blamed for making angry, bitter judgments at parents who may richly deserve such evaluations, nevertheless set in motion forces which must move to resolution. It is not that God is mean, and picks on children. It is the opposite, that God in His kindness and compassion sees the gathering storms from all our sowings (though we may see neither the sowings nor the impending reapings), and He moves, unseen by us, to intercede on our behalf. When the prayers of others on earth and

the intercession of heaven fail of access to our stubborn natures, then despite the perfect will of God, we reap what we have sown.

Jesus always lives to intercede on our behalf (Heb. 7:25). "For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6). Let all Christendom understand, were the Lord to change, that is, to stop interceding for one short while, the weight of our sowings of sin is so great—"This tape (earth) will self-destruct in five seconds!"

Destruction is reaped not merely in our marriages and in our families, but in all aspects of life. Earlier we told the story of a businessman whose father had continually gambled away the family money. When our friend went to work at eleven or so for the family, if his father could find the money he earned, he would steal it and gamble it away. He judged him for that. His bitter-root judgment was that his father (therefore, subsequently all businessmen) would cheat, lie, and steal. Needing partners for his real estate projects, he continually drew to him men who failed him one way or another—lying, cheating, being lazy, and leaving our friend to hold the bag, unaided. In his business office he managed to find partners who invariably failed him. One split his family in two. Being determined, he searched and found a man of faith, a most highly recommended man, born anew, church attending, a responsible deacon. This man so failed to be responsible in business, our friend was almost driven to bankruptcy. While he was in the hospital with back trouble, this partner went to his doctor, lawyer, and counselor (me) to try to have him declared incompetent so he could steal his business!

Subsequently, we talked of his judgments against his father and how his bitter root was being reaped through all these men. He repented and was forgiven. In prayer we called that bitter root to death on the cross, and prayed for a new heart, a new expectancy by which to draw to himself dependable, honest men. One by one the Lord has weeded the leeches out of his company and brought to him men of honor and dependability. Recently his banker, extending a sizable loan

which saved his business, said to him, "Now that you have gotten rid of those men, and you are running your company again (he meant out of the hospital and back on the job) and now that you have around you these men we can trust, we will back you again." Our friend's bitter root nearly destroyed his business, and the cross of Christ saved it.

Note the words, ". . . and by it the many be defiled" (Heb. 12:15). Our bitter root, by the force of reaping, actually defiles others. We *make* them act around us in ways they might successfully resist, apart from us. Every married person or other kind of partner ought to ask, "How come he didn't become a better and stronger person by associating with me?" And, "Can it be that my bitter root is defiling him?" "Am I reaping something through this person?"

We need to understand, however, that guilt is always fifty-fifty. Our bitter root could not overcome the other's free will unless something in him is still flesh (no matter how good and strong), or weak and sinful. The other is always responsible too. Guilt in a family is always shared.

When questions reveal a bitter root, there are several factors needing our attention. First there is the original event. The grown person may have no awareness, as Paula has never been able to *feel* any kind of resentment against her father. But we are not dealing first with feelings of the flesh or spirit. We are dealing with facts and law, by faith. Forgiveness for the sin of judgments should be pronounced if present circumstances indicate reaping. Where reaping is, judgments and/or sinful actions were the sowing, no matter what the other's reasoning mind or feelings may protest. The counselee need not presently feel anything during counseling or prayer. The counselor is now a confessor, pronouncing absolution for the inner child, ministering beyond the adult to the little one within. Forgiveness needs to be said several ways so that the inner one can take hold and receive.

The counselee should be asked both to forgive and to be forgiven, purely by faith if necessary. Forgiveness is essential. Without it, no subsequential healing can happen (Matt. 6:15, Mark 11:26, Matt. 5:23-24).

TRANSFORMATION OF INNERMAN - SANFORD

BITTER ROOTS

The original event(s) created structures in the character. These are practices of judgment and psychological bitter-root expectancy which only the cross can transform. The counselee or counselor or both should pray aloud together asking that Jesus' work on the cross be applied to that practice in the old nature. It will help and may be necessary for the counselee to say in prayer, "I hate it. I reject it. I don't want it."

A science-fiction, space movie several years ago told the story of a spaceship lost upon a planet devoid of its former population. A second spaceship, sent to find the first, found only a professor (the scientist aboard the flight) and his daughter still alive. Soon members of the second crew began to be torn apart one by one by an only partially visible monster. The captain discovered a machine invented by the former population. By placing a cap on the head and turning the machine on, great mental powers were released. Unfortunately so were all the inner powers. The hidden demonic urges of the former population had thus materialized, causing them all to destroy one another by their covert hatreds! Meanwhile all the new ship's crew were being destroyed until only a few remained, locked behind a supposedly impenetrable door with the scientist and his daughter. Now the demonic thing was smashing through even that! At the last moment the captain, perceiving the truth, called on the scientist, who he discovered had tried the machine, to realize it was his own despotic thing, jealously overprotecting his daughter. At last the scientist stepped in front of the door and cried out, "I hate you. I reject you. I don't want you." Dramatically the sounds of rending and tearing descended into silence.

I know of no better way to depict the power of such subconscious practices in our nature, or how they can only be destroyed by holding them to the cross by hate. ". . . hate what is evil (loathe all ungodliness, turn in horror from wickedness) but hold fast to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9b TAB). Sometimes we have prayed with counselees about such practices, in full faith, only to have them continue, seemingly

unabated. The missing factor which denied success was hate.

We spoke earlier of reward systems. All bitter-root systems contain rewards. I grew up determined to serve well no matter whether my folks appreciated or criticized. Actually that built a noble martyr who loved that stance. That fed my ego. No matter how much I protested that I disliked being criticized and was tired of serving for little reward, the inmost truth was that in reality I preferred it so. That proved me the magnanimous suffering-servant Christian, and all those others less than me, even hypocritical. So long as I enjoyed that reward, I was not about to let go and face as sin my defiling others by causing them to act in an un-Christian manner toward me.

So long as John kept working too late, spending too much time away from me (Paula) and the children, my noble martyr self could "bear that cross" all alone and unappreciated while serving anyway. That fed my ego. So long as I enjoyed proving the man wrong, so long as I enjoyed being "one-up" (on my brothers in sibling rivalry projected onto John), so long as it was precious to me that my bitter root view of life was being confirmed again and again, I had no real intention of letting go of my bitter root. The rewards were too sweet.

Perhaps now we are prepared to comprehend the necessity for the command, *"See to it. . . ."* Sometimes overturning a bitter root requires upsetting the entire stance of life by which one has defined his life and found his (fleshly) worth. It may mean coming to hate that fleshly righteousness by which we have congratulated ourselves that we are the good guys standing for Jesus and being persecuted by all the dirty guys.

Further, real repentance may require that we repent of our pushing those very people whom we have been blaming for hurting us to do so by being in proximity to us. Oddly, we may have to repent that we hurt them by causing them to hurt us! We may not become whole until we bless them for loving us enough to be the ones through whom we could reap! Truly forgiveness is not fully fulfilled until we bless those who despitefully use us (Matt. 5:12-13, Rom. 12:14, and 1 Pet. 3:4).

Finally, the counselee may have to catch himself at the game in many little ways for days thereafter. The big battle may be won but there may be hundreds of pockets of "guerrilla resistance" here and there in our nature. Habit structures are like morning glories, weeds which keep sending up sprouts from a long, persistent root system until every part of the old root is uprooted or finally too weak to send up a shoot.

The blessed end of transformation of bitter roots is first that we find ourselves continually surprised. Things just don't happen like they used to. New things happen. People compliment who didn't, or give affection, or whatever is the reverse of what used to happen. Good rather than bad "accidents" happen. Things begin to work together for good, visibly. One can't miss seeing it.

Perhaps the most blessed shock is that often the very people we have been hating become the ones we love or appreciate the most. We even become grateful for their former persecuting ways (or whatever they did) because by that we saw and were set free. Life takes on a new lease. It is as though new vistas open before us—and we come (slowly perhaps) to realize they were there all along; we just couldn't see them. What used to bother us now falls like water off a duck's back. We giggle instead of tense up. We laugh *with* those we used to get mad at for laughing *at* us. And we see others and our own self with real compassion.

Truly in that area we are born anew.

Section IV

Sexual Sins and Difficulties



. . . the root of a tree gives life

In a tree or plant, a root is an underground, hidden structure which is a conduit for nourishment. For us, "roots" are habitual ways we drink nurture from God, others, ourselves and nature. Our roots also lie beneath the surface, usually hidden to the adult mind. If we have **bitter** roots, we drink harm to ourselves.

. . . what are bitter roots, or bitter root judgments?

* our **sinful reactions** to hurt
* **condemning judgments** of people
* **refusal or inability to forgive** someone
* operations of the unchangeable **laws of God** which cause us to reap in kind what we have sown
* they have the **power to defile** many, including ourselves, causing us to drink "poison" instead of nourishment

. . . bitter roots are NOT

* the hurtful or terrible things that happen to us, nor are they the sins of those who have wronged us; they are **our** sins.
* powerful enough to overcome the free will of another, though they do defile

. . . bitter roots infect the mind with expectancies

an **expectancy** is

* a psychological practice in our natures
* a habit of self-fulfilling prophecy, by which we "push" people to fulfill our picture of the way things will go.
  - "Women will always be controlling."
  - "Men can't be depended upon."
  - "No one ever listens to me."

. . . an example of expectancy

A man is brought up by a critical mother. Feeling wounded and rejected, he learns to protect his heart by withdrawing from her. His experiences with mother form his picture of "woman." When he marries, he fears pain of vulnerability and consciously (or unconsciously) projects his expectations onto his wife, holding her at a distance. She is lonely and appeals to him to share with her. He interprets this as criticism (whether it is or

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. . . example, cont.

not), and pulls farther away. He criticizes her attempts to break through the walls of his heart. When she becomes a critical woman, he doesn't see his part in pushing her to fulfill that expectation.

. . . how do judgments and expectancies differ?

Consider a similar scene. Add to the man's bitter expectancy to be criticized the fact that in earliest childhood he made a powerful, condemning judgment against his mother. He soon forgets the judgment, but it has been sown as a seed (with the power to defile) which will affect him. He will reap through his wife, and other women, what he experienced with his mother. Because of the forgotten nature of the sowing, the reaping may come as a surprise to him.

. . . where do we find judgments and expectancies?

* Sowing and reaping for bitter root judgments and expectancies most often happen in relation to parents and spouses.
* They can also occur in relation to other primary people during our foundational years, and occasionally with those who are not primary.

. . . who is accountable?

We are.

* God holds us accountable for our own sinful reactions to what happens to us.
* We are guilty but not condemned. Guilt is the friend which brings us to the cross, and thus to healing and transformation.

. . . counselors must be aware

Bitter root judgments and expectancies are such common problems that every counselor should check for them as routinely as a doctor checks blood pressure and temperature.

. . . maxim for Christian counselors

"If you have the fruit, you have the root"
Luke 6:43-44; Matthew 7:20

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