

## Challenging Our False Beliefs With God's Truth Stan Haegert, MD

### I. Return to the Source – renouncing independence and moving toward restored relationships<sup>1</sup>:

A. False belief: “I must always be available to others for their sake.” “I can’t reach for my oxygen mask because the person next to me needs help with his!”

1. Underlying assumption: “I can give without receiving because I am self-sufficient. I have no need for replenishment.”
2. The countering truth: “I was made for fellowship with my Father...I need Him to make me lie down in green pastures and lead me beside quiet waters...to restore my soul. It is appropriate for me to isolate myself from the needs of others in order to cultivate, nourish and strengthen my relationship with Him.”
3. Look at Jesus’ practice of the discipline of solitude – time with the Father. This often required dismissing crowds and distancing Himself from others and their needs.
  - a. Matt. 14:23, 24a – “After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves...” Notice that the disciples got into the boat *before* the “evening” and Jesus didn’t come to help them until the “fourth watch of the night” (from 3AM-6AM). He let them struggle with the wind and waves all night long while He had His quiet time!<sup>2</sup>
  - b. Jesus was in control of His time as he responded to the will of His Father, and so are you! It was only through his practice of solitude in His Father’s presence that Jesus knew what to do with His time. We all have 24 hours each day. When confronted with an opportunity or task, it’s less appropriate to say “I don’t have the time,” than to say “I choose to use my time in a different way.”

B. False Belief: “God will love me more if I serve Him.”

1. Underlying assumption: “God’s love and acceptance of me is *conditional*, based on what I *do*.”
  - a. If this were true, I would exhaust myself trying to maintain His love!

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<sup>1</sup> Cloud, Henry and John Townsend. 2001. How People Grow: What the Bible Reveals about Personal Growth. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. Pg. 28-36.

<sup>2</sup> Although speculative, it is worth considering the experience disciples might have missed out on had Jesus interrupted His time with the Father to “rescue” them. How often in our responding to “urgent” needs do we short-circuit what God wants to bring into the lives of others through trials? Only time with the Father will give us the discernment we need to be able to respond to “urgent” needs according to His will.

- b. Quote from a pastor: "If the missionary I visit isn't exhausted, then we stop supporting him. We should all be exhausted doing the work of the Lord."<sup>3</sup>
2. The countering truth:
- a. How do you finish this sentence: "God loves me because..."? Is the next word "I"? It should be "He!" Eph. 1:4 – "*For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ...*" Look at the timing. God set His love on me before He made the universe! God loves me simply because He chose to do so!
- b. Michael Card – "*He cannot love [us] more, and He will not love less.*"<sup>4</sup>
- c. As a missionary, I did a great job being God's servant, but I forgot to be His son! Your recognition that you are also God's child can only come about as you spend time with your Father.
- d. "*The Kingdom of God, you see, is a paradox. While the world applauds achievement, God desires companionship. The world clamors 'Do more! Be all that you can be!' But our Father whispers, 'Be still and know that I am God.' He isn't looking as much for workers as he is looking for sons and daughters—a people to pour his life into...When we put work before worship, we put the cart before the horse. The cart is important; so is the horse. But the horse must come first, or we end up pulling the cart ourselves. Frustrated and weary, we can nearly break under the pressure of service, for there is always something that needs to be done. When we first spend time in his presence—when we take time to hear his voice—God provides the horsepower we need to pull the heaviest load. He saddles up Grace and invites us to take a ride.*"<sup>5</sup>
- e. Whom does God love?
- (i) A cheerful giver! 2 Cor. 9:7—"*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*"
- (ii) Does this apply only to our money or also to our time, strength and service?
- (iii) God does not need or want giving done reluctantly or under compulsion.

## II. Return to the Order – our submission to God and to His limits – He is God and we are not:

### A. False Belief: Saying "no" to a need is un-Christian.

<sup>3</sup> Anonymous, quoted by Heidi Enck, personal communication, May 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Card, M. "Chorus of Faith,"

<sup>5</sup> Weaver, J. 2007. Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press. Pg. 13. (Emphasis in the original).

1. Faulty underlying assumption: “I have enough resources to meet all needs...I have the capacity to help everyone.”<sup>6</sup> For whom alone is this true? Has He met all needs?
  2. The countering truth:
    - a. Jesus didn’t meet all the needs, but only those that the Father had specifically appointed Him to meet. I’m here to give you permission to be like Jesus! This means that you can say no... Mark 1:37b-38 – “...when they found him, they exclaimed: ‘Everyone is looking for you!’ Jesus replied ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’”
    - b. When Jesus ascended, there were still needs in the world. Yet he could say to His Father in John 17:4 “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do.”
    - c. I am responsible to make stewardship decisions with the limited resources that God has given me. That will mean saying “no” to some, perhaps most, of the needs I encounter.
- B. False use of a Truth: “God won’t give me more to do than I can handle.”
1. While this is true, a faulty underlying assumption can lead us to use this truth in a false way. We may think: “Whatever I’m trying to handle right now must be what God has given me!”
  2. The countering truth: “God will supply the resources I need to accomplish His will.”
    - a. Eph 2:10 – “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” As Master Craftsman, God matches the workmanship with the works. He prepares vessels that have just the right features and specifications for the work He has in mind for them to do. I would be thought foolish for blaming my five gallon jug for failing to hold the ten gallons I had attempted to pour into it. Why then do I fault the vessel when I attempt to pour ten gallons worth of ministry into my five gallon life?
    - b. 2 Cor. 9:8—“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.”<sup>7</sup>
    - c. If I’m running out of resources I should consider that I may be running ahead of His will. Perhaps I have stopped applying wisdom.
- C. False use of a truth: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).
- a. Once again, this is a truth that is often yanked out of context and blended with false assumptions to reach a false conclusion. “There should not be

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<sup>6</sup> The second phrase in this sentence is from Travilla, Carol. Caring Without Wearing. Quoted in Weaver, J. 2007. Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press. Pg. 20.

<sup>7</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. 2 Co 9:7

any limits to what I can do!<sup>8</sup> ‘All things’ must mean everything I can think of!” Oh really? Can I fly? Can I hold my breath for 2 hours?

2. The countering truth:
  - a. Phil. 4:13 is given in a *context*. Paul is explaining his ability to be content in every circumstance, “*whether well-fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*” To extend the meaning of “all things” to “every task or challenge I can imagine myself doing, without regard to my giftedness or the limitations God has built into me,” is to strain the text.
  - b. Ps. 103:13b-14 – “*...the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.*” We get into a lot of trouble by forgetting that we are dust...that we have limitations that God knows all about because He has DESIGNED them.
  - c. A credo: “Working within my God-given limitations, I can use my gifts through the power of His Spirit to accomplish the works that He has specially designed for me to accomplish.”

### III. Return to the Roles – practicing dependency, controlling what we are meant to control and relinquishing all else:

#### A. False Beliefs:

1. “I am responsible for the decisions of others.”
2. “I have the ability to change another person.”<sup>9</sup>

#### B. The countering truth: Rom. 14:12 – “*So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.*”

1. I am responsible *to* others but not *for* them.
  - a. I may be *faithful* to a needy individual without *becoming* the needy individual.
  - b. I may minister to another to the best of my ability, but it is the Holy Spirit who brings about change in a person’s heart. The decisions made by the person to yield to or resist the Holy Spirit are their own responsibility. They will reap what they sow. It is not appropriate for me to feel guilt when others make poor decisions.
2. I must learn to distinguish *guilt* from *regret*. Guilt has to do with transgression of God’s laws. When I transgress God’s law, I *should* feel a sense of guilt. I know that I am not *judicially* guilty because Jesus has paid my penalty, but I should rightly experience a shame that should draw me to repentance. But I must also learn to experience *regret*. I *regret* that people make poor decisions. I *regret* that we are living in a fallen world where needs seemingly exceed the resources to meet them. I *regret* that I am not

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<sup>8</sup> Travilla, Carol. Caring Without Wearing. Quoted in Weaver, J. 2007. Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press. Pg. 20.

<sup>9</sup> Travilla, Carol. Caring Without Wearing. Quoted in Weaver, J. 2007. Having a Mary Heart in a Martha World: Finding Intimacy with God in the Busyness of Life. Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press. Pg. 20.

unlimited and therefore cannot meet all the needs with which I am confronted. I regret that I must say “no” sometimes. But when I do, I must learn to reject feelings of guilt if I have not transgressed God’s law. Guilt has to do with transgression. Regret is an expression of godly sorrow over the twisted-ness of the present groaning creation.

#### IV. Return to Relationship with Others – open, honest, and vulnerable:

##### A. An American cultural example of the effects of the Fall on relationships:

*“I’ve built walls,  
A fortress deep and mighty,  
That none may penetrate.  
I have no need of friendship; friendship causes pain.  
Its laughter and its loving I disdain.  
I am a rock,  
I am an island...  
I have my books  
And my poetry to protect me;  
I am shielded in my armor,  
Hiding in my room, safe within my womb.  
I touch no one and no one touches me.  
I am a rock,  
I am an island.”<sup>10</sup>*

##### B. False beliefs:

1. “I’m isolated and alone. No one else is experiencing what I am. No one cares.” The depersonalization of burnout leads to separation from potentially strengthening relationships.

*“The inmost places suffered most. I was losing perspective. Fissures in my character worked themselves here and there into cracks. Some widened into ruptures. I grew easily irritable, paranoid, bitter, self-righteous, gloomy. I was often argumentative: I preferred rightness to intimacy. I avoided and I withdrew. I had a few people I confided in, but few friends. I didn’t understand friendship. I had a habit of turning people, good people who genuinely cared for me, into extensions of myself: still water for me to gaze at the way Narcissus did, dark caves for me to boom my voice into and bask in the echoes. I didn’t let anyone get too near.”<sup>11</sup>*

2. “I must hide, because the real me will not be loved or respected.”

##### C. The countering truths:

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<sup>10</sup>Paul Simon, “I am a Rock,” *Sound of Silence*, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Buchanan, Mark. 2006. *The Rest of God: Restoring Your Soul by Restoring Sabbath*. Nashville: W Publishing Group. Pg. 2.

1. I am not alone...I am built for relationship: Eph. 4:11-13—*“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”<sup>12</sup>*
2. Others are likely experiencing what I am. The Fall causes us to hide and to posture. I can choose to break the “code of silence.” Vulnerability begets vulnerability.
3. The real “me” is the only one God can relate to and heal, because it’s the only one He knows! Ps. 139. I don’t need the love or respect of others that is based on falsehood.

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<sup>12</sup> *The Holy Bible : New International Version*. Grand Rapids : Zondervan, 1996, c1984, S. Eph 4:11