

## CHANGES THAT HEAL - 2

In this session, you will see the symbol “☞” followed by *some questions in italics*. These are things for you to think about, jot down some answers and come to class prepared to discuss them. You don’t need to answer every question, but please come prepared to discuss some of them.

### C. SORTING OUT GOOD AND BAD.

The third developmental task is to learn to **resolve the good and evil** we find within ourselves and others. This could be compared to the “sapling” stage. If we do not have the ability to deal with the **simultaneous** existence of good and bad, we cannot successfully live in this world since both the world and we are precisely that: good and bad.



We were made to have perfect relationships with perfect people, but the Fall of man into sin changed all that. Some people deny the bad in themselves by never dealing with their problems. Others deny the good in them and focus only on their weaknesses and failures. We often envision an “ideal” self, but our real self often falls short of this “ideal.”

Whenever the real self becomes apparent, the ideal self will judge it and try to make it hide. When we’re hiding in the shadows, we’re not in the kind of relationship God intended with Himself and with others. We left perfection far behind in the Garden of Eden. Evil, and the **potential** for evil, will be present within us until the day we go to be with the Lord.

The developmental task here is to **graciously** extend God’s **forgiveness** to **ourselves** and **others**. We accept in grace those less-than-ideal parts so they can be loved, healed, and grow (Romans 8:1). The demands of the ideal are met in Christ (Romans 8:4).

The nature of the relationship, then, between the “ideal” and the “real” needs to be one of grace, of unconditional love and acceptance. Real healing and spiritual power can be found in a safe relationship, where the darkness can be made light and the “dark parts” can find forgiveness and acceptance (James 5:16). In the body of Christ, we are to love each other in spite of our failures and **gently** correct each other toward a goal of love (Galatians 6:1). **Forgiving relationships within the church** can cure the problem of splitting good and bad. The ideal self that is based on the Scriptures and Christ-likeness can become a goal and not a demand, and the true self can be loved along the way. The help resolve issues of the good and bad, it’s important to be into the Bible to find out what the ideal should be and to work to change distorted thinking (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). One also shouldn’t reject others when they are less than perfect. Give up your quest to have perfect relationships.

☞ *Have you seen your failures as something to hide or as something to learn from? When “badness” has surfaced in your life, have you experienced gentle correction toward a goal of love and acceptance, or judgment and being “written off” by others? When “badness” surfaces in other’s lives, do you typically respond with gentle correction toward a goal of love and acceptance or judgment and “writing them off?” Any examples? Have you tried to appear “all good” and hide weaknesses? How could you be more real and transparent?*

- D. **ADULTHOOD AND AUTHORITY.** The last developmental task is that of embracing our lives as adults. This could be compared to the “tree” stage. Growing into **adulthood** is the normal process of growth (1 Corinthians 13:11). Dr. Cloud writes:



*Becoming an adult is the process of moving out of a ‘one-up/one-down’ relationship and into a peer relationship to other adults...Becoming an adult is a process of gaining authority over our lives...Adults know what they believe, think through things for themselves, make decisions, do not depend on the approval of others for survival, and have an area or areas of real expertise.*

They don’t have to ask anyone’s permission to do the things adults are supposed to do, think or feel. Becoming an adult is recognizing our mutuality with every other adult. If God is our Father, then we are all siblings and because there is only one Parent, we don’t need to parent other adults or look for others to parent us (Matthew 23:7-10). In the book of Acts, the word “disciple” (learner) is paralleled by the term “brother” as the church matured. The “one another” verses confirm the idea of mutual adulthood. Being an adult means that we can lead, follow or just be a friend.

Because we are on equal footing with other adults, we can understand the role of authority. People who are over us are not better than us. We can willfully submit to proper authority without demeaning ourselves. Adulthood is when one looks to other adults for advice and input, but is still responsible for one’s own life. Just as Jesus became an authority in different aspects, we are to grow up and become an authority in exercising power, holding the offices He has given us, developing expertise, using earned influence, and submitting to others.

1. Signs of inability to achieve adulthood
  - a. Inordinate need for approval
  - b. Fear of disapproval
  - c. Guilt (still under “parental voice”)
  - d. Sexual struggles
  - e. Fear of failure
  - f. Need for permission and fear of making decisions
  - g. Loss of power (gives power to controlling person)
  - h. Can’t agree to disagree on insignificant issues
  - i. Superiority (one-upmanship)
  - j. Judging others without knowing all the facts of the situation.
  
2. Barriers to growing into adulthood
  - a. Distorted thinking about ourselves. “I’m less than others” “Ours is the only real ministry”
  - b. Distorted thinking about others. “They have no weaknesses”
  - c. Distorted thinking about God. “He wants me to defer to my authorities without questioning” “He doesn’t want me to disagree with my pastor even when he’s wrong”

These can be overcome by knowing and believing who you are as a Christian. It will also take work, steps of faith, prayer, relationship, and practice.

3. Learning to become Adults
  - a. Re-evaluate your beliefs.
  - b. Be willing to respectfully disagree with authority figures (pastor, supervisor). Be honest with others; listen to their opinions.
  - c. See parents/authority figures realistically (with strengths and weaknesses).
  - d. Make your own decisions. Don't give in to others' statement "you should," but rather listen, evaluate, act in what you believe God wants you to do.
  - e. Give yourself permission to be equal with your parents. Admire what they did well, change in the areas where they fell short.
  - f. Recognize and pursue the talents God has given you.
  - g. Engage in spiritual warfare and gain authority over evil.
  - h. Submit to others out of freedom (compliance is slavery).
  - i. Let go of ways you're trying to earn approval.
  - j. Appreciate mystery and the unknown. There may not be answers for everything. But God loves you; He is in control; He has a wonderful plan for your life; He is at work in your life and in others.
  - k. Love and appreciate people who are different.

☞ *What authority figures have hurt you? How? Have you forgiven them? Do you let any authority figures "parent" you? Are there any people you are afraid to disagree with? How have you let others think and decide for you? Are there any people you depend on for their approval or "permission?" Are there any authority figures you have trouble submitting to? Do you try to "one-up" anyone or do you let anyone "one-up" you?*

#### IV. Conclusion

We all struggle with all four issues (bonding, boundaries, bad and good, maturity). We all have broken relationships with God, others, and self. Relationship reconciliation is at the base of all healing. We don't want to just deal with our symptoms and try to become functioning human beings; rather we want to really love others and impart to others from a full reservoir filled by God. To see this happen, we need to be into God's Word, letting the Holy Spirit control us, and we need grace and truth through time from the body of Christ.

☞ *You probably have a good idea of what you need to trust God to develop in your life in the areas of bonding, boundaries, living with the good and bad, and adulthood. What can you do to prepare against possible future challenges in these areas? Who in God's family can help you in this? How can you be the loving and accepting "Body of Christ" to others struggling in these areas?*

## APPENDIX A

### A Word to Parents...

#### I. Bonding.

Everyone carries “baggage” (dysfunctional stuff, things that don't align with God's Word) into their marriage. Willingly or unwillingly, we inherit them from our parents. We will pass them on to our children, unless we recognize, renounce, and repent from them. As mentioned in the notes, the ability of children to trust and be vulnerable is injured when they are neglected, abandoned, beaten, abused, criticized, hated, or resented for existing.

#### II. Boundaries

Parents WILL get practice in setting boundaries with their children. It's important that the children's disagreements and disobedience not result in a withdrawal of love (even though this may be what the parent experienced as a child). Parents need to stay connected with the child even when they disobey or disagree, otherwise God's constant love would be misrepresented. Love should not be connected to behavior, or else these children will grow up fearing to set boundaries. As children express disagreeing feelings respond with, “You have a choice...” Parents also need to be careful not to be so over-controlling that their children get little or no experience in making mistakes. Another problem is when the parents cover for the children's mistakes or tantrums. If not dealt with, this can lead to jail, divorce, or other consequences later in life. When a boundary is clearly communicated to the child along with the consequences of crossing the boundary, parents must lovingly enforce them instead of constantly reminding the child. Discipline is an external boundary designed to develop internal boundaries in our children. It provides a structure of safety until the child has enough structure in his character to not need it. Good discipline always moves the child toward more internal structure and more responsibility. The work of boundary development in children is to prepare them for adulthood.

#### III. Sorting out the Good and Bad.

Some may have trouble graciously accepting others because they themselves may not have experienced gracious acceptance from significant others. Parents need to deal with their kid's failures like God does with us. Don't deny them or beat the child up but rather convict them of wrong (truth) and give love and compassion (grace).

#### IV. Adulthood and Authority

To help our children in this area, parents need to be gentle, warm, loving and firm. Holding the office of parent gives one authority to enforce consequences. As the child becomes an adolescence, there should be a shift from parental control to parental influence as the parent guides them and upholds the value of sex and gives proper guidelines and limits without being repressive. Our children shift from parental rules to freedom and obedience to the Spirit of God, a freedom not to indulge the flesh but to serve in love.