

Overcoming Abuse

- God Heals The Broken -

E.R. Bonds



Developed as a study course by Emmaus Correspondence School – St. Louis

Overcoming Abuse is a result of the teaching ministry of Randy Gruber at the Potosi Correctional Center Prison Fellowship Bible Study in Missouri. His students have produced this course to pass on what they have learned to good and faithful men who will in turn be able to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

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STUDENT INSTRUCTIONS

Abuse is a widespread problem in our society. *Overcoming Abuse* addresses the physically, spiritually and emotionally harmful acts that man commits against man. Even though some of the material may be difficult to read, we ask that you keep an open mind and understand that the vast majority of abusers were once themselves victimized. As you read each chapter, keep one point in mind, even though we are *all* broken and wounded people, through Jesus Christ we can *all* be healed—body, soul, and spirit.

God is always with us and He cares for us deeply. *“For he who touches you touches the apple of His eye”* Zechariah 2:8b.

Lessons You Will Study

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Course Components

This course has two parts: this study course and the exam booklet.

How to Study

This study has twelve chapters, and each chapter has its own exam. Begin by asking God to help you understand the material. Read the chapter through at least twice, once to get a general idea of its contents and then again, slowly, looking up any Bible references given.

Begin studying immediately, or if you are in a group, as soon as the group begins. We suggest that you keep a regular schedule by trying to complete at least one chapter per week.

You may use any Bible version. However, we suggest that you use the *New King James Version* if possible.

Exams

In the exam booklet there is one exam for each chapter (exam 1 covers chapter 1 of the course). Do not answer the questions by what you think or have always believed. The questions are designed to find out if you understand the material given in this course.

After you have completed each chapter, review the related exam and see how well you know the answers. If you find that you are having difficulty answering the questions, review the material until you think you can answer the questions. It is important that you read the Bible passages referenced as some questions may be based on Bible text.

How Your Exams Are Graded

Your instructor will mark any incorrectly answered questions. You will be referred back to the place in the course where the correct answer is to be found. After finishing this course with a passing average, you will be awarded a certificate.

If you enrolled in a class, submit your exam papers to the leader or secretary of the class who will send them for the entire group to the Correspondence School.

INTRODUCTION

“The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.” –Psalm 34:18

Everyone has felt the pain of abuse at some point in their lives. We are a fallen and broken people, and in our fallenness we abuse others and ourselves. When any type of abuse takes place, there is a loss that the victim suffers. That loss makes the victim feel unstable.

In many cases the trajectory of a person’s life will change dramatically because of the abuse he has endured. The victim is often left with a feeling of isolation, separation from God, the world and others. He may even believe that God has abandoned him, that He is no longer watching over him. But *“the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry”* Psalm 34:15.

Overcoming Abuse will help the reader to realize what Jesus has done on our behalf. He took our shame and made it possible for us to freely come to Him. Through Him the abuse victim no longer has to live in fear of the horrors that plagued his past. He can take rest in Christ, no longer being a victim or an aggressor.

In this book we will look at many forms of abuse including verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. We will learn about the damage that abuse causes to a person’s body, soul and spirit. We will also discover how to overcome this damage and become whole again through our Lord Jesus Christ.

With a broken heart, we can look up from our tragedies and failures to find that God is with us, ready to receive us, forgive us and begin the healing process that will be completed when we are resurrected and conformed to the image of His Son Jesus Christ!

LESSON ONE



We All Abuse

Key Scripture:

“Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” –Philippians 2:1-4

Wouldn't it be wonderful if we always uplifted one another in speech and in action? This is what God commands us to do. *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another”* John 13:34. Sadly, all too often, we miss the mark on this commandment. We wound people with our speech and with our actions. The old adage which says, “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me” is far from the truth. Words do hurt. Words can hinder, tear down or even destroy one's growth. Words can shatter a child's spirit, break up marriages, ruin families and end friendships.

Our actions can also have detrimental affects on those with whom we come in contact. People wound people. We do this because we are all broken in some way, and broken people injure others. However, that is not how we were fashioned. God created us to be a help to one another. *“Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith”* Galatians 6:10. But, we pervert God's creation with jealousy, pride, self interest and idolatry. Each time we inflict wounds on another with our speech or our actions, we further defile God's creation. With every malicious word spoken, with every hate filled slap, with every inappropriate touch and lustful thought, we dishonor God.

Fallen Man

We are a fallen race, broken and hurting. But before we can be healed and whole again, it is vital to understand that we are guilty, and we are ungodly. We are sinners who do sinful things. It is also important to acknowledge that we are absolutely helpless in our fallen state. Man has no strength to be what he knows he should be. Paul, being educated and disciplined in the Word of God, humbly made this declaration in Romans 7:15-20, *“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”*

The problem lies in our hearts. *“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies”* Matthew 15:19. Our hearts are evil beyond measure. *“The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?”* Jeremiah 17:9. This wickedness was inherited from our first parents Adam and Eve, the first fallen. *“By one man’s (Adam’s) disobedience many were made sinners”* Romans 5:19.

Did Adam and Eve have to fail? No. They had a choice, but sadly for them and for us, they made the wrong choice. They were given explicit instructions by God on what they could and could not do. They were not given an extensive list of instructions like the Israelites were given, not even ten commandments! Actually, it was an extremely small list of what they could not do. This list consisted of one thing only—not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Like us, they failed to obey the simplest of instructions. They could have easily taken sides with God and obeyed Him. Sadly, they made a choice to disobey God, a choice that God knew they would make even before He created them. When we make wrong choices, we suffer the consequences of those choices. Our first parents suffered terrible consequences for their wrong choice: pain, suffering, death and a perpetual state of fallenness, for them and for their descendants.

In our fallenness we are damaged. As a result, we damage others. This hurting continued with our first brothers Cain and Abel and has woven its ugliness throughout the millenniums. Cain’s abuse of Abel resulted in Abel’s

death. *“Now Cain talked with Abel his brother; and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him”* Genesis 4:8. Although abuse does not always result in physical death, each time a person is abused, hurt and pain result.

Changing Heart

We have zero ability to change our condition, that is, the wickedness in us that is the result of our fallenness. But, thankfully there is a way out of this sickness of the soul. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam, came and did for us what we could never do for ourselves. He gave us a way to exchange our hard, evil heart for a heart of flesh that loves and protects. God promised the house of Israel this new heart as a result of their rebirth. See Ezekiel 36:24-32. Today, under the New Covenant of God’s grace founded on the shedding of Christ’s blood, we who believe in Christ are given a renewed mind (heart) that is capable of pleasing God by serving one another in love. See 2 Corinthians 3:3 with Galatians 5:15. Paul could pray for the church of the Thessalonians, *“And may the Lord make you increase and abound in love to one another and to all, just as we do to you, so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints”* 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13. What a change is brought about by the grace of God acting in our lives!

If we keep our eyes on Jesus Christ, we will see ourselves and others as God sees us. As a result, we will not abuse others but, instead, show them love and kindness, breaking the cycle of abuse.

Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is the desire of the spirit of a man to please God as his Sovereign Master Who cannot look upon evil with the least allowance and to Whom all men everywhere must give an account, therefore never taking one step that is not ordered by His command.

One of the core problems of humanity is our lack of the fear (reverence) of the Lord. This is not the type of fear where you run and hide, pulling the covers over your head. This type of fear honors the Lord and is the proper attitude for all learning. *“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge,*

but fools despise wisdom and instruction” Proverbs 1:7. Without this fear of God, we cannot begin to comprehend His ways or His desires for us.

The children of Israel were instructed in Deuteronomy 4:10 to be trained in the Word of God, to teach the Word to their children, and, above all, to learn to fear the Lord. *“Gather the people to Me, and I will let them hear My words, that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.”* The Word of God obviously places a great importance on having a healthy fear of the Lord and training children to have knowledge of their accountability to God.

Think back to when you were a child. If you were anything like me, you were filled with mischief and naughtiness. I routinely teetered on the line that divided good and bad behavior. What often kept me from crossing that line was the fear that I had of my dad. I knew that once that invisible line was crossed I was in for a whole lot of trouble. Believe me, even as a kid, I did not want that kind of trouble. The fear that I had of my dad restrained me from doing things I knew I should not do. If we were wise enough as children to watch our behavior because we had a healthy fear of our earthly father, how much more prudent should we be as adults when it comes to having a healthy fear of our Heavenly Father, Who is the Creator of all? See 1 Peter 1:17 and Hebrews 12:9.

A healthy fear of the Lord keeps us from making terrible blunders. It keeps us from the darkness where we would otherwise live out the wickedness that dwells within us. *“By the fear of the LORD one departs from evil”* Proverbs 16:6b.

Blessings Come from Fearing God

The prophet Samuel reminded the children of Israel of the great blessings that stemmed from their fear of and obedience to God, *“Only fear the LORD, and serve Him in truth with all your heart; for consider what great things He has done for you”* 1 Samuel 12:24. He went on to warn them of what would happen if they did not fear the Lord but continue in their wickedness, *“But if you still do wickedly, you shall be swept away, both you and your king”* (v. 25).

In the days of the judges, time and time again we see the Israelites turning away from their God, not fearing Him and not teaching their children to obey His laws. Each time they turned away they were met with tragedy. Then, in their panic, they turned back to God, vowing to fear and obey Him

once again. God would send judges to deliver the Israelites and, after a time of peace (resting in Him), they would again turn away from God and end up in a disastrous situation all over again. This cycle went on for many years even after God gave them, at their request, kings to reign over them. Finally, God removed them from the land He had given them, allowing His chosen people to be captured by the Babylonians. When we refuse to fear God, we experience disastrous results.

In Psalm 25 King David pleaded with God for deliverance and forgiveness. In his plea he spoke of the prosperity that stems from those who fear God. *“Who is the man that fears the LORD? Him shall He teach in the way He chooses. He himself shall dwell in prosperity, and his descendants shall inherit the earth”* Psalm 25:12-13.

To our own harm, we often do not fear God; instead, we rely on self. But self will only disappoint and add to our brokenness. God wants us to seek Him and rely on Him, even when we do not understand His plan and we have been broken and abused. *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths”* Proverbs 3:5-6. Only He can heal the wounded and repair the injuries of the soul. See Jeremiah 30:12-17. It is essential that we seek God in every situation, keeping Him in our thoughts during times of joy as well as in times of tragedy. He is always with us. If we are willing to follow, He will guide us every step of the way and bring us out of the shame, despair and hopelessness of abuse.

The fear of the Lord enables man to deal humanely with man. In fact, if everyone feared the Lord, there would be no speech or action that would be harmful to another. There would be no abusive behavior that wounds the soul and tramples one’s dignity. In Job 31:13-14 we see that Job’s fear of the Lord caused him to deal graciously with his servants. *“If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant, when they complained against me, what then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how shall I answer Him?”* Job understood that he would be held accountable by God concerning his treatment of others, even his servants.

The fear of the Lord is a key quality for a ruler or a judge. *“The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spoke to me: ‘He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God’”* 2 Samuel 23:3. In 2 Chronicles 19:9 when Jehoshaphat appointed leaders and priests in Israel, he commanded them saying, *“Thus*

you shall act in the fear of the LORD, faithfully and with a loyal heart.” Isaiah’s prophecy describing the coming of our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ clearly illustrates the significance of godly fear. *“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD”* Isaiah 11:1-3a. If our leaders acted in godly fear, we would be living in a much different place.

The fear of the Lord is not a fear we should dread. Rather, it is a fear we should embrace and take pleasure in. This type of fear does not bring about a threatening atmosphere filled with anxiety and unease. The fear of the Lord brings joy, happiness and blessings. In Proverbs 31:10-11 King Lemuel talks about a virtuous wife, listing several blessings bestowed upon her that come from her reverential fear of God. *“Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.”* Verses 25 through 28 further state how joyful her life will be, *“Strength and honor are her clothing; she shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom, and on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.”* What a wonderful testimony! *“Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised”* (v. 30).

Finally, look at how King Solomon compares fearing the Lord with great treasure, *“Better is a little with the fear of the LORD, than great treasure with trouble”* Proverbs 15:16. In Proverbs 10:27 we read that *“The fear of the LORD prolongs days.”* King David, a man after God’s own heart, understood the blessings that come from fearing the Lord. *“Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who delights greatly in His commandments”* Psalm 112:1.

In summary, we see that we are a fallen race in Adam. As a result, we have all been abused, and, in turn, we abuse others. We hurt because our wounds are severe. We cannot heal ourselves. But God has done a work in Christ to reconcile us to Himself, giving us a new heart that understands life from His perspective and that fears Him for our good and the good of others. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold all things have become new”* 2 Corinthians 5:17. In Christ alone begins our journey of hope.

Overcoming Abuse

EXAM BOOKLET

AK '16 D-OA

STUDENT NAME (PLEASE PRINT)

ADDRESS

CITY, STATE, ZIP

COURSE GRADE: _____

INSTRUCTOR



Exam developed by Emmaus Correspondence School – St. Louis

CHAPTER 1 EXAM

WE ALL ABUSE

EXAM GRADE

Before starting this exam, write your name and address on the front of this Exam Booklet.

Directions: Read each question carefully and write the letter of the correct answer in the blank space on the right. Use the separate answer sheet if provided.

1. What did God command us to do according to John 13:34? _____
 A. study the Word of God
 B. love one another
 C. keep the Sabbath
 D. give freely to the poor
2. How do we pervert God's creation? Through _____
 A. jealousy
 B. pride
 C. self interest
 D. all of the above
3. In our fallenness _____
 A. we honor God
 B. go to church regularly
 C. make good choices
 D. we damage ourselves and others
4. According to the author, what is one of the core problems of humanity? _____
 A. lack of fear of the Lord
 B. lack of honor
 C. lack of joy
 D. lack of pride
5. Deuteronomy 4:10 instructed the children of Israel to _____
 A. be trained in the Word of God
 B. teach the Word of God to their children
 C. learn to fear the Lord
 D. all of the above

- 6. What comes from fearing God?
 - A. anger
 - B. loss of self
 - C. curses
 - D. blessings_____

- 7. Whenever the Israelites turned away from the Lord, they were met with
 - A. prejudice
 - B. tragedy
 - C. famine
 - D. none of the above_____

- 8. In Psalm 25, King David pleaded with God for
 - A. deliverance and forgiveness
 - B. riches
 - C. fame
 - D. all of the above_____

- 9. If we rely on self and not God, we will _____.
 - A. become wiser
 - B. disappoint
 - C. add to our brokenness
 - D. both B and C_____

- 10. How does God heal us?
 - A. through retribution
 - B. by allowing us to heal ourselves
 - C. through seeking counseling
 - D. through Jesus' work to reconcile us to Himself_____

WHAT DO YOU SAY?

Do you have a fear of the Lord? Why or why not?
