

Prestonwood Connection #11

Love's Obstacles: Part 2

1 Corinthians 13:4

Wednesday, November 13, 2002 • Dr. David McKinley

[Dr. McKinley, message, *Love's Obstacles: Part 2*] <side 1 @ 88>

Glad to have you here man. Wasn't that great? I'm telling you, who need Kenny "G" when you got Johnny "C" right? We've got a... John Carlson and God has given him a great gift and a..., you know, I'm excited. You know the Bible talks about there bein trumpets in heaven but I'm kinda excited there might be some saxophones up there and a little bit of jazz and I'm a... excited about that because God has used this talent and this gift and it really has been amazing for me today to get to meet John because it's been a number of years that a... I have listened to the *Prelude* CD and have used that as sort of background a... music in my office and my study just in the course of the day and a..., so it's been a real special treat to get to meet him and then a... Rick did you say that we have some of those available tonight? Out in the atrium? Okay at the ticket booth, out in the atrium. So if you happen to wanna pick up some of that music tonight a... you can do so. John we do pray this will be a great transition for you as you a... move here to the Dallas/Fort Worth area and a... you will find that a... it is a great place to live. I know you've been livin in a great place in Chicago, it's one of my favorite cities in America, but we're really glad to have you here and I hope this won't be your last time to come to Prestonwood, that's for sure, so anyway. Let's just pause a moment and pray together before we open God's Word and begin a time of study tonight.

Father I am so thankful for the way that You use music, the gift of music and the gifts that You give in the body of Christ to minister that music to us, whether it be through the voice or through an instrument a... it is amazing how that a... You touch our hearts in this way. I think tonight about all of those who are in our choir and our orchestra here who are just behind us and who are preparing and rehearsing and planning for, Lord, the Dallas Christmas Festival. And I really do ask You that more than allowing us to be a part of a production that Lord You will do a work in the lives of Your people and that, that work will just spill out through our hearts and to the community that will come and will gather and I pray Lord that a... many, many people will come to know Jesus. As we sit in this auditorium tonight this is a sacred place in our hearts because we know that this is a place of decision, it's a place where people come to know Christ and as we're here Lord, we're just really asking that You would move and work up and down these aisles and across these pews and Father that what we see and what we hear would change lives in the days to come. And so Father thank You for the ministry of Your Spirit through music, the ministry of Your Spirit through witness and testimony and Lord most of all thank You for the ministry of Your Spirit in the Word. And so

tonight as we take the Bible and as we open it we pray that You will use it in a very dynamic fashion in our lives. Father we pray we'd be changed tonight in Jesus name. Amen.

Well, I a... know several times tonight a... in my interactions with people I've simply ask the question, "How your day been." And, and I would have to say that a... the water level is above average for most people. Most people today have said, "I've had a good day. I've had a great day." And I think a lot of it's had to do with the weather and the sunshine and it's just been really enjoyable to be alive these last few days and just to enjoy the beauty of this time of year, the fall color and, and a... the wonderful temperatures and a... I trust that you have been able to enjoy this day. I've had a great day.

I heard about a little boy who was a... standing in the kitchen lookin at his mom and he looked at her and he just said, "Mom" he said, "I have had a great day." And she said, "Well, sweetheart that's wonderful." And then without any further prompting on her part he said, "Mommy, I've been playing postman." And she said, "Well, that's great honey." He said, "Yeah, I put a letter in every mailbox on our street." And she said, "Well, that's good." She said, "Honey, where did you get those letters?" He said, "I found them wrapped up in a pink ribbon in your top drawer in your dresser." Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha. Now needless to say whatever good day mom was having, it was over as soon as she heard and realized that her precious little boy had taken the love letters of her life and distributed them there in the neighborhood. And it's amazing that no matter how good your day can be you can have a single event that can take a great day and can take you to misery in life. In fact all of us struggle to find the balance on a daily basis between having days that are great days and having our hearts grounded and our emotions in a dive because of negative things that can happen in the course of a day.

But we've been talking in here in a study on the subject of love, about what God's love looks like when it touches our lives. But not only have we been talking about that love and the importance of that love and what it means to love God and then, then ultimately to love others. The last couple of weeks we've been talking about the obstacles to love and the things that get in the way, the things that become impediments, the, the things that become tripping points, if you will, in our lives to keep us from loving the way that God intended for us to love. And so what we've been doing is we've been trying to zero in our attention on looking at the chapter about love in the Bible, 1st Corinthians 13 and then from that chapter trying to understand the application of what it means to love the way that God intends for us to love, to experience love in life and to be a channel in the lives of others.

And so if you have your Bible I do want you to open it to 1st Corinthians 13 because tonight we're gonna continue to look at overcoming the obstacles of love and I want us to identify specifically one of those significant obstacles that every person in this place tonight deals with on a regular and a repeat basis. 1st Corinthians 13, verse 1:

¹Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels but have not love, I have become a sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. ²And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am...

What?

...nothing. ³And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love it profits me nothing.

LIFE — LOVE = 0

Life minus love equals nothing. That's what it says. Life minus love equals nothing and so therefore the Bible talks to us about love and this is what it says, it says:

⁴Love suffers long and is kind; does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not...

What does it say?

...provoked...

Somebody else have another translation? Not easily angered, it's not provoked, it's not easily angered and then it goes on to say it:

...it thinks no evil.

And then it says it:

⁶rejoices not in iniquity but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Now last week we focused specifically on two aspects of love that are points of injury and obstacle in life and that is the issue of ego and the issue of envy. And we looked at those 4 phrases together there about love not envying, not parading itself, not being puffed up, not acting rudely. But tonight we look at what the Bible says when it says love is not provoked and thinks no evil or in some translations say:

...love is not easily angered...

Confession time! How many of you have been angry at least once in your life? How many of you have been angry this week since that wonderful worship service on Sunday, huh? Okay thank you, thank you for being honest. How many are sitting next to the person you've been angry at this week, ha, ha Jack. Ha, all right, thank you, thanks for that confession on the top row up there I see that hand. We'll pray for you later, I saw that, so we'll a... make an appointment. But a..., but the reality is, is that

anger is a real and regular part of life. In fact I personally believe that it is impossible to love without anger because in many ways true love and anger are on the same continuum of emotion. To every really love and care and value someone or something is to ultimately feel negatively about anything that would injure destroy or devalue that person thing or relationship in your life. And so ultimately every single person in this building tonight needs to deal with the issue of anger and anger is one of the primary obstacles of love and the Bible makes it clear here, that love, God's love is not easily angered or provoked and that it does not think evil. And yet anger, anger is such a normal and such a natural part of who I am and of what I am in life.

Now tonight if you wanna take some notes because it probably would be note worthy to a... take down some thoughts on the subject of anger. If you'll go to the back page, since we don't have the screens I tried to give you a little note page there tonight that you could use and what I wanna do is I wanna simply take time to think about being provoked and thinking evil and dealing with anger and I wanna ask you to simply write down several concepts, several a... processes that we need to think through tonight that will help us to deal with this obstacle in the area of love as it relates to the subject of anger. And you've gonna find that there are 3 key words that are there and the first word is the word **IDENTIFY**. And so if the Bible tells us that we are not to be easily provoked and to think no evil, that anger is not to be a part of my life if my heart is full of love then the first thing that I have to do is I have to identify anger as an injurious agent in my relationship with God and with others. I have to identify anger as an injurious agent in my relationship with God and my relationship with others. Now, obviously this whole study that we've been embarking upon began with the first commandment, which is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all you mind, with all your strength and then to love your neighbor as yourself. But anger when it is present in my life, anger can be injurious in my relationship with God. I don't know how many people would be honest in this room tonight but I think if we were to get gut level honest and we've known the Lord for any ser...significant time in life, that many of would have to confess that there have been times that we have been put out with God. Now you can't win that argument. You've many times heard, your arms are to short to box with God. You know, you're not gonna hurt Him. But the reality is, is that people get mad at God and not only do they get mad at God but they get mad at one another. We all know that reality and therefore I have to identify that if I am going to look for love in all the right places then in my love for God and in becoming a channel of love for others then I've got to deal with this issue that is inside of me, this tendency, this normalcy if you will, to give way to an attitude of anger. Now we all like to justify anger in life. We all like to talk about it as though it's a part of a temperamental quality or a family fault or it's a part of our cultural heritage. And yet so many times we fail to take into account the serious impact and injury that does come to our relationships because of anger and so we have to deal with anger. Now I realize that some of you are feeling like a bull's eye in my sight by me saying the term anger because you know that everybody that knows you,

knows you to be a person who expresses anger openly and frequently and you don't have to raise your hand right now, okay? But there are others of you sitting here tonight saying, you know, I, I'm really, this isn't a big problem for me, I really don't have anger problems in my life. Yes you do. The reality is, is that we all have a problem with anger. The question is, how do we deal with our anger and how do we express our anger in life? Because I have found that there are 4 basic expression of anger that come forth through our lives in life. Now number one is the guy or the gal that I call **THE GAS CAN**, hum, the gas can. All you gotta do is get a spark near em and boooooommm...they blow up. It's incredible, some people are like gas cans and all you have to do is to give them just a little bit of ignition, just a little bit of a spark and I promise you everybody is gonna know because they are combustible, they blow up, they burn off. Suddenly you know and you hear and you see, we've got a problem and the gas can blows up and that is one kind of anger. And of course in the process many other people feel the impact of the explosion.

But there's another way in which people deal with anger and some of you are not gas cans but let me tell you, we've got some of these sitting in here tonight and that is you are **A CROCK POT**. I didn't say a crackpot, I said a crock pot. You know what a crock pot is don't you? It's one of those little things that you put there on the counter and you turn it on and it's kinda hard to even see that it's heating up and it just sits there and it just simmers and it boils and it simmers and it boils and ultimately it cooks everything into a very fine soupy substance. [pause] It's just not like the gas can. It's not immediate. It's not sudden, but it's real and it's regular and it's intense and some people are like the gas can but other people are like the crock pot and the anger is just as real in their life. But what happens is, it's just a slow simmer.

And then there are some people who are not only like the gas can and like the crock pot but there are some that are like **THE IRON SKILLET**. Hum, now what do you know about the iron skillet? Well, most of the time they're black, their just kinda black and dark and you can't whether they're hot or cold. You can't tell a whole lot about em, but the reality is, is that if you touch em you'll realize that they're hot and you'll get burned. And there are a certain group of people in this room that you're not a gas can and you're not a crock pot but you're an iron skillet and when ever you are dealing with something that you dislike in life you just begin to heat up but nobody can see it, nobody can tell it but everything in your world goes black, everything about you is, is just sort of depressive and internalized and it's there in your skin as though it were and everything about your life is just black and hot and down.

And then there are people that are like **THE TRASH CAN**. Heh! The trashcan, they just got a whole bunch of IOU's wadded up and deposited down inside of em. Every time somebody does somein they just write an IOU and they put it in the can, and they will. Someday they'll find a way to get even. It may be through sarcasm. It may be through a cutting remark. It may be through something that they do. But they're just simply walking around with IOU's and they manipulate all of life to try to be able to cash in

the charges, the trash that they're burying down inside. Now I don't know which kind you may be tonight, but the reality is, is it really doesn't matter, because whether you are a gas can, or a crock pot, or an iron skillet or a trashcan anger is destructive in your life and in my life.

In fact, for this very reason the Bible gives us some warning labels about anger. If you'll look in the book of Proverbs chapter 14 and verse 16 you'll read these words.

¹⁶A wise man fears and departs from evil, But a fool rages and is self-confident. ¹⁷He who is quick-tempered acts foolishly, And a man of wicked intentions is hated.

The Bible gives us a warning about the impact of anger in life. Again in the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 7 and verse 9, the Bible says:

Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, For anger rests in the bosom of fools.

Gonna be a fool? The most foolish thing you can do with your life is either to let your anger go unbridled or to live with anger that is denied, that will make you a fool. And then in the book of Ephesians chapter 4, in verse 26 the Bible says:

"Be angry,..."

Did you know that's in the Bible? Some of you oughta to memorize that verse.

"Be angry, and do not sin."...

Heh!

"Be angry and do not sin."...

Ephesians 4 and do...verse 26:

...do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

And the Bible does say that there are some things that oughta make you angry. In fact this very passage that we're in, in 1st Corinthians says there:

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth;

To love what is right and good and pure is to hate what is wrong and evil and destructive and there are some things that ought to make you mad. And don't ever get the idea that being a Christian simply means, Hummmmmmmmmmm... [pause] because there is a right kind of an anger. Heh, Martin Luther used to say, he didn't do anything well until he was angry and once he was angry he said it was incredible what he could do for God

and he was serious. Because in his day, in his hour, in his ministry he was standing in opposition of many who were perverting the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So the Bible tells us to be angry. There is an anger that is needed, that is necessary, that is a part of love but:

"...sin not." and do not let the sun go down on your wrath.

You see the Bible says that there are sins of disposition. We know about the sins of dissipation, sins of dissipation are the drunkenness and the immorality and the things that we do with our body. But the sins of disposition are those attitudes that are being harbored inside of our heart, that ultimately are injurious and are destructive in our relationships with others. So anger does much to injure my life and to hinder my ability to be effective in loving others. For this reason Jesus came and taught us that we were to learn what it meant to turn the other cheek. Do you remember that Jesus taught that in the Sermon On The Mount? Turn the other cheek! I understand that one day Ruth Graham walked in the house and her daughter Ann was sitting with Franklin and she was just whapping on one side and the other and back and forth and back and forth and she said, "Ann what are you doin?" And she said, "I'm teaching Franklin to turn the other cheek." Heh, well, the reality is, is that Jesus has called us to deal with the issue of anger. Ultimately Jesus has said that you and I are responsible for our emotional behavior and well-being. For this very reason He told us that we're not to look at the speck in our brothers eye until we deal with the beam that is in our own eye. And we are so prone to going around and letting the anger either explode or the anger internalize that has me looking at the, at the, at the specks in others eyes and overlooking the beam that is in my eye. The Bible makes much of the fact that I am 100 res...% responsible for my emotion, beginning with anger and I have to deal with it because it injures and destroys relationships. How many churches have been divided? How many families have been destroyed in divorce? How many lives have ultimately been damaged because of the injurious agent of anger? It doesn't matter how you express it, it doesn't matter how you keep it. The reality is, is that love is not easily provoked, is not easily angered and thinks no evil.

So that takes me to the second thing that I want you to see tonight and that is not only that we ultimately need to begin our study tonight by identifying anger as an injurious agent in my relationship with God and with others. But I need to **INTERPRET** the cause of anger in my life experience. The Bible says that anger is often in two forms; one, provoked, I'm provoked by something, something that happens or doesn't happen in life and the Bible is trying to give me the balance here that love is not easily or quickly provoked in anger. Now we all know that there are people that kinda live in the set off mode and the reality is, is that the circumstances of their life are not the cause of their anger, their anger is what you see in all the circumstances of life. And so I need to ask myself the question, "What is it that causes me, instead of loving others, to be provoked by others?" And then to flip the coin, on the other side, the Bible says that, that love does not think evil, that is that true love is not like a calculator going around and saying, "Okay,

there's one and there's another." And th...and just keeping score and keeping a record. If I'm record keeping in my life, in my marriage, with my children, with my friends there's something seriously wrong with the quality of love in my heart and I'm ultimately gonna be a destructive person rather than a constructive person in that relationship. And so the Bible clearing indicates here that, that anger is something that obstructs my love so I have to ask the question what causes anger in me? What do you think it is? Well, some people say, well I guess it's just that I'm angry on the inside. Well, that's true but you know anger is really more of a symptom than it actually is a cause; it's more of a symptom than it is a cause. It's a sin, don't get me wrong. But what is it that so often causes anger in my life? Well I believe there's several things that cause anger in our lives and I simple would encourage you to take a moment and to write them down. Number one, one of the primary things that brings about anger in me is **HURT**, it's hurt. When I am hurt I get mad. It's true physically, it's true emotionally. Think about it physically. Soon you'll be putting up Christmas decorations, you'll have to tack those little lights up or maybe a wreath up and you've got that hammer in your hand and you're tackin away, but because you don't do this all the time suddenly whammm, you hit your finger, what do you think when you hit your finger? Hmmm? [pause for slight congregation laughter] don't confess it. [pause for more slight laughter] What do you feel when you hit your finger? Let's be honest, it hurts, but it hurts in a way that I GET MAD! I intensify on the inside and when I get hurt physically there's something that causes me to boil up and build up on the inside and I don't care who you are everyone of us deals with the reality that hurt makes us mad. But we may have learned how to use good Christian terms like, "fiddle sticks" [pause for more slight laughter] "Praise the Lord" [pause for congregation laughter] but you know what you're thinkin inside don't you, huh? I mean the reality is, is that when you hurt physically something erupts inside of you. And when I hurt emotionally something builds up and erupts inside of me. One of the primary reasons that people live with anger whether it's the combustible kind or the simmering kind, is the reality is that they've been hurt and hurt will perpetuate the hurt through my life because of the instrument of anger. Anger can be so destructive and people who are always easily provoked and who are always thinking evil many times, underneath it all are people who have been hurt and that hurt goes on in cycle after cycle after cycle. Studies have been done to show that many people live angrily ever after a divorce. In fact estimates are that as many as one third of all people who get divorced are still mad 10 years later with greater intensity than ever before because of the injury and the hurt and the pain. Now please hear me, I'm not saying that it doesn't hurt. It does hurt and it's a tragedy what happens in so may people's lives that hurt when it is unchecked and when it is undealt with in my life ultimately results in the out flow of my life becoming angry and I live a life that's provoked and I live a life that thinks evil.

There's another that causes anger in my live and that's not only hurt but it's **FRUSTRATION**. When I am tense, when things aren't going right, when I feel boxed in and shut down frustration can cause me to be angry. How many of you have ever just had a moment where you pulled into a gas station and

you whopped in your credit card and you're tryin to get gas and you're in a hurry, suddenly you realize it says insert credit card again and then you do it again and you go through all the processes do you want a receipt, do you want a car wash, do you want this, do you want that. No, no, no [pause for slight congregation laughter] I just want gas! [pause for congregation laughter] Some of you may have been watching me Monday morning. [pause for more laughter] I'm telling you it ticks me off. [pause for more laughter] Excuse me, in the King James, it tickith me off. [pause for more laughter] Heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh, heh but the reality is, is that when I'm frustrated I get angry. It's amazing how tension and temper come together in my life and many times when I am living with unresolved frustration in my life my heart can become a seedbed for anger and that anger will allow me to be quickly provoked and to continually think evil. And so I have to understant that, that many times frustration is the cause of anger in my life.

And then there's another thing that brings anger in my life. Not only hurt and frustration but **INSECURITY**, when I don't feel confident when I don't feel secure. You know the Bible says:

...Perfect love casts out fear...

But when I'm not secure in the love of God in my life I can't love others because everything becomes threatening to me. I'm constantly dealing with issues of security and confidence and ultimately issues of rejection. Do you remember what happened in the Old Testament between Cain and Abel? Sure we've been studying Genesis and both of the boys brought their offerings to God and God accepted the one and rejected the other and what happened to Cain? The Bible says he became angry, he became so angry that he killed his brother. You see it's amazing what happens in my heart and in my life when I allow insecurity to go unchecked and to live without the security of God in my life and in my heart. Gary Smalley a wonderful Christian writer has said this, he said:

"Each of us in our selfishness, tend to expect others, things, or circumstances to bring us the level of satisfaction from life we believe we deserve, expecting God's creation to meet our deepest needs and to bring us a satisfying life is the basis for developing an angry heart. When our expectations are not fulfilled hundreds of times a year we become frustrated and we become hurt over the lack of being fulfilled. Our hearts fill with hundreds of small embers of anger. Each unforgiven ember of hurt of frustration to build into a lava flow of anger. These embers of unforgiveness are the main obstacle that prevent us from knowing the Lord as He desires, they keep us from experiencing His love and Spirit for a life of lasting fulfillment."

You see when hurt and frustration and insecurity th...it...shows itself in rejection is present in my life then ultimately I am going to be a person who is not able to love but who faces the obstacle of love when anger is in my heart and so therefore it is so very important that I understand the significance not only of identifying anger as being something destructive

and interpreting the causes of my anger. Stop and ask yourself the question, "Why am I angry?" Have you ever thought about how many times anger doesn't really give you, when it is expressed, the result that you want? Have you ever noticed how many times you actually feel bad about getting angry rather than feeling good about getting angry? Oh I don't mean that you don't feel good for a moment. It feels great, telling somebody off, ohhh... that's unbelievable, till the Holy Spirit gets a hold of your heart [pause] and then, then everything changes. You see I have to realize that when I'm angry that ultimately I have to ask myself some questions about my anger and about dealing with my anger. Three questions that I would suggest that you ask, if I can find em here, here they are.

Number one, **WHY AM I ANGRY?** When I get angry ask myself am I hurt, do I feel insecure or rejected am I frustrated? Deal with the issue of what's wrong with you. Because if you'll deal with what's wrong with you then you'll be able to deal with the event and the people in your life.

Number two, ask yourself **WHAT DO I REALLY WANT?** What do I really want as a result of my interaction, my conflict, whatever it may be with someone else?

And then ask yourself the question, **HOW AM I GONNA GET IT?** And is getting angry and spewing and spitting and foaming and steaming and stewing gonna get me that result or is there another way?

Well, that brings me to the last thing that I want you to see tonight and that is that we need to **INTERRUPT** anger with God's love and forgiveness. Everyone of us needs to recognize the obstacle of ruv...of love being anger but we need to interrupt the impact and the process of anger in life the tendency to be provoked and to think evil and to do that by ultimately addressing God's love and forgiveness in my life. In Romans 12, verse 21 the Bible says:

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

And God wants to take away the negative obstacles of love and wants to use love to bring healing and strength and cleansing in my life and the secret to that is bathing my heart in His forgiveness in my life. Corrie Ten Boom who suffered tremendous injury in a concentration camp and who ultimately lost members of her family during World War II said this:

"One thing worse than this prison camp on the outside it is being a prisoner of hate in the heart."

As bad as it is to be in a prison, as awful as it is to be mistreated, as hard as it is to feel the injury of pain and rejection and hurt and frustration in your life, there's something much greater and that is becoming a prisoner of the anger in you and because every time I feel brokenness in my life I can soon turn to bitterness and that bitterness will just increase the brokenness, just like jagged edges turning over inside of me. It's only when I interrupt that bitterness and brokenness

with forgiveness that forgiveness begins to bring healing, solace and peace in my heart and therefore that means I need to stay very close to the one who is the source of forgiveness. Am I gonna get injured in life? Yes, I am. Am I gonna be frustrated in life? Yes I am. Am I going to deal with the issues of rejection and insecurity in my life? Yes, but the reality is, is I need to get close to the One who covers that with His love and just for the sake of time I'm gonna bring this all to a close tonight because I want us to have a season of prayer. But I wanna end by going over to Psalm 103 and I just want you to hear and to reflect on what the Bible tells us about the love of God because the way that I interrupt the anger of my life is through God's love and His forgiveness and here we read of the wonder of His love for us. The psalmist begins with praise. It sound like he's havin a good day.

¹*Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name!*
²*Bless the Lord, O my soul, And forget not all His benefits:* ³*Who forgives your iniquities, Who heals your diseases,* ⁴*Who redeems your life from destruction, Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,* ⁵*Who satisfies your mouth with good things, So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

Then the Bible says in verse 8:

⁸*The Lord is merciful and gracious, Slow to anger,...*

Not easily provoked.

...and abounding in mercy. ⁹*He will not always strive with us, Nor will He keep His anger forever.* ¹⁰*He has not dealt with us according to our sins,...*

Thinkith no evil.

He has not punished us according to our iniquities. ¹¹*As high as the heavens are above the earth so great is His mercy toward those who fee...fear Him;* ¹²*and as far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us.*

Ladies and gentlemen, God loves you, God forgives you and God wants to heal you through His mercy and love and forgiveness so that you in turn might be able to extend mercy and love and forgiveness, not bound up by anger, not hostage to hate, not imprison to bitterness but that your life and my life would daily be set free to enjoy the benefit of His mercy and His love day by day.

Father tonight I thank You for just this simple time of reflection and Bible Study and I thank You Lord for the way that it a... certainly touches and applies to each of our lives. I pray that You'd use Your Word as a mirror tonight to help us to examine the condition of our hearts and even more the behavior of our lives and our relationships. And Father I pray You'd use tonight to help us to move toward healing and wholeness and health by dealing with the obstacle of anger, not living set off, being

provoked, not living built up, thinking evil but Lord living in freedom and security in Christ. So Father I pray that You would help us to embrace this tonight and Lord ultimately to have victory in our life. And Lord I pray that as we enter into these moments together of prayer that You would let this be a time of healing, that You would let it be a time of renewal, that You would let it be a time of hope as we share it together in Jesus name.