

# HIDING FROM REALITY

[They are] always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.  
—2 TIMOTHY 3:7

[Read chapter 6, stopping at the heading "Self-Preservation."]

I'M OFTEN ASKED BY PEOPLE HOW TO KNOW WHEN IT IS TIME TO leave a church or a ministry team. In turn, I ask them, "Who sent you to your present church?"

Most people respond, "God did." I then explain that if God sent them there, it will not be time to leave until God releases them. When God does instruct you to leave, you will go out with peace, no matter the condition of the ministry (Isa. 55:12).

Describe a time when God released you from a church and allowed you to maintain peaceful relationships since you left.

At our previous church we left in peace. The doors closed due to Covid and it was time to move on.

In this book I have described the difference between *teknon* ("babies or immature sons") and *huioi* ("mature sons"). Romans 8:14 speaks of sons [huioi] of God." How does God mature us as His children? In order to understand the process of spiritual maturity we can observe the perfect example of the mature Son of God—Jesus Christ.

Offense blocks spiritual growth, but suffering and obedience take us to a deeper relationship with the Lord and with others.

pass matured through obedience and suffering.

How are you learning about suffering and obedience right now in the trials in which you find yourself? How are you growing in your attitudes, thoughts, and emotions so as to avoid taking up an offense against the Lord when you face suffering or are required to fulfill obedience?

I'm learning because suffering and obedience are my friends. I'm learning to keep pressing forward and I'm growing in my ability to get closer to God! I'm growing in my ability to forgive my husband for not going with me. I have to suppress my feelings to avoid taking up offense.

We need to learn that offense blocks spiritual growth, but suffering and obedience take us to a deeper relationship with the Lord and with others.

Complete the following sentences:

When I suffer, I respond with prayer and reading my word. I cry, but I give it all to God.

When I must obey, my attitude is keep quiet and submit.

## WRITE A PRAYER...

Surrendering all in obedience to God and offering yourself as a vessel willing to suffer for Christ.

Lord, I surrender all in obedience to you. I give you my emotions, desires, wants and dreams. I just want to be obedient to you and offer myself as a vessel willing to suffer for Christ. I no longer live, but Christ lives through me.

# SELF-PRESERVATION

For the battle is the Lord's, and He will give you into our hands.  
—1 SAMUEL 17:47

Read the remainder of chapter 6, beginning with the heading "Self-Preservation."

**A** COMMON EXCUSE FOR SELF-PRESERVATION THROUGH DISORDERED self-protection. It keeps you from seeing your own character flaws because the blame is deferred to another. You never have to face your immaturity or your sin because you see only the faults of the offender. Therefore God's desire to develop character in you through opposition is thwarted. The offended person will avoid the source of the offense and eventually flee, becoming a spiritual vagabond. The Bible has much to say about judging and blaming others.

Read the following verses and jot down what they say to you about judging and blaming others.

Matthew 7:1-5 "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be judged as you treat others. The standard by which you will be judged, that which you stand by which you will judge, is the same when you have a log in your own eye."  
Matthew 5:21-26 You must not murder, but if you are even angry with someone you are subject to judgment. If you call someone a fool you are in danger of being brought to court of hell. If you have something against someone be reconciled with them.

Like 6:36-37  
Do not condemn, don't judge, don't condemn.

Forgive others,

Romans 2:1-2

You think you can condemn people!  
You have no excuse! When you accuse others you are condemning yourself. And will punish those who do these things.

Romans 12:17-21

Never pay back, do things so that everyone knows you are honorable. Do it for the peace. Never take revenge. If your enemies are hungry, drink, thirsty, feel them and give them. Don't let your evil conquer you.

Romans 14:10-13

Why do you condemn? Who look down? We will be judged! We will give an account. Stop condemning! Live in a way that will not cause others to stumble.

James 4:11-12

Don't speak evil! If you talk about others you talk a bad word. God is judge, we obey the law. God is judge, we have no right to judge others.

Jesus said in John 20:23, "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

Love forgets wrongs so that there is hope for the future.

We preserve the sins of other people when we pick up an offense and harbor resentment. The key is to refuse to run from problems, deal with an offense will not free us from the problem. The root of the problem remains untouched. God's plan often causes us to face hurts and attitudes we don't want to face. The offenses from which we are tempted to run will bring strength to our lives.

Remember: Love forgets wrongs so that there is hope for the future. If we have truly overcome an offense, we will earnestly seek to make peace. The time may not be right immediately, but in our hearts we will watch for an opportunity for restoration.

WRITE A PRAYER...

Asking for God's help to face offenses and not run from them.

Lord, help me face offenses! I want to make peace! Help me not run from them!

THE SURE FOUNDATION

Therefore thus says the Lord God: "Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, a tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; whoever believes will not act hastily." —ISAIAH 28:16

[Read chapter 7, stopping at the heading "No Other Option."]

WHOMEVER BELIEVES WILL NOT ACT HASTILY. A PERSON WHO acts hastily is an unstable person because his actions are not properly founded. This person is easily moved and swayed by the storms of persecutions and trials.

The only sure foundation in the midst of persecution and trials is the Word of God. When I preach, I have often admonished congregations and individuals to listen for God's voice within my voice. When we listen to an anointed minister speak, or as we read a book, we should look for the words or phrases that explode in our spirit. This is the word God is revealing to us. It conveys light and spiritual understanding.

The psalmist said, "The entrance of Your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple" (Ps. 119:130). It is the entrance of His Word into our hearts, not minds, that illuminates and clarifies.

How does the Word illuminate your life weekly? Check  each of the following ways you hear God's voice for your life.

- Bible study
- Bible reading
- Singing Scripture
- Preaching
- Teaching
- Reading Christian books
- Listening to Scripture choruses
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

What God reveals by His Spirit cannot be taken from us. We root our decisions in His Word. Without a foundation in His Word, we

will be easily offended by unexpected trials and tribulations. When God's Word is not rooted in us, we may receive it with gladness at first but later become offended (Mark 4:16-17).

Without a foundation in His Word, we will be easily offended by unexpected trials and tribulations.

When you hear a word from God that contradicts a feeling, thought, or behavior what is your immediate response? Prioritize from most often (1), to least often (7).

- 7 I get angry.
- 7 I am confused.
- 7 I feel hurt.
- 7 I repent.
- 7 I rejoice in learning what God is saying.
- 7 I get offended.
- 7 I blame others or God.
- Other

Being rooted in God's Word and illuminated by His Spirit will enable us to hear truth from God and from others without becoming offended.

WRITE A PRAYER...

Thanking God for His Word and for the many ways to illuminate it for your life.

God, thank you for your word! It helps us deal with our tongue offense!  
 Thank you because you shed light in areas of my life that used to be enlightened!

YOU HAVE NO OTHER OPTION THAN...

Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.  
 —1 PETER 2:4-5

[Read the remainder of chapter 7, beginning with the heading "No Other Option."]

THE REVEALED WORD OF GOD IS THE SOLID ROCK ON WHICH WE are to build our lives and ministries. Its commands and laws are not optional; they are mandatory. Just because a command or law in the Word might be offensive, we do not have the options of offense and disobedience. The only option we have is to obey.

Describe a time in your life when you took offense at the Word and did not obey. What were the consequences?

Well, for many years I took offense to women submit to your husbands, I did not obey but my name was a warzone!

In the midst of trials and pressures, we find ourselves, like Peter, becoming as stones—little rocks being built into spiritual houses. Peter (*Petra*) is a rock, a stone confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. Trials and testings locate a person. In other words, they determine your spiritual position. They reveal the true condition of your heart.

The Bible refers to a house built on the sand (Matt. 7:26-27). Such a house may be five stories tall and decorated beautifully. As long as the sun is shining, the house looks like a bulwark of strength and beauty. Next to that house may be a plain, single-story house that is almost unnoticeable and unattractive in comparison to the beautiful edifice next to it. But it is built on something you can't see—rock.

Trials and testings locate a person. In other words, they determine your spiritual position.

As long as no storms strike, the five-story house looks much nicer. But when it encounters a severe storm, the five-story house will collapse in ruins. Christians are living stones whose houses are built on the rock of Jesus Christ. When storms come, they do not run, take offense, or blame others. Rather, in the storms of life, they stand firm.

Have you attempted to build a house on the sandy foundations of this world's system? Check  any of the worldly foundations listed below that you have been tempted to use. Briefly describe the results:

- Money: I was always chasing after.
- Success: \_\_\_\_\_
- Power: \_\_\_\_\_
- Possessions: I always wanted the latest friends.
- Security: \_\_\_\_\_
- People: My relationships, but I was always left a little wounded.
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Be sure that you build your life on God's revealed Word, not on what others do or say. Keep seeking the Lord and listening to His voice as He speaks to your heart. Don't do or say things just to please everyone else. Seek Him, and stand on what is illuminated in your heart!

WRITE A PRAYER...

Asking God's Spirit to reveal His Word to you and to help you to build your life upon the Rock of Christ.

thy Spirit, reveal Gods word to me!  
help me build my life upon the  
Rock of Christ. In Jesus name, Amen!

# ALL THAT CAN BE SHAKEN WILL BE SHAKEN

*He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.*

—Hebrews 12:26-27

*[Read chapter 8, stopping at the heading "Grace Is Given to the Humble."]*

**EVEN THOUGH SIMON PETER WAS NAMED "ROCK" AND CONFESSED Jesus as the Son of the living God, toward the end of Jesus's earthly ministry Peter discovered that he was not yet walking in the character and humility of Christ. He was building his life and ministry with past victories and pride. Paul admonished us to take heed how we build on our foundation in Christ:**

According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

—1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-11

When any part of our lives is built upon worldly things, that part will be shaken by Christ.

*Read 1 John 2:15-17. Below is a list of worldly things that God will shake from our lives. Put an x on the line representing where you are.*

The lust of the flesh

ALREADY SHAKEN

NEEDS TO BE SHAKEN

The lust of the eyes

ALREADY SHAKEN

NEEDS TO BE SHAKEN

The pride of life

ALREADY SHAKEN

NEEDS TO BE SHAKEN

Because of Peter's pride at the end of Jesus's ministry, Jesus told him, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat" (Luke 22:31).

Jesus did not pray that Simon Peter would escape the intense shaking—He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail in the process.

Pride opened the door for the enemy to come in and sift Simon Peter. Now if Jesus had had the mentality of many within the church, He might have said, "Let's pray, guys, and bind this attack of the devil. We are not going to let Satan do this to our beloved Simon!" But look at what He said: "I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:32).

Jesus did not pray that Simon Peter would escape the intense shaking—He prayed that Peter's faith would not fail in the process. Jesus knew that out of this trial would emerge a new character, the one Simon Peter needed to fulfill his destiny and strengthen his brethren.

Satan had requested permission to shake Simon Peter so severely that he would lose his faith. The enemy's intent was to destroy this man of great potential who had received so much revelation. But God had a different purpose for the shaking, and, as always, God is way ahead of the devil.

*God may shake our lives for one of the following purposes. If He is shaking your life, which of these reasons could be His purpose for you? (Check  all that apply.)*

- To bring your life closer to its foundation
- To remove what is dead, such as pride, from your life
- To harvest what is ripe within you
- To awaken a dormant area of your spiritual life
- To solidify your life so that the truth in your spirit man can no longer be separated from your soul and body

Any thought process or heart attitude that is rooted in selfishness or pride will be shaken and purged.

WRITE A PRAYER...

*Asking the Lord to sift the pride, selfishness, and lust from your life.*

Lord, sift me! Remove anything that is  
 not pleasing to you! Remove any pride,  
 selfishness, or lust from my life! Purify  
 my heart and purify my hands! I am  
 Yours!

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GRACE TO THE

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