

Rehabilitation: Release for the Captive and Recovery for the Blind

Written by Bob Stone

Help for those caught, imprisoned and addicted.

In Luke 4, Jesus explained that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah 61's prophecy, and described His ministry to captives and those enslaved (caught and imprisoned, addicted by their sin). They are in some kind of prison or spiritual blindness and need to be released and to recover their sight. Cooperative rehabilitation is what they need: a two-fold expression of rehabilitation—release and recovery.

One-time president of General Motors Alfred Sloan, once said, "The business of General Motors is to cut metal and add value to it." In a strange sort of way, Sloan's description of a car-maker's business is not unlike the business of building people. Healthy relationships should press value in each person. Conversely, unhealthy relationship devalue people. That's why Christians should be committed to adding value to others and avoid (be careful with) relationships that don't build people.

But building people—using Sloan's words—sometimes means cutting as much as shaping. The process of *shaping sounds* enjoyable and challenging. (In our last session we talked about Healing Broken Hearts.) But cutting—that's another story. No one who loves someone likes to think about saying a hard word or applying discipline. It seems too painful. It appears to be too risky. Nevertheless, the Bible provides abundant examples of both shaping and cutting.

—*Affirmation & Rebuke*, Gordon & Gail MacDonald, IVP, 1986.

Today we want to focus on the difficult ministry of cutting and shaping, as we return to Isaiah and continue our series on ministering to significant spiritual needs. Before we do, however, let's once again get in touch with the passage that is our focus.

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD'S favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor.

As we have shared, these are the words Jesus read from Isaiah to describe Himself and His church—Luke 4:18-19. In the Luke and Isaiah passages we have seen:

The Prerequisite to Ministry

"*The Spirit of the Lord is on me...*" [As we said last time](#), this overall description of ministry is introduced by this one phrase. It is an important prerequisite to all ministry. This precondition is where we all must start and continue, if we are going to be ultimately effective in any Christian service. We need the Spirit!

The Pattern of Ministry

With that example of dependency in mind, notice how Isaiah gives to us a description of the Lord's ministry and ours. At least five areas are mentioned here:

1. evangelizing
2. healing counsel (tending)
3. rehabilitation
4. prayer and spiritual warfare
5. explaining the times

The first area of ministry is evangelizing.

"The spirit of the Lord is on me; therefore he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor..."—Luke 4:18a; Isaiah 61:1a.

The second area of ministry is healing, counseling and tending.

"...he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted..."—Luke 4:18b; Isaiah 61:b. We saw last time it is God's intention to bring all kinds of healing through Spirit-empowered believers, so we continue to need all kinds of healing agents in this hurting world.

Today we want to focus on another significant need.

The third area of ministry mentioned here is rehabilitation.

"He has sent me to proclaim freedom (release) for the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind"—Isaiah 61:1b; Luke 4:18c.

Ministry to captives and those enslaved (caught and imprisoned, addicted by their sin) is being described here. They are in some kind of prison or spiritual blindness and need to be released and to recover their sight. Cooperative rehabilitation is what they need: a two-fold expression of rehabilitation—release and recovery.

Release—finding freedom for the captive

This word "release" means letting go, sending forth; setting free from captivity as from sins, hence remission or pardon. What specific kinds of captivity are we talking about?

- Habits that enslave—Eph. 4:17-19; 1 Tim. 5:13; Heb. 10:25
- Bitterness—Heb. 10:15
- Hostility—Eph. 4:31; 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 2:15; Rom. 8:7
- Sexual problems/deviance—Jude 7; Eph. 5:3-7; 1 Cor. 6:9-20

Note: In our culture today, more and more people are coming into the church needing assistance to be released from their many forms of captivity. We must be ready to minister to them!

In addition, these people need help in

Recovery—restoring sight to the blind

"Recovery" means a looking up, a recovery of sight. Who are these captive/enslaved people?

- Those who live only for the moment—Prov. 20:4; 6:6; 1-9.
- Those who don't look ahead—Prov. 14:15; 22:3; 19:2; 14:8.
- Those who can't distinguish good from evil—Heb. 5:14.
- Those who have been schooled in sin by parents, peers, or the media—Ex. 20:5-6; 1 Cor. 15:33; Prov. 1:10-19; 3:31-32.

A person in need of rehabilitation is helped by these two distinct but interrelated processes: release and recovery. **Release** will set the captive free; and **recovery** will restore sight to the blind. Understand, however, that release is rarely immediate for those deeply entrenched in or addicted to sin. More often there is a psychological and physical dependence with their addiction that will be broken slowly. The recovery of sight is not always immediate. Yes, God's grace is sufficient to bring immediate forgiveness and pardon from all sin, but certain kinds of addiction and sinful captivity may take time, support, specific treatments and action (e.g., drugs, alcohol, certain sexual addictions, etc). So if you intend to be an instrument in this process, you must understand this kind of recovery and release may take considerable equipping, experience, and dependency upon the Spirit—Rom. 15:14.

Spiritual release and recovery can be ours, because the ministry that was begun by Jesus continues through believers today. Pardon, recovery and release is available to all!

What is involved in rehabilitation? I have listed five important elements that the Scripture gives for this kind of ministry. There are probably more, but I have observed these to be necessary and effective.

Confronting/rebuking—Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2.

Here is the basis:

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- Matt. 18: 15—*"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."*
- Gal. 6:1—*"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted."*
- Luke 17:3—*"So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him."*
- 1 Tim. 5:1—*"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers....."*
- 2 Tim 4:2—*"Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction."*
- The words of Jesus to Laodicea in Revelation 3:19 were: *"Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent."*

What does it mean to confront or rebuke? William Barclay tells us that the Greek word for rebuke came from the ancient practice of laying a heavy weight upon the chest of the accused. Superstition said that if the weight crushed the defendant, he was not telling the truth. (I would hate to see what they would do if you were guilty!)

Later, the word rebuke came to mean the testing of intentions, the exposure of attitudes, the correction for error. Here is a good picture of a rebuke:

"A lighthouse stands at a prominent point to expose dangerous rocks. It warns that certain consequences are in store for the ship captain who is reckless. Rebukers act as lighthouses in human relationships. Their job is not that of critics who seek to hurt or to embarrass; rather it is to warn of the consequences of reckless choices.

Or, to change to an even more appropriate metaphor, the rebuker is a surgeon who spots and removes a cancer which, if ignored, can destroy"—*Affirmation & Rebuke*, Gordon & Gail MacDonald, IVP, 1986.

Because we are people with faults and flaws, we should recognize that some surgery is needed on us too if we are to grow and become what God has designed us by creation to be.

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Some suggestions for beginning the confrontation might be:

- "I always want to give a good report about you to anyone who asks. For this reason, could you explain something I don't understand?"—Bill Gothard.
- "Is there something I have done to cause you to act/react to me in this way...?" (Explain)
- "This is difficult for me to share with you, because I love you so much. But I saw you (or heard you say)... Will you tell me how you feel about it?"
- "I want you to know I've given something a lot of thought and prayer, and because I care a lot about you, I think I need to tell you..."
- "Hey brother (sister), I saw you sinning; what's going on?"

Are there any other guidelines?

- Go to restore and release your brother by yourself—Matt. 18:15 (unless it might be dangerous). Whatever the case, a controlled environment is the best situation (e.g., not isolated, free from temptation or potential danger).
- Go when sin is involved, not just idiosyncrasies or differences of opinion—Matt. 18:15. Disputable matters are not reasons for the Matthew 18 process, e.g., Rom. 14:1-23. Therefore, you should be able to verify with Scripture the reason for your visit. As a church, we have had to go through the Matthew 18 process twice, and in each case it was because of a violation of a specific command of Scripture.
- Go to restore and not punish—Matt. 18:15; James 5:19; Gal 6:1.
- Go with the right attitude of gentleness and love—Gal. 6:1; I John 4:7-8; 2 Cor. 2:4.
- Go after we have examined our own lives—Matt. 5:23-24; 7:3-5.
- Go expecting a good response—Matt. 18:15b.
- Go with some steps of release and recovery in mind.
- Go speaking the truth in love—Eph. 4:15; John 16:13-14; 8:32; 2 Tim. 2:25-26; 2 Cor. 2:4.

Rebuke is not the criticism which destroys a person's sense of value. Rebuke is not necessarily harsh words which intimidate. Paul reflects the act of loving rebuke in 2 Cor. 2:4 when he writes, "*I wrote you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears, not to grieve you but to let you know the depth of my love for you.*"

(I love that attitude—mimic it!) I think that verse reflects the spirit of the loving rebuker; the words were not said easily or without sensitivity, but they had to be said.

Here is a measuring stick:

"a rebuke is usually administered effectively when it hurts the rebuker as well as the rebuked."

"...A person can handle a rebuke if they know the person giving it is committed to them. But if the rebuked person equates the painful words with the possibility of rejection, then there can be...pain and stiff resistance to what has been said."—*Affirmation & Rebuke*, Gordon & Gail MacDonald, IVP, 1986.

I remember a loving confrontation from a friend about 11 years ago. With tears in his eyes he told me how he thought I had misjudged him. I felt like the biggest jerk, because he was right. I found no problem taking it/hearing from him because of his attitude, and I knew he was committed to me.

Some examples from Scripture can be helpful to us.

Paul's rebuke of the Corinthian church is a textbook example. He begins with an affirmation. 1 Cor. 1:4— *"I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus."*

- He follows with an appeal/rebuke. v. 10— *"I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you..."*

- He specifically tells them what is needed. v. 10b— *"...and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought."*

- Next Paul identifies the source of his information. v. 11— *"My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you,"*

We should be committed to keeping confidences too; but in a rebuke, we should try to be as open and honest as we can be! We should not be driven by hearsay, and if we do not have firsthand knowledge, we should tell where we got our information and begin with a question: "Is it true...?"

Normally we encourage a witness to first confront privately, but in Corinth it was not in just one case Paul could encourage Matthew 18 to be exercised. The quarrels were taking place in multiple situations. It had become a characteristic of the church that needed public pastoral correction.

- The final thing Paul does, along with some related issues, is to point out the real reason for their quarrels is their immaturity—1:13-4:1

"Paul was not going to overlook something he knew to be potentially destructive to a church. He was ready to risk his popularity because he loved the people too much to permit the hurt to go on and on. It took courage, and it took maximum affection. But a rebuke was what Corinth needed"—Gordon and Gail MacDonald, *ibid.*

In the gospels, we see another good example of a strong rebuke given by Jesus to Simon Peter—Matthew 16:23.

Jesus had just affirmed Peter, but now Peter challenged the Lord, basically telling Jesus He was wrong about the future and he (Simon) knew what was going to happen. Matt. 16:22 says, *"Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him (Jesus). 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!'"*

Immediately the Lord rebuked him in no uncertain terms. Matt. 16:23—*"Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.'"*

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Ouch! Peter went from being affirmed in verse 18, to being a person used of Satan in verse 23. Have you ever done anything like this? I have! Jesus' statement here is a stunning exposure of Peter's resistance to God's plan. This explains why the disciples didn't understand what Jesus was telling them on many occasions. They were resistant to it. Peter, especially, had another plan!

A third example of a rebuke can be found in the last visit Paul had with the Ephesian elders in Acts 20:17ff.

Paul reviewed his ministry and told them this was his last visit. In his talk, Paul rebuked them for something that would happen in the future. Acts 20:29—*"I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30] Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31] So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."*

The rebuke was, 30] *"...from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them."*

31] The warning and reminder was: *"So be on your guard!"*

The solution:

"Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears."

(Do the same.)

On some rare occasions, we will need to give a strong rebuke, e.g. "Get behind me Satan." This is especially true when the expressed will of God is being challenged because someone thinks they know better than God. Most of the time, however, our rebuke of someone will be characterized as an appeal—1 Cor. 1:10. We will have to risk our relationship because we love them too much to let them hurt themselves.

If you are concerned about the potential sin in someone, you might go to them and gently warn them, but make sure you are a model of what you are asking others to do, or it won't be received!

Admitting/confessing

Matt. 18:15b—*"If he listens to you, you have won your brother over."* (See 1 John 1:9 too.) Those who are incarcerated need to admit they are captive and have a problem. (e.g., "My name is Bill and I'm an alcoholic...")

In Luke 15:17-19, the Prodigal Son models this for us. *"When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'"*

The admission of a problem is often very difficult to give or get, yet only when we say "I have a problem, I need help..." are we beginning down the road to release and recovery.

What should I expect if I confront or rebuke? It is a difficult matter to handle, but sooner or later a confrontation or rebuke will be resisted. Some might say, "What gives you the right to confront me about my actions?" or, "That's just the way I am. Take it or leave it." What should you do?

If the person is in the church and the sin continues, then Matthew 18:15-20 gives us further instructions. We are to take one or two witnesses with us and continue on to the second step.

If the person calls him/herself a believer and is not in the church, "This is no time to respond with equal resistance or anger. In most cases, with the exception of children...you might say something like, "I am going to drop the matter for awhile and give it some thought as to what I am trying to say. I am available to discuss it if you want to."

I am always intrigued by the example of the prodigal's father. There comes a time when words are not going to make any difference, so let them go, but continue to watch and pray. In the Old Testament, when kings resisted the rebuke of a prophet, in most cases

the prophet simply backed off and allowed the matter to take its course. Usually the king suffered the logical consequences of his blindness/resistance.

On the other hand, what if the person responds positively and confesses? James 5:16 promises that the exciting result of confession accompanied by prayer is healing. *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed."*

Repenting

2 Cor. 7:8-11:

"... I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while—yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done. At every point you have proved yourselves to be innocent in this matter."

Repentance means to change one's mind and turn from sin. 1 Thess 1:9 says, *"...for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God..."*

The fruit of repentance is easy to see—2 Cor. 7:9-11 tells us exactly what to look for in a person who has truly repented.

- Godly sorrow
- No regret for turning from sin
- Earnestness to clear yourself
- Indignation (at sin and self)
- Alarm
- Longing (affection)
- Concern
- Readiness to see justice done

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- At every point proving yourself innocent (making things right at every point)

(See also Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20; Philemon 18-19.)

If repentance does *not* take place, then continue on with the steps as outlined in Matt 18:16-17. *"But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17] If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*
(See also Deut. 19:15.)

If you need assistance in any way, like in a dispute as to whether a certain action is sin, see a mature believer/elder/spiritual leader for wisdom and prayer.

Supporting

2 Cor. 2:5-11

"If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes."

There are three basic areas of support one needs to escape prison and spiritual blindness:

1. Forgiveness (or lead him to seek forgiveness from the one[s] he has offended or sinned against)—v. 7.
2. Comfort—v. 7b. We do not remain distant! We hug and comfort "...so that he will

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not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow."

This can easily happen once a person is thinking clearly. When they begin to see the impact of their sin and how they hurt others and the church, they can be overwhelmed by sorrow!

3. Reaffirmation of our love—v. 8c; John 13:34-35; 1 Thess. 3:2.

To assist in the process, a support group may need to be formed. This can be helpful to a person who has repented and is making their way to total healing, e.g., recovery groups for alcoholism, drugs, work, sex, gambling, pornography.

Substituting

—Eph. 4:17-5:21 (The Great Put Off and Put On).

What will it involve to continue in repentance and not return to our old way of living?

Not repression: "I won't..." (e.g., try not to think about a pink elephant riding a cycle for one minute. How many of you can do it?)

Not expression: "I will do what pleases me..."

But substitution: "I change my prison clothes for God's clothes."

Eph. 4:22-24—*"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness."*

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For further help see: [The Problem of Temptation](#) by Robert C. Stone.

It is such a wonderful thing to observe this rehabilitation process, the recovery and restoration of a believer. If this recovery does not take place, however, another result takes place that we don't often talk about: the impact of sin on the whole body.

Think about this: Do we have a private life as believers? The answer is yes and no. Of course we have the right to continue to make choices as believers. We do not become robots who have no free will. Our entire lives do not need to be open to public scrutiny.

It is important, however, to note that our private sin can have an effect not only on us, but on the whole body as well. Nancy and I were given a quilt over 30 years ago, when we left my home church in Wenatchee after being youth pastors for two years. You can see it is made up of many pieces of fabric all sewn together. I intend to go back to Wenatchee and see if anyone there will repair it for me, because it is showing signs that some squares and the border are in need of rehabilitation/recovery to return it to its former state.

This could be a good picture of the church, too. One part can affect the whole—its look, its feel, its durability, its function, etc. One square could be compensated for, but if many squares are torn and coming apart, then the whole picture would be changed!

I think you see the point. Everyone here is a piece of the whole. One piece at a time we are added; together we make up a beautiful, warm blanket. Together we are more than we could be alone, and every piece matters. If we are in disrepair, we affect the whole; and if we are repaired and restored, the whole is also affected!

Therefore, rehabilitation—recovery and restoration—is about all of us. This is a process we all need to pray for, and recognize our place in!

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Appendix God's Plan for Mutual Support

How important to the Lord is this sharing with one another? Gal. 6:1 says, "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." Verse 2 continues, "Carry each other's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ." The word used for "burdens" here indicates a heavy load, one impossible to be borne by an individual alone, which may be a major factor in a person's becoming involved in sin.

Shortly after verse 2, Paul makes what many have considered a contradictory statement. "Each one should carry his own load" (v. 5). However, a different term is used here that contrasts with, not contradicts, the "too heavy" load of verse 2. The term here designates the backpack normally carried by an individual soldier as part of his military assignment.

This contrast shows us the balance between helping one another and taking personal responsibility.

Many people, however, need help from others to judge what should be personal responsibility and what ought to be considered a burden needing the help of others to carry. Some people take too little responsibility for the normal load that should be theirs. Others try to carry too heavy a load, too proud or embarrassed to admit they need help.

Note also the last part of verse 1, "Watch yourself, or you also may be tempted." Some try to take on too much of another person's overload, when they should be asking others

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to help carry it. Otherwise, it may overburden them, too, and become a factor in a fall into sin for themselves—Helping One Another Change Bad Habits, Minirth-Meier Clinic, Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1987, pp. 7-8.

Questions and Reflection

1. As a believer, do we have a private life that is no one else's business?

2. List the effect private, long-term and unrepentant sins can have on a community of believers. What Scriptures give us instruction about the yeast effect upon a body of believers?

3. Do you agree that release and recovery is rarely immediate for those deeply entrenched or addicted to sin where psychological and physical dependence is present? Why?

4. When helping another person to recovery and restoration, which of the following five important elements of rehabilitation do you find the easiest to do? The most difficult? Why?

a. Confronting/rebuking—Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2; Luke 17:3; 1 Tim. 5:1; 2 Tim. 4:2

b. Admitting/confessing—Matt. 18:15b; 1 John 1:9

c. Repenting—2 Cor. 7:8-11; 1 Thess. 1:9

d. Supporting—2 Cor. 2:5. The three basic areas of support needed:

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1) Forgiveness—2 Cor. 2:7

2) Comfort—2 Cor. 2:7b

3) Reaffirmation of our love—2 Cor. 2:8

e. Substituting—Eph. 4:17; 5:17

5. Without violating a confidence, share a story of ministry to another that you consider a victory. Any failures to report?

6. As you look back at your past (or continuing) addictions/sins/imprisonment, which of the above elements of rehabilitation were/are the most difficult for you?

7. Why is support (mentioned in #4) so essential to the process of recovery and restoration?

8. What has been your personal experience (or observation) with the application of Matt. 18:15-20?

9. How many of the steps of Matt. 18:15-20 can we apply if the believer sinning (obvious and overt sin) is not involved in a church community?

10. How does the example of the prodigal's father instruct a parent who has children who are not following the Lord? (See Luke 15.)

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11. As a group or individually, list the most frequent addictions/sins you have seen in your friends and family. If you were able to help them through the first four steps of question 4, what specific actions/activities/experiences/attitudes could specifically be substituted for the sins on your list? Use Eph. 4:17-5:21 for some examples of the Great Put Off and Put On. What substitution takes place in this passage?

12. How do you intend to apply this teaching of rehabilitation? Close in prayer for all who intend to share this rehabilitation process with others.

See notes at the beginning of The Problem of Temptation for the continuation of this outline

2) The therapy: There are five ways freedom is achieved:

a) The first way is to recognize that freedom comes from the Lord. John 8:36—"So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

FREEDOM MUST COME FROM JESUS CHRIST!—Rom. 5:6-8; 6:1-14.

It is important to you see how Jesus "relates" to a person who is in sin. On one hand he advocates unparalleled moral purity (Matt. 56:27-28), but on the other hand, we see Him as a friend/restorer to the one who has fallen into sin—John 8:1-11.

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How will the Lord bring freedom to us?

i) Begin by recognizing what He has already done—Rom. 6:6-8.

ii) Next, remember His death and realize it was our death too —Rom. 6:1-4. (See the declaration of freedom in Rom. 5-8.)

—Jesus' death for sin was our death to sin, and His resurrection was our resurrection—Rom 6: 5-7. WOW!

—Jesus' death and our death means then, that sin does not reign in us, it is rendered powerless—Rom. 6:11-13.

—We are no longer slaves—WE ARE FREE!

—We now have the option to offer ourselves as "instruments of wickedness, or instruments of righteousness"—v. 13.

b)The second way freedom is achieved is by placing yourself

under the Lord's therapy—Matt. 5:29-30.

i)This is like salvation. Phil. 2:12-13—"Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13] for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

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—We must understand—working out our salvation is

complex.

—We long for the simple answer.

*Our part is obedience—v. 12. (See 1 Cor. 9:24-27.)

*The Lord's part is to enable us to continue, by working in us—v. 13. We obey, He says, "I'll help you."

*The Lord's part is His blood, His strength, His wisdom, and His Spirit, working in me enabling, convicting, etc.

Quote: Charles Dunham reflects on this truth. He writes: "'I'm quitting! God must do it all!' is the wrong attitude. Renewing the mind is DIVINE work, but it does not take place apart from HUMAN effort. We tend to confuse the gift of salvation, which is of grace and unearned by works, with sanctification. Sanctification is not substitutionary. It requires effort. Notice the beautiful balance of Scripture as it addresses this question: 'Work out your own salvation...for God is at work in you'—Phil. 2:12-13.

What if that isn't working like it should? What if I'm defeated?

ii) This is the Lord's therapy—Matt. 5:29-30.

—If you are continually failing in any area, such as the area of lust, "...pluck out your eye

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and cut off your hand." —This is called a "hyperbole"—a planned exaggeration to get an effect.

—It was a form of speech totally understood by the disciples. Why would He use the eye and the hand?

—If you think about it, there are two strong gateways to sin:

*One is the power of sight, which is related to the eye.

*The other is the power of touch, related to the hand.

*In these two areas, remove that which is leading to sin.

iii) In a general way, let's view each of these two gateways to sin.

SEye. If you have a problem in relationship to the eye

(literature, media), cut out that activity—Luke 11:34-36.

Make an eye covenant—Job 31:1; Psalm 119:37.

STouch. If your problem is in the area of touch, then you'll have to discipline yourself to cut off any possible expression.

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Summary: Whatever sense is causing us to sin, we should cut it off, i.e., the ear, the tongue, the eye, the nose.

iv) This will save us from ultimate judgment—Matt. 5:29b, 30b.

c) The third way freedom is achieved involves a new input and mindset for the mind. Eph. 4:22-24—"...to be made new in the attitude of your minds."

Note: It takes time to think like a Christian, therefore we are going to need to discover the secret to a renewed mind—Rom. 12:1-2.

Note: This includes a study of, and an application of spiritual disciplines.

i) This is the middle step in Eph. 4:22-24—"... to be made new in the attitude of your minds..."

—For instance, what is your attitude about the following: your body, women or men, artificial substances (drugs, alcohol, etc.), wealth, possessions, your enemy, stealing, church?

—For complete deliverance to take place, you will need to change your attitude. For instance:

*Your body—1 Cor. 6:19

*Women and men—Gal. 5:13

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*Addicting substances—Ps. 19:8; Eph. 5:18

*Wealth, possessions—1 Tim. 6:6,17-18

*Your enemy—Rom. 12:21

*Stealing—Eph. 4:28

*Your church—Rom. 12:10-13

What should we focus on?

ii)The new mindset is to be on what the Spirit desires—Rom. 8:5. "Spirit, my thoughts are evil. What do you think about this person"?

How do we fill our minds with the right input?

iii)The new input is that which comes from the therapy of God's Word—Ps. 1:1-3; 119:9,11. This can't be overstated!

d)The fourth way freedom is realized is through prayer for a proper relationship with God and man—Ps. 51.

i)There is no Psalm that has been used more effectively than David's Psalm of repentance. He understood how to pray.

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ii) There are a couple of things to note about David's prayer:

* Approach God only on the basis of His mercy—vv. 1-2.

* Agree with God that we indeed have offended Him—vv. 3-6.

* Ask God not only for pardon, but for purity—vv. 7-12.

* Acclaim God's righteousness in worship and witness—vv. 13-17.

3) The Summary:

a) There are various levels of moral failure, just as there can be deeper levels of impairment or illness. So it is possible there might be different types of therapy employed by the Lord.

It is much like going to physical therapy after an accident and being put on the parallel bars.

It may take some time to walk again, it won't happen overnight; but the power of repeated confession, along with pur-

poseful obedience, will break the power of habitual sin—Heb. 12:11-13.

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b) There are two questions you need to ask: Do you want help? Do you want to be free?—John 15:1-6.

If you want to be free, then accept the Lord's operation in you to set you free from sin—Rom. 5-8;

Go to His therapy and go through the most stringent

discipline required—Matt. 5:27-30;

Pray with a broken and contrite heart Psalm 51;

Allow another person to steady you and support you in prayer as you learn to walk again—James 5:16.

Quote: C. S. Lewis once wrote "to a lady" some words that may be appropriately repeated here: "I know all about the despair of overcoming chronic temptations. It is not serious, provided self-offended petulance, annoyance at breaking records, impatience, etc., don't get the upper hand. NO AMOUNT of falls will really undo us if we keep on picking ourselves up each time. We shall be very muddy and tattered children by the time we reach home. But the bathrooms are all ready, the towels put out, and the clean clothes in the airing cupboard. The only fatal thing is to lose one's temper and give it up. It is when we notice the dirt that God is most present in us; it is the very sign of his presence"—W.H. Lewis, ed., *Letters of C.S. Lewis*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1966, p. 199.

Quote: Leighton Ford once said, "I used to think that God would deal with me like a grape, taking me all in one bite. But now I know that I am more like an onion, and that he is peeling me layer by layer"—Charles Durham, *Temptation*, Intervarsity Press, p. 54.

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Summary of substituting: What is involved then, rehabilitation? I have listed five important elements that Jesus uses in this kind of ministry: a. Confronting—Matt. 18:15-20; Gal. 6:1-2; b. Admitting/confessing. Matt. 18:15b; c. Repenting—2 Cor. 7:8-11; d. Supporting—2 Cor. 2:5-11; e. Substituting—Eph. 4:17-5:17.

This seems like a big load to carry by ourselves.

4. Do we need help to come through the process of rehabilitation—to get through to release from sin recovery of our sight? Yes!

Letting others help us is one of the most difficult things for some of us.

—Satan's strategy is to isolate, by making us think we're the only person in the world who has this particular problem. If he can get us to concentrate on our badness, then we may not seek help or go on to confession and repentance.

But God has another plan in mind.

—God's idea is to get us functioning as any part of the body will function when it hurts - to cry for help and healing from the other parts.

NOTE: If I cut my finger, the whole body is mobilized to help bring healing.

—Our help should likewise, come from the body of Christ. James 5:16—"Therefore, confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

What does this involve?

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a. This is not confessing every minute detail, but a confession of only what's necessary for a person to understand, to care, and to pray. If you have committed private sins, the place to confess them isn't in a public meeting. Also understand, the lasting healing isn't just in the confession, although there's a release (a catharsis), but the healing also depends on the prayer of a righteous (mature) man or woman.

b. Therefore, if you're bound by a sin and repeated confession to God hasn't broken the habit, then go to someone else and let them help you get the burden off your back. Sometimes certain cultures, or even some in an older generation may have a problem with this, but remember, culture or upbringing cannot dictate response, only Scripture can do that.

Who do we make confession to?

c. This is best done with three types of people described below, or to a group of fellow Christians who qualify, e.g., a committed small group.

1) A close, personal friend.

2) A person you respect and admire who may or may not be a professional person.

3) A family member.

4) A small group/support group.

d. The following questions can help you find such a person. You might also ask yourself if you're this type of person too.

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1) Does the person love me, or do they have a love in their life that is evident? Paul was such a man. 1 Cor. 6:11-13—"We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians, and opened wide our hearts to you. We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us. As a fair exchange, I speak as to my children - open wide your hearts also."

2) Can I trust the person that they will keep our conversation

confidential?

•Prov. 11:13—"A gossip betrays a confidence, but a trustworthy man keeps a secret."

•Prov. 20:19—"A gossip betrays a confidence, so avoid a man who talks too much." (See also Prov. 10:18-19.)

3) Is this person open to sharing their own personal struggles? Will they be able to share with you what they've learned in similar circumstances?

2 Cor. 1:8-11—"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. 9] Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10] He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11] as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many." (See also 11:29-33.)

—It's a good idea to try to find someone who's working at being honest and can share their struggles and solutions, i.e., Paul,

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especially in 2 Corinthians, does this.

—It's not necessary for that person to have shared every detail of their life with you before you open up. What you are looking for is some vulnerability, as well as some victory.

4) Is this person stable and at least working toward a disciplined life? Prov. 10:17—"He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." If they are not heeding discipline in their own life, then their advice will be questionable.

5) Is this person confronting? Will they care enough to let you know when they think you are snowing them and will they call you to what's right, regardless of your reaction? Prov. 27:17—"As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Prov. 28:23—"He who rebukes a man will in the end gain more favor than he who has a flattering tongue."

6) Is this person righteous and one who prays? James 5:16b—"The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

7) Is this person a listener? Prov. 18:13—"He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame."

Summary: The above seven questions describe the kind of person(s) who will help you, and the description of a person you need to be to help others. There is a great ministry in helping a person come to freedom through the loving, but steady pull of your hand. Most people won't go to a pastor or to a professional counselor, but they will go to a friend. Avail yourself of any training that will equip you to be of help.

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Listening Guide ideas

The fourth way freedom is achieved is through the pull of another person's hand. This is what we allow someone else to do.

1. Satan's strategy is to isolate us.

2. God's idea is to get us functioning as any part of the body will function when it hurts—to cry for help and healing—James 5:16.

This help and confession can be done with three types of people:

a. a close personal friend; b. a person we respect and admire, who may or may not be a professional person; c. a family member.

3. This is what the person looks like: 1 Cor. 6:11-13; Prov. 11:13; 20:19; 2 Cor. 1:8-11; 11:29-33; Prov. 10:17; 27:17; 28:23; James 5:16; Prov. 18:13. This is the kind of person who will help, and the kind of person we need to be to help others.

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