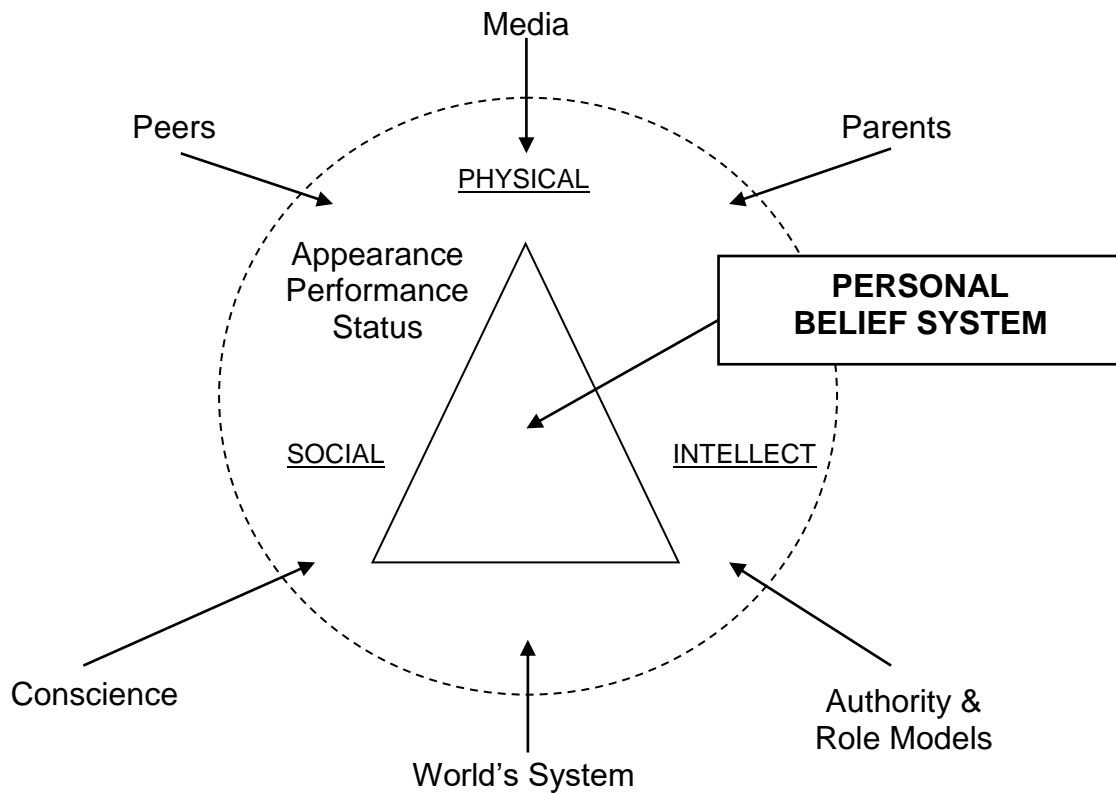


## Introduction: How do we get unstuck?

- We get stuck with issues in our past.
- The power of warped mirrors in our lives.
- We all have warped mirrors.
- We all experience pain and distortions that affect our lives and relationships because of the warped mirrors of our past and present.
- **Self Image:** The mental picture or concept of one's self – a person's own idea of self or sense of worth. The "composite picture" of the mirrors in our lives.

**How is our self-image developed?**



**What is the impact of a warped self-image?**

- Insecurity, inferiority
- Performance orientation or withdraw
- Denial, compensation, or addictive behavior
- Unfulfilled longings for significance and unconditional acceptance

### **What does God say about self-image?**

*“For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.”*

Romans 12:3

### **Where can we get an accurate view of ourselves?**

<sup>1</sup> *“Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are at Ephesus and who are faithful in Christ Jesus:*

<sup>2</sup> *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

<sup>3</sup> *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,*

<sup>4</sup> *just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love*

<sup>5</sup> *He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,*

<sup>6</sup> *to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.”*

Ephesians 1:1-6

## What does God's mirror say about you?

If you are "in Christ" you are...

1. **WANTED** and **CHOSEN** every minute of every day by One who knows every aspect of your life (past, present, future).
2. **ACCEPTED** because you are **ADOPTED** eternally into God's family with all the rights, privileges, and blessings given His children.
3. **SIGNIFICANT** since you are **CALLED** to reflect His character (holy and blameless) in a fallen world, and to declare (speak well of) the grace freely available to all in Jesus.

## Discussion Questions:

1. What aspect of today's message "hit home" with you? Why?
2. Which "mirrors" of your past have impacted you the most? How has this played out in your life and relationships?
3. What does the mirror of God's Word say about who you are "if you are in Christ?"
4. What specific steps could you take to allow the truth of God's mirror to become the basis of your self-image?

### **Resources:**

*Telling Yourself the Truth* by William Backus

## Introduction: “The Rejection Syndrome”



### Definitions of rejection:

- To throw out as worthless, useless, or sub-standard; to pass over or skip; to rebuff...especially to deny acceptance, care, or to love someone.

Webster's Dictionary

- “The absence of meaningful love.”  
from The Rejection Syndrome by Charles R. Soloman

## Understanding rejection: Two types

- **Overt** - willful, known abuse - either verbal, emotional, or physical
- **Covert** - unintentional rejection that is emotionally perceived but not intellectually comprehended.

### Some examples:

- Physical isolation – incubation or medical cause
- Absent parent – war, divorce, or death.
- Overprotection
- Spoiling
- Smothering
- Performance-based love – “I love if...” or “I love you because...”

## Understanding the impact of rejection:

- **The behavioral impact** - When we have been rejected, we will find ourselves rejecting others in the same way.
- **The emotional impact** -
  - Feelings of worthlessness
  - Wishing I hadn't been born
  - Feelings of inferiority
  - Fear of expressing feelings
  - Depression
  - Emotional insulation
  - Overly introspective
  - Perfectionist
  - Worries, doubts, fears
  - Self-condemnation
  - Self-hatred
  - Guilt
  - Inability to express love

**God's solutions for our rejection:**

Ephesians 1:7-14

*No matter how rejected you have been...*

1. **Lie:** I don't measure up because of my past.

**Truth:** Jesus will put your past **BEHIND** you.

*<sup>7</sup>In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, <sup>8a</sup>which He lavished on us.*

Ephesians 1:7-8a

- **New Message – You are **FREE**!**

2. **Lie:** I don't measure up because I don't have anything to offer.

**Truth:** Jesus has a **PURPOSE** for your life today!

*<sup>8b</sup>In all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup>He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him <sup>10</sup>with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things on the earth.*

Ephesians 1:8b-10

- **New Message – You are **NEEDED**!**

3. **Lie:** What's the use? I was a loser then; I will be a loser now.

**Truth:** Jesus promises you a **POSITIVE** future!

*In Him <sup>11</sup>also **we have obtained an inheritance**, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, <sup>12</sup>to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory.*

Ephesians 1:11-12

- **New Message – You are **WORTHY**!**

4. **Lie:** I don't want to get hurt again. It's not worth it.

**Truth:** Jesus will never ever **REJECT** you!

*<sup>13</sup> In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation--having also believed, **you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise,** <sup>14</sup> who **is given as a pledge** of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory.*

Ephesians 1:13-14

- **New Message – You are **SECURE**!**

**Conclusion:** “The answer to our problem is a person.”

**Discussion Questions:**

1. When and how have you experienced rejection in your life?
2. What behavioral and emotional impact has this had on you and your relationships?
3. What aspect of “God’s Solutions for Our Rejection” helped you the most? Why?
4. What specific steps of faith / obedience would help you experience Christ’s unconditional love and acceptance?
  - Study this passage
  - Talk with God about your struggles
  - Share deeply in community with other believers

**Resource:** Tired Of Trying To Measure Up by Jeffrey VanVonderan





**Introduction:** We all dream dreams and experience the pain of shattered dreams.

- Our childhood dreams
- Our adult dreams
- Our mid-life dreams
- Our later-year dreams

**The Question:** How do we respond to our “shattered dreams?”

1. We must face our shattered dreams.

2. We need to understand our shattered dreams.

- Dreams are built on EXPECTATIONS.

Philippians 1:27

- Dreams flow from three universal LONGINGS.

- The longing to be intimately known and loved.
- The longing for a “better tomorrow.”
- The longing to “leave a legacy.”

- Dreams built around IMPERFECT PEOPLE

in an IMPERFECT WORLD that we cannot control,  
eventually, almost always “shatter.”

3. We can grow from our shattered dreams:

*Shattered dreams can lead to transformed lives because...*

1. God wants to fulfill your dream of being intimately known and loved just for who you are.

*<sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, <sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you **in my prayers**. <sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that **you may know** Him better.*

Ephesians 1:15-17

**How?** Ask the Father to **REVEAL** Himself to you!

2. God wants to fulfill your dream of having a “better tomorrow.”

*<sup>18</sup> I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that **you may know** the hope to which He has called you, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints,*

Ephesians 1:18

**How?** Ask the Father to give you an **ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE**.

3. God wants to fulfill your dream of “leaving a legacy” in this world.

*<sup>19</sup> and His incomparably great power for us who believe. That **power** is like **the working** of His mighty **strength**, <sup>20</sup> which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.*

*<sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.*

Ephesians 1:19-23

**How?** Ask the Father to help you **COMPREHEND** the supernatural power available to you today!

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What “shattered dream” has impacted your life?
2. Why is it important to understand how our dreams get formulated in our hearts and minds? What place have unrealistic expectations played in your shattered dreams?
3. Why is it equally important to know that God longs to meet our deepest longings and fill the vacuum of those shattered dreams? Do you think our “shattered dreams” sometimes help us realize our real need for God and a relationship with Him?
4. What role does intercessory prayer have in us experiencing in our daily life what God has accomplished for us in Christ?
5. Discuss as a group the three statements given in the conclusion of this message. What would it look like in your life to:
  - 1) Allow God’s love to heal your heart?
  - 2) Fix your hope on His promises for your future?
  - 3) Dream a God-sized dream that will demand God-sized resources?

**Resources:**

Overcoming Emotions that Destroy by Chip Ingram  
Rebuilding Your Broken World by Chip Ingram



### **Introduction: What is a dysfunctional family?**

- **Definition** – Dysfunctional is that which is not operating according to its original design; faulty, impaired, “not working properly” for optimal results.
- **History** – Not new, but more plentiful and more extreme than in the past.

### **What have we learned about dysfunctional families?**

1. Dysfunctional families left to themselves produce dysfunctional children.
2. Dysfunctional families require an “intervention” to break the cycle of destruction.
3. Genuine recovery never begins until a person “hits bottom.”
4. Genuine recovery is never complete until a person has helped another person recover.

God's solution for dysfunctional families:

Ephesians 2:1-10

1. Examine the problem:

We are **ALL** members of a dysfunctional family.

*<sup>1</sup>As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.*

*<sup>3</sup>All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath.*

Ephesians 2:1-3

- The Source:

Romans 5:12

- The Results:

- Past – **DEATH**
- Present – **DISOBEDIENCE**
- Future – **DESTRUCTION**

## 2. Understand God's solution:

Jesus' **INTERVENTION** broke the cycle of destruction.

*<sup>4</sup> But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus.*

Ephesians 2:4-7

- His Motive    **GREAT LOVE**    Ephesians 2:4
- His Action    **TO MAKE YOU ALIVE**    Ephesians 2:5-6
- His Purpose    **TO REVEAL HIS CHARACTER**    Ephesians 2:7

## 3. Experience God's provision:

Our restoration can only begin when we recognize the **FULL**  
**EXTENT** of our need.

*<sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Ephesians 2:8-9

#### 4. Move beyond recovery:

Our restoration will never be complete until we **IMPART** what we now possess.

*<sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

Ephesians 2:10

#### Discussion Questions:

1. In what ways did your family operate in a less-than-healthy manner? In a spiritual sense, why are we all members of a dysfunctional family? (Romans 5:12)
2. Why did Jesus intervene to break the cycle of destruction in our lives? What happens in a person's life when they receive God's grace and forgiveness? (Ephesians 2:4-6)
3. Why can't restoration begin until we realize the full extent of our need? In what ways are you coping and/or overcompensating, rather than dealing with the core issue in your life? (Ephesians 2:8-9)
4. What is your "next step" to allow the grace of God to forgive, cleanse, and restore your dysfunctional past?
5. Who might help you on this journey?

#### **Resources:**

*The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer

*Rebuilding Your Broken World* by Chip Ingram

*Overcoming Emotions that Destroy* by Chip Ingram



## **Introduction:**

### **Prejudice - pre•ju•dis**

A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; the act of pre-judging another person's value, worth, significance, or suitability for inclusion within a group based on appearance, race, cultural background, speech, nationality, gender, geography, or personal history.

- Have you ever been wounded by the “pre-judgments” of others?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Have you ever intentionally or unintentionally wounded others by “pre-judging” them?

**A case study in prejudice:**

Ephesians 2:11-22

**A classic conflict = Hostility**

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)—*

*<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.*

Ephesians 2:11-12

**A supernatural solution = Peace**

*<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,*

*<sup>15</sup> by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup>and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.*

*<sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:13-18

### A powerful testimony = Unity

*<sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, <sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the chief cornerstone.*

*<sup>21</sup> In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. <sup>22</sup> And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit.*

Ephesians 2:19-22

### How to stop the painful cycle of prejudice:

1. **REMEMBER** your former condition. Ephesians 2:11-12
2. **REALIZE** that the ground is level at the foot of the Cross. Ephesians 2:13-16
3. Let your **WALLS** come down. Ephesians 2:17-18
4. **RECONCILIATION** in God's family is not an option to be considered, but a fact to be experienced. Ephesians 2:19-20
5. **RECOGNIZE** that God's presence dwells where unity prevails. Ephesians 2:21-22

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What wounds in your life can be traced to the issue of prejudice?
2. What new insight did you gain about some of your own “preconceived” ideas of others?
3. Which of the steps to “stop the painful cycle of prejudice” were most helpful to you? Why?
4. Why is it so important that we, as believers, model reconciliation and unity across all cultural, racial, and socio-economic lines?
5. What “one thing” would God have you do to bring greater harmony and unity in your relational network?

## **Introduction: Why do we suffer?**

### **Four possibilities:**

1. Suffering may be the result of our own sin and poor choices.  
(i.e. David with Bathsheba) Galatians 6:7-8
2. Suffering may be the result of satanic spiritual attack.  
(i.e. Job, chapter 1) Ephesians 6:10-12
3. Suffering may occur simply because we live in a fallen world.  
(i.e. Tower of Siloam, Luke 13) Romans 8:18-23  
Genesis 3
4. Suffering may be the result of doing good.  
(i.e. Peter preaches = prison) 1 Peter 2:19-21

## **Question: How do *you* deal with unjust suffering?**

**A model to follow:**

Ephesians 3:1-13

**God's prisoner: PAUL**

*<sup>1</sup> For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles—*

**God's secret plan: THE CHURCH**

*<sup>2</sup> Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, <sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly. <sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ, <sup>5</sup> which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets. <sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.*

**Paul's role in God's plan: SERVANT / MINISTER**

*<sup>7</sup> I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of His power. <sup>8</sup> Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, <sup>9</sup> and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things.*

**The purpose of the Church: EDUCATION & ACCESS**

*<sup>10</sup> His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, <sup>11</sup> according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>12</sup> In Him and through faith in Him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.*

**4 principles to remember when you're suffering unjustly:**

1. We are **NOT VICTIMS**. Ephesians 3:1
  
2. Until we understand what God is up to in **THE WORLD**, Ephesians 3:2-6  
we will never understand what He's up to in **OUR WORLD**.
  
3. Until we understand our role in **HIS PLAN**, Ephesians 3:7-9  
we will forever be frustrated with God's failure to fulfill "our plans."
  
4. Until we grasp the extraordinary privilege and Ephesians 3:10-13  
eternal impact of suffering for good, we will squander  
the **GREATEST OPPORTUNITIES** God will ever provide  
us to glorify His name, and commune with His heart.

**Conclusion/Application:**

Ephesians 3:13

- **Don't be discouraged! God uses unjust suffering to reveal His character to others and His grace to us.**

There is more to life than "right now." The Christian life was never meant, this side of heaven, to make people happy! The Christian life was meant to "free us" to love and to be loved, and to experience exceeding joy in relationship with Christ and one another, regardless of our circumstances.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. Have you ever suffered unjustly? How did you handle it?
2. Which of the "4 Principles to Remember" were most helpful to you? Why?
3. Read 1 Peter 2:19-25, James 1:2-4, and Romans 5:1-5. Discuss the theme that emerges from these passages as it relates to today's message and your life.
4. In what specific way could you put into practice one of the "4 Principles" you learned today?



## **Introduction: The Power of Relationships**

- Few things in all of life can compare with the satisfaction, joy, and connectedness that come when we love deeply and are deeply loved in an authentic, meaningful relationship.
- By contrast, few things in all of life can hurt as badly and as deeply as the wounds, the sorrow, and the alienation that comes when a relationship is broken.

**God's prescription for the pain of a broken relationship:**

**1. Talk to the Father**

*<sup>14</sup> For this reason I kneel before the Father, <sup>15</sup>from whom His whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name.*

- **Why?** Prayer is our passport to God's **PERSPECTIVE**.

(see Jeremiah 33:3)

**2. Ask God for the inner strength to yield rather than resist His work in your life.**

*<sup>16</sup> I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, <sup>17a</sup> so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.*

- **Why?** God longs to make your heart **CHRIST'S HOME**.

(see Matthew 11:28-30)

### 3. Ask God to help you grasp and experience His love in the midst of your pain.

*<sup>17b</sup> And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, <sup>18</sup> may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, <sup>19</sup> and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*

- **Why?** Authentic spiritual growth only occurs in the fertile soil of

**GENUINE LOVE.**

(see 1 John 4:19)

### 4. Expect God to answer your prayers in a manner beyond your wildest dreams.

*<sup>20</sup> Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, <sup>21</sup> to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.*

- **Why?** Your welfare and Christ's glory are uppermost on

**GOD'S AGENDA.**

(see Psalm 84:11)

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What broken relationship has been the most painful in your life?
2. Why is it important to talk honestly and openly with God about the pain of our broken relationships?
3. What does it mean to allow “my heart to be Christ’s home?” Why does it take such inner strength to give Him control (especially when we are “reeling” from a broken relationship)?
4. Why is allowing Christ to be the CEO and Master of our hearts a prerequisite to experiencing His love?
5. What hope or promise from God in today’s message was most helpful for you? What would it look like to trust Him in your life and relationships right now?

**Resources:**

*The Knowledge of the Holy* by A.W. Tozer  
*Rebuilding Your Broken World* by Chip Ingram  
*Overcoming Emotions that Destroy* by Chip Ingram