

KINGDOM LAWS



VOLUME II

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INTRODUCTION

Imagine for a moment that you live on another planet operating under different laws. Suppose your planet has no gravity and no need for a medium of exchange such as money. You get your energy and fuel from osmosis, instead of eating and drinking. Suddenly, without warning, you find yourself transported to planet **Earth**.

When you awake from your trip, you step out of your hovering spacecraft and fall abruptly to the ground. "Ouch!" you say, not knowing exactly why you fell. After regaining your composure, you decide to travel around a bit, but are unable to fly, because of this new phenomenon called gravity. So you start walking.

After a while, you notice that, strangely, you feel hungry and thirsty. You wonder why. Where you come from, the galactic system rejuvenates your body automatically. Luckily, you run across an earthling who diagnoses your problem and tells you that you need food. Better yet, he recommends a place where you can eat, called McDonalds'.

You follow his directions, go into the establishment, and manage to order some of this **Earth** food that contains all the nutrients you need. You immediately feel better. But then, the man who gave you the food wants "seven dollars" for what he gave you. You have no idea what he's talking about. After quite an argument, some men in uniforms come and take you away and put you in a small room with bars. What in the world is going on, you wonder.

You didn't mean anyone harm, yet you are in "jail," whatever that is. You can no longer move about as you want, and you resent it. You only wanted to be about your own business, and now you have a sore leg, fatigue from the long walk, and a stomachache from eating too much. Nice place, this **Earth**.

Does this sound farfetched? People raised in dysfunctional families, or families where God's ways are not practiced, have experiences similar to that of the alien. They find themselves transported into adult life where spiritual principles that have never been explained to them govern their relationships and well-being. They hurt, are hungry, and may end up in jail, but they never know the principles that could have helped them operate in accord with reality instead of against it. So, they are prisoners of their own ignorance.

God's world is set up with laws and principles. Spiritual realities are as real as gravity, and if you do not know them, you will discover their effects. Just because we have not been taught these principles of life and relationships does not mean they will not rule. We need to know the principles God has woven into life and operate according to them. Below are ten laws that you can learn to begin to experience life differently. The first two laws are addendums to Volume I. The remaining eight laws are "HOT OFF THE PRESS." A common thread in this teaching will center on Learning to Set Limits.

Any confusion of responsibility and ownership in our lives is a problem of setting limits or boundaries. Just as homeowners set physical property lines around their land, **we need to set mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual boundaries for our lives to help us distinguish**

what is our responsibility and what isn't. This is one of the most serious problems facing Christians today. Many sincere, dedicated believers struggle with tremendous confusion about when it is biblically appropriate to set limits. When it is appropriate to say “no.” When confronted with their lack of limits, they raise good questions:

- ◆ Can I set limits and still be a loving person?
- ◆ What are legitimate limits?
- ◆ What if someone is upset or hurt by my saying “no”?
- ◆ How do I answer someone who wants my time, love, energy, or money?
- ◆ Why do I feel guilty or afraid when I consider saying “no” to others?
- ◆ How do setting limits relate to submission?
- ◆ Aren't boundaries selfish?

Misinformation about the Bible's answers to these issues has led to much wrong teaching about setting limits. Not only that, but many clinical psychological symptoms, such as depression, anxiety disorders, eating disorders, addictions, impulsive disorders, guilt problems, shame issues, panic disorders, and marital and relational struggles, find their root in conflicts with setting limits.

In the physical world, boundaries are easy to see. Fences, signs, walls, moats, manicured lawns, or hedges are all physical boundaries. In their differing appearances, they give the same message: this is where my property begins. The owner of the property is legally responsible for what happens on his or her property. Non-owners are not responsible for the property.

Physical boundaries mark a visible property line that someone holds the deed to. You can go to the county courthouse and find out exactly where those boundaries of responsibility are and whom to call if you have business there.

In the spiritual world, boundaries and limits are just as real, but often harder to see. **The goal of this material is to help you define your intangible boundaries and to recognize them as an ever present reality that can increase your love and save your life.** In reality, these boundaries define your soul, and they help you to guard and maintain it. (Prov. 4:23)

Boundaries define us. They define what is me and what is not me. A boundary shows me where I end and someone else begins, leading me to a sense of ownership.

Knowing what I am to own and take responsibility for gives me freedom.

Think how confusing it would be if someone told you to "guard this property diligently, because I will hold you responsible for what happens here," and then did not tell the boundaries of the property. Or they did not give you means with which to protect the property? This would be not only confusing but also potentially dangerous.

This is exactly what happens to us emotionally and spiritually. God designed a world where we all should inhabit our own souls, and we are responsible for the things that make up "us." **"The heart knows its own bitterness, and no one shares its joy"** (Prov. 14:10). We have to deal with what is in our soul, and boundaries help us to define what that is. If we are not shown the parameters, or are taught wrong parameters, we are in for

much pain.

The Bible tells us clearly what our parameters are and how to protect them, but often our family, or other past relationships, confuses us about our parameters.

In addition to showing us what we are responsible for, boundaries help us to define what is not on our property and what we are not responsible for. We are not, for example, responsible for other people's actions. Nowhere are we commanded to have "other-control," although we spend a lot of time and energy trying to get it!

We are responsible **to** others and **for** ourselves. Many times others have situations that are too big to bear. They do not have enough strength, resources, or knowledge to carry the load, and they need help. Denying ourselves to do for others what they cannot do for themselves is showing the sacrificial love of Christ. This is what Christ did for us. He did what we could not do for ourselves; He saved us. This is being responsible **"to."**

On the other hand, everyone has responsibilities that only he or she should handle. No one should do certain things **for** us. We are expected to deal with our own feelings, attitudes, and behaviors, as well as the responsibilities God has given to each one of us.

It is very important to determine what "me" is, where my boundary of responsibility is and where someone else's begins.

This material presents a biblical view of setting limits or boundaries: what they are, what they protect, how they are developed, how they are injured, how to repair them, and how to use them. My goal in this message is to help

you use biblical limits appropriately to achieve the relationships and purposes that God intends for you as His child.

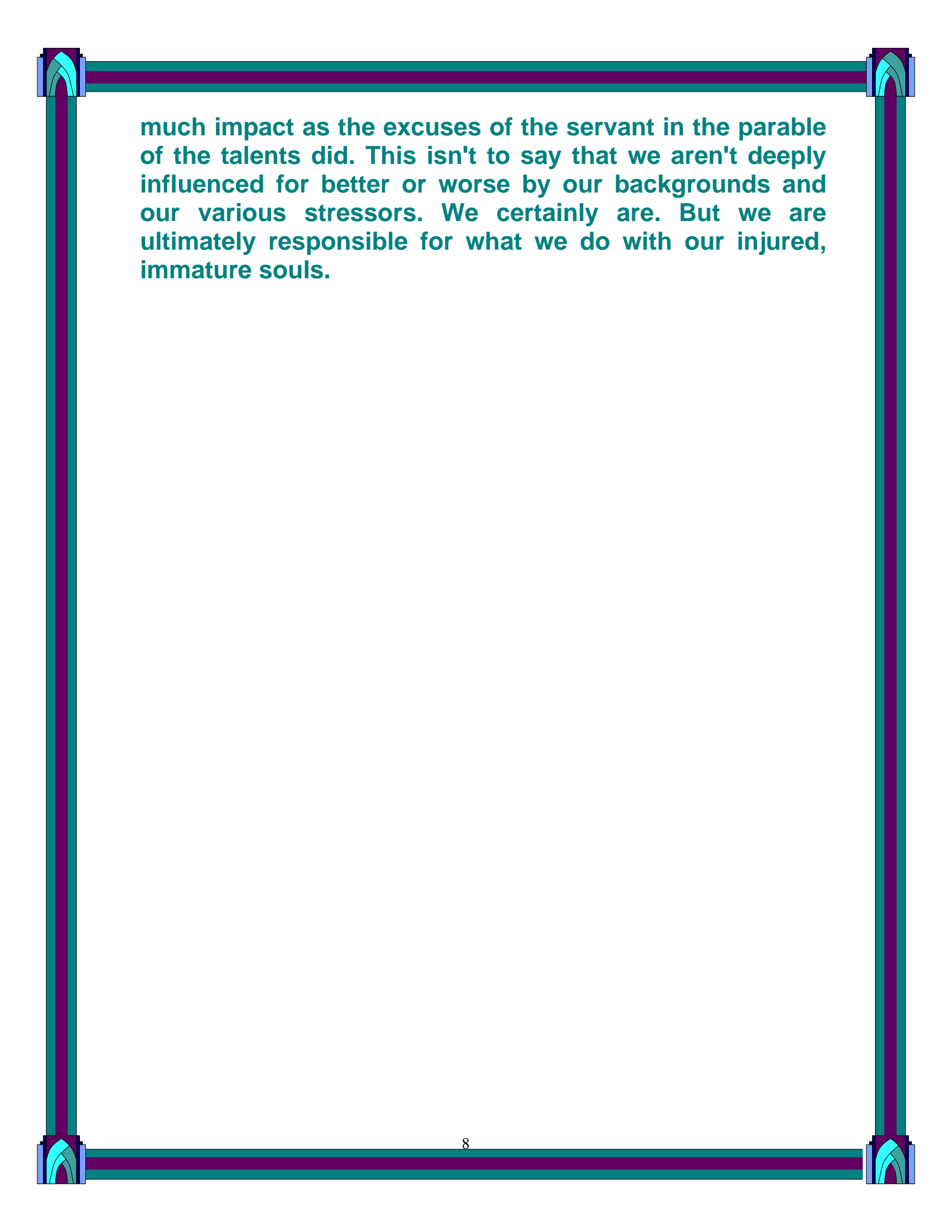
This material aims to help you see the deeply biblical nature of limits as they operate in the character of God, His universe, and His people.

By the time you complete this study you should have internalized a deep sense of personal responsibility for your lives. You should hold these convictions:

- ◆ My success or failure in life largely depends on me.
- ◆ Though I am to look to God and others for comfort and instruction, I alone am responsible for my choices.
- ◆ Though I am deeply affected by my significant relationships throughout my life, I can't blame my problems on anyone but myself.
- ◆ Though I will always need support, I can't depend on some over responsible individual to constantly bail me out of spiritual, emotional, financial, or relational crises.

This sense of "my life is up to me" is founded in God's concern that we take responsibility for our lives. He wants us to use our talents in productive ways, as Jesus discussed in the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). And this sense of responsibility will follow us all through our adult lives and even beyond the grave, at the judgment seat of Christ.

You can imagine how well not taking ownership over our lives will come across to the Lord then: "But I had a dysfunctional family." "But I was lonely." "But I didn't have much energy." The rationalizing "buts" will have as



much impact as the excuses of the servant in the parable of the talents did. This isn't to say that we aren't deeply influenced for better or worse by our backgrounds and our various stressors. We certainly are. But we are ultimately responsible for what we do with our injured, immature souls.

LAW OF RECIPROcity (ADDENDUM)

The law of cause and effect is a basic law of life. The Bible calls it the Law of Reciprocity. "You reap whatever you sow. If you sow to your own flesh, you will reap corruption from the flesh; but if you sow to the Spirit, you will reap eternal life from the Spirit" (Gal. 6:7, 8). When God tells us that we will reap what we sow, he is not punishing us; he's telling us how things really are. If you smoke cigarettes, you most likely will develop a smoker's hack, and you may even get lung cancer. If you overspend, you most likely will get calls from creditors, and you may even go hungry because you have no money for food. On the other hand, if you eat right and exercise regularly, you may experience fewer colds and bouts with the flu. If you budget wisely, you will have money for the bill collectors and for the grocery store.

Sometimes, however, people don't reap what they sow, because someone else steps in and reaps the consequences for them. If every time you overspent, your mother sent you money to cover check overdrafts or high credit-card balances, you wouldn't reap the consequences of your spend-thrift ways. Your mother would be protecting you from the natural consequences: the hounding of creditors or going hungry.

The Law of Sowing and Reaping can be interrupted. And it is often people who have no limits who do the interrupting. Just as we can interfere with the law of gravity by catching a glass falling off the table, people can interfere with the Law of Cause and Effect by stepping in and rescuing irresponsible people. Rescuing a person from the natural consequences of their behavior enables him

to continue in irresponsible behavior. The Law of Sowing and Heaping has not been repealed. It is still operating. But the doer is not suffering the consequences; someone else is.

Today we call a person who continually rescues another person a codependent. In effect, codependent, people "co-sign the note" of life for the irresponsible person. Then they end up paying the bills — physically, emotionally, and spiritually. And the spendthrift continues out of control with no consequences. He continues to be loved, pampered, and treated nicely.

Establishing limits helps codependent people stop interrupting the Law of Sowing and Reaping in their loved one's life. Limits force the person who is doing the sowing to also do the reaping.

It doesn't help just to confront the irresponsible person. Confronting an irresponsible person is not painful to that individual; only consequences are.

If the person is wise, confrontation results in a behavior change. But people caught in destructive patterns are usually not wise. They need to feel the consequences before they change their behavior. The Bible tells us it is worthless to confront foolish people: **"Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you" (Proverbs. 9:8).**

Codependent people bring insults and pain onto themselves when they confront irresponsible people. In reality, they just need to stop interrupting the law of sowing and reaping in someone's life.

THE LAW OF RESPONSIBILITY (ADDENDUM)

Many times when people hear a message on taking responsibility for their own lives, they say, "That's so self-centered. We should love one another and deny ourselves." Or, they actually become selfish and self-centered. Or, they feel "guilty" when they do someone a favor. These are unbiblical views of responsibility.

The Law of Responsibility includes loving others. The commandment to love is the entire law for Christians (Gal. 5:13, 14). Jesus calls it "my" commandment, "Love each other as I have loved you" (John 15:12). Anytime you are not loving others, you are not taking full responsibility for yourself; you have disowned your heart.

Let's clarify the Law of Responsibility. We are to love one another, not be one another. I can't feel your feelings for you. I can't think for you. I can't behave for you. I can't work through the disappointment that limits bring for you. In short, I can't grow for you; only you can. Likewise, you can't grow for me. The biblical mandate for our own personal growth is **"Continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose"** (Phil. 2:12-13). You are responsible for your growth. I am responsible for my growth. We can help guide others but we can not grow for them.

An additional theme in the Bible says that we are to treat others the way we would want to be treated. If we were down and out, helpless and without hope, we would certainly want help and provision. This is a very

important side of being responsible.

Another aspect of being responsible is not only in the giving but in the setting of limits on another's destructive and irresponsible behavior. **It is not good to rescue someone from the consequences of their sin, for you will only have to do it again.** You have reinforced the pattern (Proverbs. 19:19). It is the same principle spoken of in child rearing; it is hurtful to not have limits with others. It leads them to destruction. (Proverbs. 23:13).

A strong strand throughout the Bible stresses that you are to **give** to needs and put **limits** on sin.

THE LAW OF MOTIVATION

What are your motives? Have you ever felt unappreciated for all that you do? Do you feel weary of doing good? Have you felt that you “love too much?” The Bible says that true love leads to a blessed state and a state of cheer. Love brings joy and happiness, not depression. If your loving is depressing you, it's probably not love."

As we spent more time together, you will learned that a lot of your "doing" and sacrificing was not motivated by love but by fear. I was counseling a young woman last year who learned early in life that if she did not do what her mother wanted, her mother would withdraw love from her. As a result, she learned to give reluctantly. Her motive for giving was not love, but fear of losing love.

The young woman was also afraid of other people's anger. Because her father frequently yelled at her when she was a girl, she learned to fear angry confrontations. This fear kept her from saying no to others. Self-centered people often get angry when someone tells them **no**.

She said yes out of fear that she would lose love and that other people would get angry at her. These false motives and others keep us bound:

1. **Fear of loss of love or abandonment.** People who say yes and then resent saying yes fear losing someone's love. This is the dominant motive of martyrs. They give to get love, and when they don't get it, they feel abandoned.
2. **Fear of others' anger.** Because of old hurts some people can't stand for anyone to be upset with them.
3. **Fear of loneliness.** Some people give in to others'

because they feel that they will "win" love and end their loneliness.

4. **Fear of losing the "good me" inside.** We are made to love. As a result, when we are not loving, we are in pain. Many people cannot say, "I love you and I do not want to do that." Such a statement does not make sense to them. They think that to love means to always say yes.

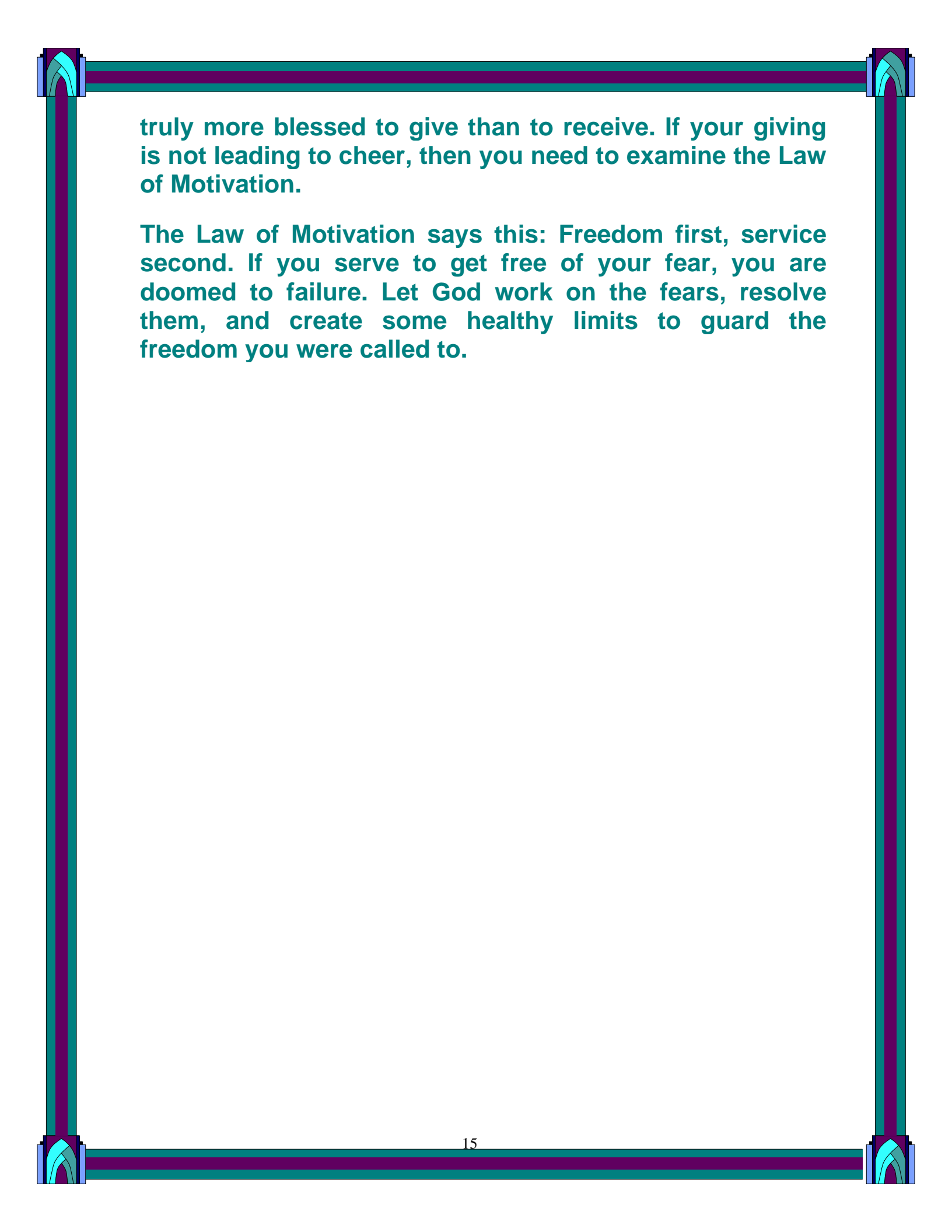
5. **Guilt.** Many people's giving is motivated by guilt. They are trying to do enough good things to overcome the guilt inside and feel good about themselves. When they say no, they feel bad. So they keep trying to earn a sense of goodness.

6. **Payback.** Many people have received things with guilt messages attached. For example, their parents say things like, "I never had it as good as you." "You should be ashamed at all you get." They feel a burden to pay for all they have been given.

7. **Approval.** Many feel as if they are still children seeking parental approval. Therefore, when someone wants something from them, they need to give so that this symbolic parent will be "well pleased."

8. **Over identification with the other's loss.** Many times people have not dealt with all their own disappointments and losses, so whenever they deprive someone else with a no, they "feel" the other person's sadness to the nth degree. They can't stand to hurt someone that badly, so they comply.

The point is this: we were called into freedom, and this freedom results in gratitude, an overflowing heart, and love for others. To give bountifully has great reward. It is



truly more blessed to give than to receive. If your giving is not leading to cheer, then you need to examine the Law of Motivation.

The Law of Motivation says this: Freedom first, service second. If you serve to get free of your fear, you are doomed to failure. Let God work on the fears, resolve them, and create some healthy limits to guard the freedom you were called to.

THE LAW OF POWER

The Apostle Paul admitted: "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. ... For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing . . . waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members" (Rom. 7:15, 19, 23). This is powerlessness. But thank God He does not leave use powerless.

Though you do not have the power in and of yourself to overcome these patterns, you do have the power to do some things that will bring fruits of victory later:

1. You have the power to agree with the truth about issues in your life just like the Apostle Paul. In the Bible this is called "confession." To confess means to "agree with." You have the ability to at least say "that is me." You may not be able to change it yet, but you can confess.

2. You have the power to submit your inability to God. You always have the power to ask for help and yield. You have the power to humble' yourself and turn your life over to Him. You may not be able to make yourself well, but you can call the Doctor! The humbling of yourself commanded in the Bible is always coupled with great promises. If you do what you are able-confess, believe, and ask for help-God will do what you are unable to do-bring about change. (I John 1:9; James 4:7-10; Matt. 5:3, 6).

3. You have the power to search and ask God and others to reveal more and more about what is within you.

4. You have the power to turn from the evil that you find within you. This is called repentance. This does not mean that you'll be perfect; it means that you can see your sinful parts as aspects that you want to change.

5. You have the power to humble yourself and ask God and others to help you with your developmental injuries and leftover childhood needs. Many of your problematic parts come from being empty inside, and you need to seek God and others to have those needs met.

6. You have the power to seek out those that you have injured and make amends. You need to do this in order to be responsible for yourself and your sin, and be responsible to those you have injured. Matthew 5:23-24 says, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift."

You can work on submitting yourself to the process and working with God to change you. You cannot change anything else: not the past, the economy - and especially not other people. You cannot change others. More people suffer from trying to change others than from all the known sickness in the world. And it is impossible.

What you can do is influence others. But there is a trick. Since you cannot get them to change, you must change yourself so that their destructive patterns no longer work on you. Change your way of dealing with them; they may be motivated to change if their old ways no longer work.

Another dynamic that happens when you let go of others is that you begin to get healthy, and they may notice and



envy your health. They may want some of what you have.

One more thing. You need the wisdom to know what is you and what is not you. Pray for the wisdom to know the difference between what you have the power to change and what you do not.

THE LAW OF RESPECT

One word comes up again and again when people describe their issue with saying “no.” “But they won't accept me if I say no.” “But they will get angry if I set limits.” “But they won't speak to me for a week if I tell them how I really feel.”

We fear that others will not respect us for ourselves. We focus on others and lose clarity about ourselves. Sometimes the problem is that we are judging others' limits. We are making judgments when they say “no” to us. We say or think things such as this:

“How could he refuse to come by and pick me up? It's right on his way! He could find some 'time alone' some other time.”

“That's so selfish of her to not come to the luncheon. After all, the rest of us are sacrificing.”

“What do you mean, 'no'? I just need the money for a little while.”

“It seems that, after all I do for you, you could at least do me this one little favor.”

We judge the decisions of others, thinking that we know best how they “ought” to give, and usually that means “they ought to give to me the way I want them to!”

But the Bible says whenever we judge, we will be judged (Matt. 7:1-2). When we judge others' ours decisions fall under the same judgment. If we condemn others', we should expect them to condemn us. This sets up a fear cycle inside that makes us afraid to set the limits that we

need to set. As a result, we comply, then we resent, and the "love" that we have "given" goes sour.

This is where the Law of Respect comes in. As Jesus said, "So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you" (Matt. 7:12). We need to respect the decisions of others. We need to treat their decisions the way we want them to treat ours.

If we love and respect people who tell us no, they will love and respect our no. Freedom begets freedom. If we are walking in the Spirit, we give people the freedom to make their own choices. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom" (II Cor. 3:17). If we are going to judge at all, it needs to be by the "perfect law that gives freedom" (James 1:25).

Our real concern with others should not be "Are they doing what I would do or what I want them to do?" but "Are they really making a free choice?" When we accept others' freedom, we don't get angry, feel guilty, or withdraw our love when they set limits with us. When we accept others' freedom, we feel better about our own.

THE LAW OF EVALUATION

Things can hurt and not harm us. In fact they can even be good for us. And things that feel good can be very harmful to us.

We cause pain by making choices that others do not like but we also cause pain by confronting people when they are wrong. **But if we do not share our anger with another bitterness and hatred can set in.** We need to be honest with one another about how we are hurt. "Speak truthfully to [your] neighbor, for (you) are all members of one body (Eph. 4.25)

No one likes to hear negative things about him or herself. But in the long run it may be good for us. The Bible says that if we are wise, we will learn from it. Admonition from a friend, while it can hurt, it can also help. We need to evaluate the pain our confrontation causes other people. We need to see how this hurt is helpful to others and sometimes the best thing that we can do for them and the relationship. We need to evaluate the pain in a positive light.

THE LAW OF PROACTIVITY

Many of us have known people who, after years of being passive and compliant, suddenly go ballistic, and we wonder what happened. We blame it on the job they are on or the company they've been keeping.

In reality, they had been complying for years, and their pent-up rage explodes. This reactive phase of creation is helpful, especially for victims. They need to get out of the powerless, victimized place in which they may have been forced by physical and sexual abuse, or by emotional blackmail and manipulation. We should herald their emancipation.

But when is enough enough? Reaction phases are **necessary** but not **sufficient** for the establishment of freedom. It is crucial for the two-year-old to throw the peas at Mommy, But to continue that until forty-three is too much. It is crucial for victims of abuse to feel the rage and hatred of being powerless, but to be screaming "victim rights" for the rest of their lives is being stuck in "victim mentality."

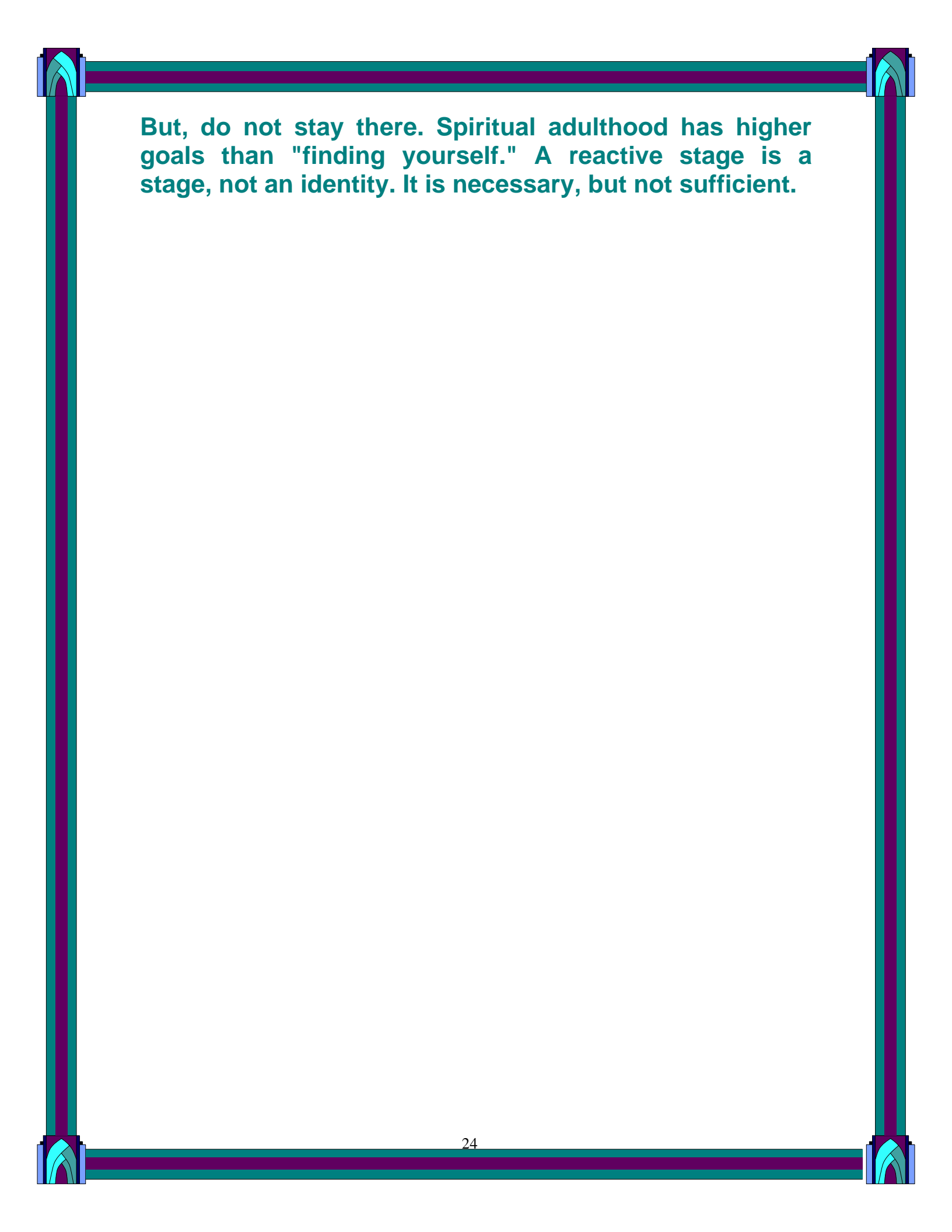
Emotionally, the reactive stance brings diminishing returns. You must react to create limits, but having found them, you must not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature . . . **"you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out for you will be destroyed by each other"** (Gal. 5:13, 15). Eventually, you must rejoin the human race you have reacted to, and establish connections as equals, loving your neighbor as yourself.

This is the beginning of the establishment of proactive, instead of reactive behavior. This is where you are able to use the freedom you gained through reacting to love, enjoy, and serve one another. Proactive people show you what they love, what they want, what they purpose, and what they stand for. These people are very different from those who are known by what they hate, what they don't like, what they stand against, and what they will not do.

While reactive victims are primarily known by their "against" stances, proactive people do not demand rights, they live them. Power is not something you demand or deserve, it is something you express. The ultimate expression of power is love; it is the ability not to express power, but to restrain it. Proactive people are able to "love others as themselves." They have mutual respect. They are able to "die to self and not "return evil for evil." They have gotten past the reactive stance of the law and are able to love and not react.

Listen to Jesus compare the reactive person who is still controlled by the law and others with the free person: "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also" (Matt. 5:38-39).

Do not try to get to freedom without owning your reactive period and feelings. You do not need to act this out, but you do need to express the feelings. You need to practice and gain assertiveness. You need to get far enough away from abusive people to be able to fence your property against further invasion. And then you need to own the treasures you find in your soul.



But, do not stay there. Spiritual adulthood has higher goals than "finding yourself." A reactive stage is a stage, not an identity. It is necessary, but not sufficient.

THE LAW OF ENVY

The New Testament speaks strongly against the envious heart. Consider James: "You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight" (James 4:2).

What does envy have to do with maturity? Envy is probably the basest emotion we have. A direct result of the Fall, it was Satan's sin. The Bible says that he had a wish to "be like the Most High." He envied God. In turn, he tempted Adam and Eve with the same idea, telling them that they could be like God also. Satan and our parents, Adam and Eve, were not satisfied with who they were and could rightfully become. They wanted what they did not have, and it destroyed them.

Envy defines "good" as "what I do not possess," and hates the good that it has. How many times have you heard someone subtly put down the accomplishments of others, somehow robbing them of the goodness they had attained? We all have envious parts to our personalities. But what is so destructive about this particular sin is that it guarantees that we will not get what we want and keeps us perpetually insatiable and dissatisfied.

This is not to say that it is wrong to want things we do not have. God has said that he will give us the desires of our heart. The problem with envy is that it focuses outside ourselves, onto others. If we are focusing on what others have or have accomplished, we are neglecting our responsibilities and will ultimately have an empty heart. Look at the difference in **Galatians 6:4**: "Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take

pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else."

Envy is a self-perpetuating cycle. Victimized people feel empty and unfulfilled. They look at another's sense of fullness and feel envious. This time and energy needs to be spent on taking responsibility for their lack and doing something about it. Taking action is the only way out. "You have not because you ask not." Possessions and accomplishments are not the only things we envy. We can envy a person's character and personality, instead of developing the gifts God has given (Rom. 12:6).

Think of these situations:

A lonely person stays isolated and envious of the close relationships others have.

A single woman withdraws from social life, envying the marriages and families of her friends.

A middle-aged woman feels stuck in her career and wants to pursue something she would enjoy, yet always has a "yes, but . . ." reason why she can't, resenting and envying those who have "gone for it."

A person chooses the righteous life, but envies and resents those who seem to be "having all the fun."

These people are all negating their own actions (Gal. 6:4) and comparing themselves to others, staying stuck

and resentful. Notice the difference between those statements and these:

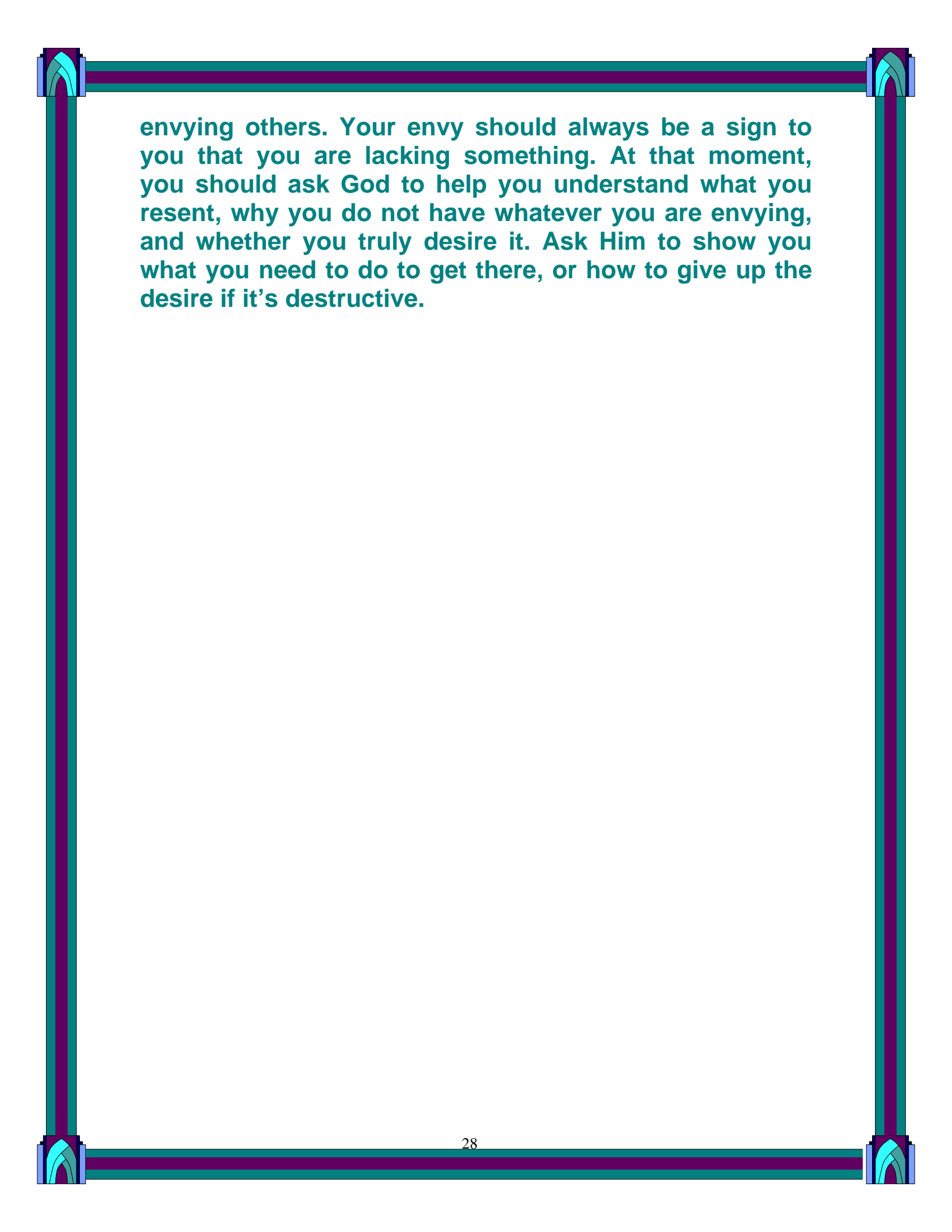
A lonely person owns his lack of relationships and asks himself and God, "I wonder why I always withdraw from people. I can at least go and talk to a counselor about this. Even if I am afraid of social situations, I could seek some help. No one should live this way. I'll make the call."

The single woman asks, "I wonder why I never get asked out, or why I keep getting turned down for dates? What is wrong about what I am doing or how I'm communicating, or where I'm going to meet people? How could I become a more interesting person?"

The middle-aged woman asks herself, "Why am I reluctant to pursue my interests? Why do I feel selfish when I want to quit my job to do something I enjoy? What am I afraid of? If I were really honest, I would notice that the ones who are doing what they like have had to take some risks and sometimes work and go to school to change jobs. That may just be more than I am willing to do."

The righteous person asks himself, "If I am really 'choosing' to love and serve God, why do I feel like a slave? What is wrong with my spiritual life? What is it about me that envies someone living in the gutter?"

These people are questioning themselves instead of



envying others. Your envy should always be a sign to you that you are lacking something. At that moment, you should ask God to help you understand what you resent, why you do not have whatever you are envying, and whether you truly desire it. Ask Him to show you what you need to do to get there, or how to give up the desire if it's destructive.

THE LAW OF ACTIVITY

Human beings are responders and initiators. Many times we have problems because we lack initiative—the God-given ability to propel ourselves into life. We respond to life's invitations and push ourselves into life.

The best boundaries are formed when a child is pushing against the world naturally, and the outside world sets its limits on the child. In this way, the aggressive child has learned limits without losing his or her spirit. Our spiritual and emotional well-being depends on our having this spirit.

Consider the contrast in the parable of the talents. The ones who succeeded were active and assertive. They initiated and pushed. The one who lost out was passive and inactive.

The sad thing is that many people who are passive are not inherently evil or bad people. But evil is an active force and passivity can become an ally of evil by not pushing against it. Passivity never pays off. God will match our effort, but He will never do our work for us. That would be an invasion of our will. He wants us to be assertive and active, seeking and knocking on the door of life.

We know that God is not mean to people who are afraid; Scripture is full of examples of His compassion. But He will not enable passivity. The "wicked and lazy" servant was passive. He did not try. God's grace covers failure, but it will not make up for passivity. We have to do our part.

The sin God rebukes is not trying and failing. Not trying is unacceptable. Trying, failing, and trying again is called learning.

Failing to try will have no good result; evil will triumph. God expresses His opinion toward passivity in **Hebrews 10:38-39**: 'But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved." Passive "shrinking back" is intolerable to God, and when we understand how destructive it is to the soul, we can see why God does not tolerate it. God wants us to "preserve our souls." That is the role setting goals; they define and preserve our property, our soul.

THE LAW OF EXPOSURE

A boundary is a property line. It defines where you begin and end. The Law of Exposure says that your boundaries need to be made visible to others and communicated to them in relationships. We have many problems because relational fears. We are beset by fears of guilt, not being liked, loss of love, loss of connection, loss of approval, receiving anger, being known, and so on. These are all failures in love, and God's plan is that we learn how to love. These relational issues can only be solved in relationships, for that is the context of the problems themselves, and the context of spiritual existence.

Because of these fears, we try to have secret boundaries. We withdraw passively and quietly, instead of communicating an honest no to someone we love. We secretly resent instead of telling someone that we are angry about how they have hurt us. Often, we will privately endure the pain of someone's irresponsibility instead of telling them how their behavior affects us and other loved ones, information that would be helpful to their soul.

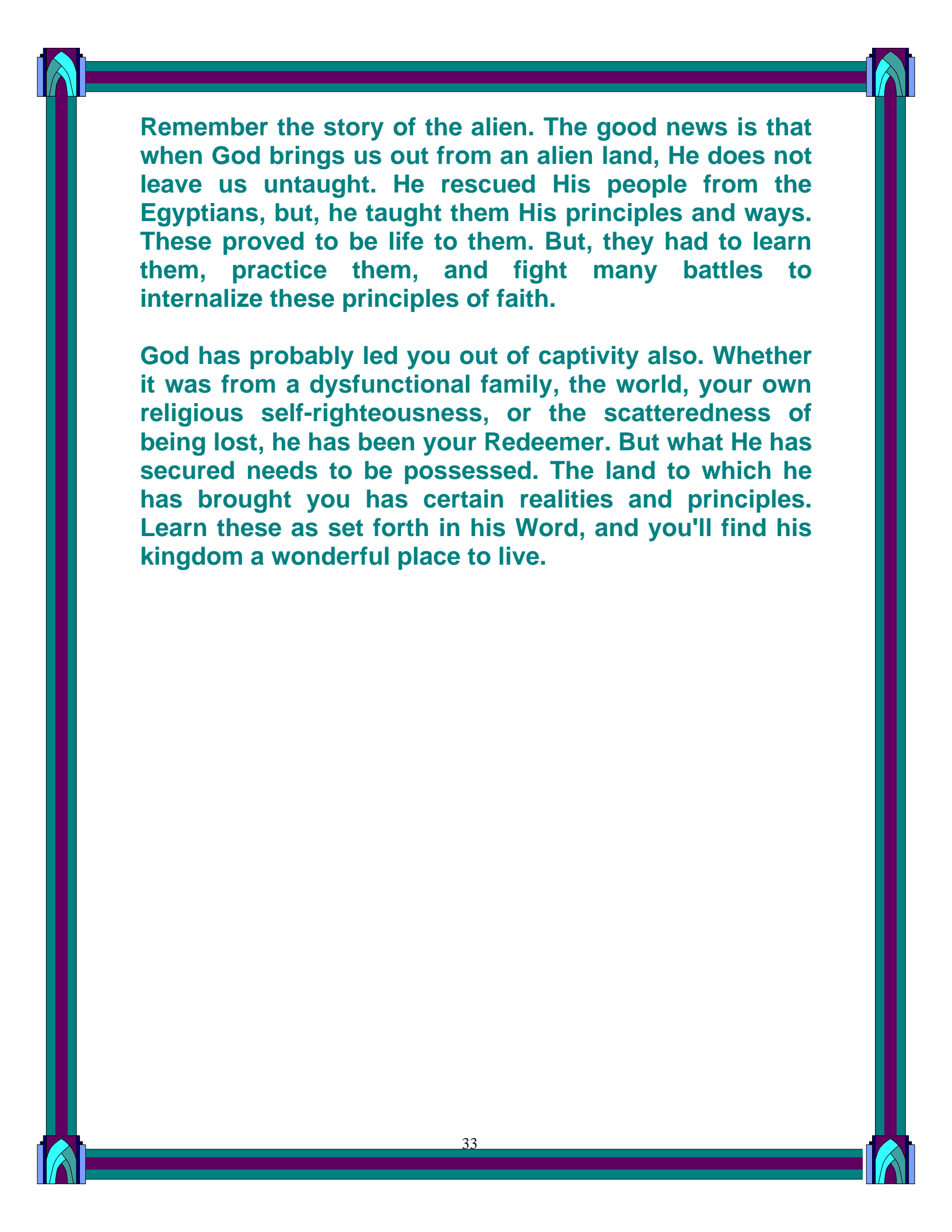
In other situations, a partner will secretly comply with her spouse, not offering her feelings or opinions for twenty years, and then suddenly "express" her feelings by filing for divorce. Or parents will "love" their children by giving in over and over for years, not setting limits, and resenting the love they are showing. The children grow up never feeling loved, because of the lack of honesty, and their parents are befuddled, thinking, "After all we've done."

In these instances, because of unexpressed feelings, the relationships suffered. An important thing to remember about feelings is that they exist, and they will affect us, whether or not we communicate them. In the same way that the alien suffered from not knowing the laws of Earth, we suffer when we do not communicate the reality of our feelings. If our feelings are not communicated and exposed directly, they will be communicated indirectly or through manipulation.

The Bible speaks to this issue in many places. Listen to the words of Paul: "Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body." **"But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you'" (Eph. 5:13-14).**

The Bible continually speaks of our being in the light and of the light as the only place where we have access to God and others. But, because of our fears, we hide aspects of ourselves in the darkness, where the devil has an opportunity. When our boundaries are in the light, that is, are communicated openly, our personalities begin to integrate for the first time. They become "visible," in Paul's words, and then they become light. They are transformed and changed. Healing always takes place in the light.

David speaks of it in this way: "Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place" (Ps. 51:6). God wants real relationship with us and wants us to have real relationship with each other. Real relationship means that I am in the light with all of the aspects of myself that are difficult to communicate.



Remember the story of the alien. The good news is that when God brings us out from an alien land, He does not leave us untaught. He rescued His people from the Egyptians, but, he taught them His principles and ways. These proved to be life to them. But, they had to learn them, practice them, and fight many battles to internalize these principles of faith.

God has probably led you out of captivity also. Whether it was from a dysfunctional family, the world, your own religious self-righteousness, or the scatteredness of being lost, he has been your Redeemer. But what He has secured needs to be possessed. The land to which he has brought you has certain realities and principles. Learn these as set forth in his Word, and you'll find his kingdom a wonderful place to live.