

# PHASE TWO: TAKING ACTION TO GET FREE

## LESSON TWELVE:

We identify areas of our lives that haven't been fully yielded to God's control and accept His timing in delivering us from old ways, acting on the changes He wants to make. Psalm 143:10 "Help me to do your will, for you are my God. Lead me in good paths, for your Spirit is good." Psalm 37:5

### NEW LIFE FREEDOM    LESSON 12

We've been analyzing our issues and made first steps in changing our ways so they align with healthier thinking. It's usually not too hard to see the biggest problem. It's the train wreck that's caused the most damage, and we start addressing it first. But as we go along, we begin to notice other things that don't seem consistent with our new intentions to put God in control. You may have seen some of these things as nobody else's business. These are the areas we're sure we can handle alone – no big deal, you can trust your own judgment. Sooner or later you realize your judgment hasn't been that successful.

These are often our typical daily reactions or choices that we just accept as normal and okay. We're used to them and don't stop to think about why we choose them or what they produce. Some are so subtle we don't even realize we're doing them. What's your automatic reaction when someone cuts you off in traffic, or a family member asks you to interrupt what you're doing and help them? How do you handle a stressful day at work, and how do you plan to unwind afterward? Where do those attitudes come from? There are hundreds of these situations that can reveal a lot about our ideas of who's in control and how we should take care of ourselves. They're also areas where we can start justifying ourselves, telling God we really couldn't be expected to act any other way under those circumstances.

God will help us identify the specific areas that we haven't released to Him if we ask. They show us that we can't expect to be transformed by our own willpower alone. It's going to take God's insight to figure out what else should be changed. David experienced this and wrote about it in Psalm 143:10. "Help me to do Your will, for You are my God. Lead me in the good path, for Your Spirit is good." We need His direction as well as His strength to even see that we need a different response. That's why David asked God to lead as well as empower him so he wouldn't just keep following the same old way.

David also wrote in Psalm 37:5, "Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust Him to help you and He will do it." This is inviting God to be present throughout the day. It's telling Him that nothing is off limits or too small for His attention. Remember, we were given the Holy Spirit to walk alongside us. When we get used to talking with Him, we learn more details about what's really going on in our

minds and driving our reactions. We become more sensitive to His voice and more willing to trust His leadership.

God will reveal lots of areas that need changes, but that doesn't mean He wants you to jump in and tackle them all at once. We've learned that our freedom is a process and it's important to keep that in mind here. Think of a time when you had a major project to do. Did you break it up into sections? Did you get distracted as you dealt with each part by noticing things that weren't really involved with that point? It's like picking up something that needs to be put away and taking it to one room and then getting sidetracked by something you see in another room on the way. God doesn't want you to get overwhelmed by the size of this process. He's patient and knows how impossible it can seem.

1 Peter 1:13-14 tells us to stay on target. "So prepare your minds for action and exercise self-control. Put all your hope in the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know better then." Stay tuned in to Jesus as your hope. Don't compare your progress to someone else's. This isn't a contest. Give God your full attention for each change and ask Him to help you know when you're ready for the next one.

James 4:10 says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up." Humility is admitting to God how much you need Him and listening to Him first. We have used a song at New Life called "I Will Make Room For You" that talks about this attitude. Here are some of the lyrics that will help us get the right focus. "Here is where I lay it down, You are all I'm chasing now. This is my surrender. And I will make room for You to do whatever you want to. Your way is better." We set aside our broken plans and give Him space to work His miracles.

Keep in mind that when God removes an old strategy of handling your life, you need to be prepared to let Him put in the substitute. Satan is ready to make his own suggestions, and so are some of our old friends or family. They may feel threatened by our new lifestyles. 1 Corinthians 15:33 warns, "Do not be misled. Bad company corrupts good character." Changing the places you go and the company you keep can help you stay on track.

Jesus gave an example of why we need to have something new in place as soon as possible. He tells this story in Matthew 12:43-45; "When an evil spirit goes out of a person, it travels over dry country looking for a place to rest. If it can't find one, it says to itself, 'I will go back to my house.' So it goes back and finds the house empty. Then it goes out and brings along seven other spirits even worse than itself, and they come and live there." When someone gives up an addiction, a new one is often taken up to replace it, usually with the same bad results. That's a possibility for all of us if we don't replace our old problem with a solution that directs us toward God. It's too easy to excuse a new choice as "not as bad as the old one" without thinking about where this one will lead. We need to have a plan for handling temptation so we won't go backward.

This process can seem like two steps forward and three backward at times, but we can keep encouraging each other and recognizing the rewards we get at each new change. People are starting to notice that we're committed to being different. We remember what Jesus has done for us and that He's

calling out our accuser who's trying to distract and discourage us by using our thoughts against us. We are learning how to tell when a thought isn't consistent with what we see in God's word and how to take it captive. Galatians 5:16 reminds us, "So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves." God is always listening and ready to help.

#### Scripture references

Psalm 143:10 and 37:5, 1 Peter 1:13-14, James 4:10, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Matthew 12:43-45, Galatians 5:16