

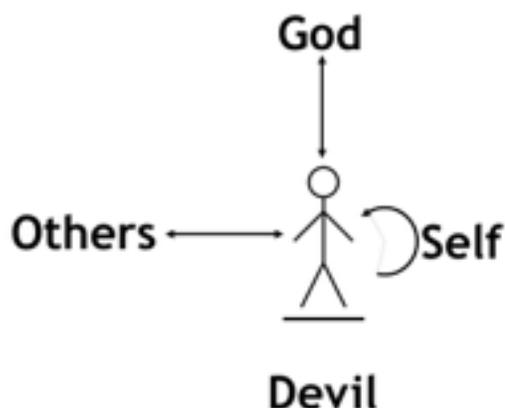
Finding Freedom Prayer Model

By Jason Lehfeltd

God's Perfect Plan

The basis of the Finding Freedom prayer model is founded on aligning our lives to the word of God. When Jesus was asked what was the most important commandment he replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Mark 12:30-31). Our call as believers is simple in concept, love God, love others and love ourselves. Here is my picture of what that looks like.

The stickman in the middle is you, me, or anyone else who has given their life to Jesus. Through the gift of salvation, we have entered into a relationship with God. The vertical line between God and the stickman represents our relational connection with the Father. According to God's perfect plan, our love, affection, worship, and prayers freely flow to God, while His love, truths and power are to flow into our lives.



The horizontal line between the stickman and Others represents the call upon our lives to love others. The curved line represents the love we have for ourselves. To complete the picture, we must include the spiritual reality of the presence of Satan and his kingdom of darkness. In Roman's 16:20 it says, "and soon the peace of God will crush Satan under your feet." The horizontal line dividing the stickman from Satan represents God's will, in that our lives should not be influenced by the demonic spirits that seek to steal, kill and destroy our lives (John 10:10a).

Have you ever experienced moments, days or even seasons where you felt close to God, connected to other people and content with yourself? If so, then you were experiencing what I call God's perfect plan. Whether you knew it or not, your life was likely in alignment with the above diagram. You were loving God, loving others, loving yourself and not allowing any influence from the kingdom of darkness.

These moments, days or seasons are sweet times. However, the peace that we enjoy in these times can vanish in a heartbeat. That's where the Finding Freedom prayer model becomes useful. The prayer model provides a framework to assist us in partnering with the Holy Spirit to identify and pray through issues in such a way that we will more consistently experience breakthroughs. The prayer model helps guide us through effective repentance.

In the Greek, the word *repentance* means "to change one's mind or purpose." While many people use the words confession and repentance interchangeably, I submit to you that based on the definition of the Greek word, repentance encompasses much more than just confession. In the Finding Freedom prayer model, we use five basic types of prayers to usher people into repentance. We simply teach people to CONFESS, RENOUNCE, FORGIVE, REBUKE, and DECLARE in alignment with the revelation and power of the Holy Spirit. So let me explain the application of the prayer model using a practical example.

Take a moment and think back to a time when you were hurt by the words or actions of another person. One moment you were at peace and having a totally fine day, and the next moment your emotions were probably spinning like a category 5 hurricane! Some of the feelings whirling around in your heart and head were likely hurt, anger, hatred, fear, and rejection. One thing is for sure, whatever you were feeling it quickly destroyed any feelings of love, care, or concern you had for that other person in a heartbeat.

If you are like me, before your heart got a second beat in, unloving thoughts about this person began to fill your head. Often times I find some of the unloving thoughts take the form of negative or devaluing labels. I picture these labels like stick-on name tags that now define the person who hurt me. Written on these name tags are words like jerk, cheater, liar, back-stabber, loser, or even worse. Out of our hurt and highly emotional state, some of us unfortunately verbalize these labels, letting that other person know what we really think of them, while others may emotionally shutdown or runaway. Regardless of which response you choose, the churning in our hearts and head doesn't typically stop there.

Long after the situation has ended, many of us continue to replay the hurtful situation, especially the unloving words and actions of the other person, over and over in our head. Rehearsing the situation simply re-fuels our anger and increases the intensity of our unloving and relationally destructive thoughts. In no time, the other person has become 100% at fault for all our hurt and pain, and is now the villain.

As a villain, we consider this person completely evil and negate any good qualities they may have. This can lead us to entertain some bad conclusions regarding the motives and beliefs of the other person. Those thoughts may sound something like, "I know she meant to hurt me," or "he never thinks of anyone but himself," or "she has never respected me," or "he thinks I'm stupid," or "she doesn't love me." While we don't really know the other person's thoughts or beliefs about us, in these times of emotional upheaval, we become convinced our conclusions are 100% true and accurate.

In some situations, the destructive thoughts and bad conclusions don't stop at the person who hurt us, but also infiltrate our thinking about ourselves, as well as God. In the heat of an argument the hurtful words are flying like flaming arrows. Some of those devaluing and destructive arrows strike deep into our hearts. We then begin to believe those hurtful words are true. We find ourselves contending with thoughts like, "I'm a failure," or "I'm stupid," or "I'm a horrible husband," or "I'm not enough." We can easily allow the words spoken by the other person to destroy the way we see ourselves.

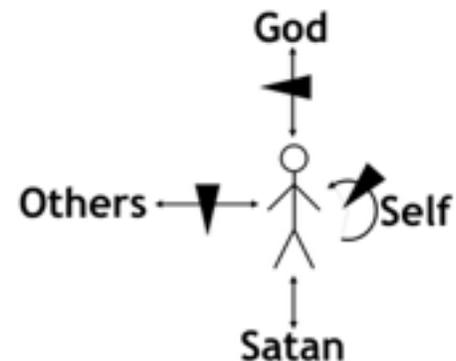
Not only do we believe things about ourselves which are not true, we do the same with God. In our hurt, pain and loneliness we come to bad conclusions about God which totally defy scripture. We begin to believe thoughts like, "God abandoned me," or "God doesn't love me," or "God won't forgive me." I call all these conclusions which don't align with the Word of God lies. As much as our heads may be able to quote the scriptures which oppose these thoughts, the fact that these thoughts are in our head simply means our hearts have not fully embraced God's truth about who He says He is. So lets take a look at the impact these painful emotions and destructive thoughts have on the diagram of God's perfect plan.

Disrupting God's Perfect Plan

First of all, the strong feelings like anger, hate and rejection rise up and act as a wedge in your relationship with the other person. In our hearts these strong emotions serve as wedges,

blocking the flow of God's love between you and the other person. As that old classic song says, "you've lost that loving feeling!" In addition to the emotions, the wedge is made up of negative labels, as well as bad conclusions you've made about the other person and their motives. The wedge consists of all the things you are holding against them!

When we make the conscious or unconscious choice to not do life God's way, this is what the Bible calls sin. In the Greek, the interpretation of the English word sin is translated "to miss the mark." Sometimes we can miss the mark by a little, or other times by a lot, but in the end, when we miss the mark, we are in sin. God's command was to love our neighbors. When we do unloving things like hate, blame, label and judge others, we miss the mark. Our sin is represented by the wedge in the relationship between us and God. To me, the scripture which paints this picture the clearest is Isaiah 59:2, which reads, "But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear."



This doesn't mean God doesn't love you. This doesn't mean you have lost your salvation. It's simply reflects the reality that there is a negative impact to our relationship with God when we sin. The wedge leaves us feeling distant and separated in our relationships with others. Whether you feel it right away or not, undealt with sin in your life will begin to create distance and separation in your relationship with God. Over time, you might not sense His presence as well as you did before, or maybe you just find it's more difficult to hear His leadings. Sin fundamentally destroys relationships with God and others.

Just like the other two wedges in the diagram, the wedge in our relationship with ourselves comes in as we think, do or say things about ourselves which oppose God's way. Remember, His command is to also love ourselves. When we entertain negative, unloving thoughts and conclusions about ourselves, we usher in a wedge into our relationship with ourselves.

If you look closely at the diagram, you'll notice there is a vertical line between the stickman and Satan. This denotes the relational connection that you have now created with the demonic kingdom of darkness. When we sin, we open up the door to additional influences and attacks from the demonic realm.

So there you have it, in a matter of moments you have wreaked havoc on every single relationship in the diagram. While this may not be what you want to see or hear, it is what you need to realize if you truly desire to see your heart restored to peace. Only by being able to recognize and identify all of the issues which are contributing to your condition will you be able to effectively pray through your situation and start finding freedom. All of the types of prayer that make up the Finding Freedom prayer model are different aspects of repentance. They work together, along with the power of the Holy Spirit, to change your sinful emotions, beliefs, conclusions and behaviors, aligning you with God's perfect plan.

What the Finding Freedom Prayer Model is Not

The finding freedom prayer model is not a procedure. While I am about to describe each type of prayer that makes up the model using a stepwise approach, I am not implying that you just pray through a situation using the exact sequence of prayers you will find freedom. That would

be the definition of a procedure, not a model. The foundation of an effective prayer time is built on entering into a relationship with God and allowing the Holy Spirit to lead. While rigidly following the exact prayer sequence may be better than doing nothing, it will not produce the fullness of breakthrough that God desires you to experience.

The other pitfall that many people fall into is believing that if they just pray through an issue one time they will find freedom. While miracles do happen, and like anyone else, I love it when they do, my experience indicates that “one prayer wonders” that leave you 100% completely and totally free of an issue after 1 prayer session are very rare. Don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying the prayer model doesn’t work. If I knew anything better I’d be sharing it with you! What I am saying is that by following the leading of the Holy Spirit and using this prayer model you will FIND freedom. Through your diligent and heart-felt prayers, God will peel a layer or level off your soul, and you will experience a breakthrough that will leave you feeling more at peace. However, be prepared for the fact that you will likely be revisiting parts or portions of the issue numerous times before you experience the full renewing of your mind, will and emotions. Enough disclaimers... lets get to the prayer model!

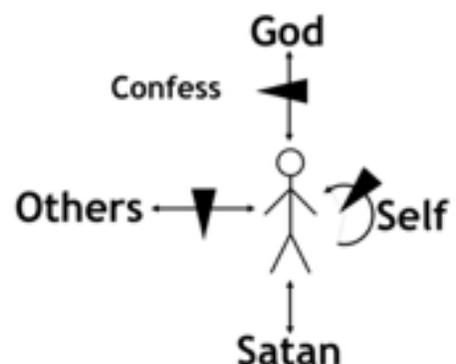
Finding Freedom Prayer Model

By comparing the first diagram of God’s perfect plan with the second diagram of a less-than godly response to getting hurt or offended you can clearly see there are a variety of issues that need addressed to get our lives back in aligned with God’s perfect plan. God’s solution to this problems is clearly laid out in Acts 3:19 which says, “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.” I don’t know about you, but when I’m emotionally bound up, this promise of God’s refreshing sounds too good to be true. However, like most of His promises they come with conditions. Our responsibility is to repent. So let’s explore each of the types of prayer that will help you learn a process of repentance that will lead to a more tangible changing of your ways, and experience of God’s refreshing power.

Confess Your Sins

When I’m struggling in any sort of a situation which has got me in the place of needing God’s promised refreshing, the first thing I want to do is focus on getting rid of the wedge between myself and God. If you or I are going to have any hope of winning the spiritual battle we are in, then we want all the power and favor of God on our side. So while I said this prayer model is not a procedure, each and every time I begin a prayer session I start with confession. My reasoning behind this is expressed in 1 John 1:9 which says, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness.” What a great promise! Not only will we receive forgiveness from God for our sinful ways, our confession opens the door for His cleansing power to be released.

If you recall, the wedge between you and God in the diagram represents your sins. By learning to quickly confess your sins, you start to destroy the things that are blocking or hindering the flow of God’s love, insight, and power in your life. I say quickly because the longer you stew on the hurt and unloving things the other person said or did, the deeper the impact our sinful thoughts and feelings have in your soul. As difficult as it is when we are hurt and offended to not blame the other person for our pain and turmoil, your path to experiencing peace



begins with you taking responsibility for your own sinful thoughts, unloving and judgmental conclusions, and any spiteful actions, and confess them to God. These are *your* sins. Yes, the other person involved may have a longer and more egregious list of sins in your mind, but those are not your responsibility. Nor are their sins keeping you from getting your soul back to peace again.

In the Greek, the word *confess* means “to speak in agreement with.” Our prayers of confession are built on the premise that we recognize and agree that our unloving thoughts and response to the situation are in fact sin and that we desire God to forgive us for the ways we have fallen short and missed the mark of His love. Let me draw your attention to the word *speak* in this definition. I implore you to pray all of the prayers that make up the Finding Freedom prayer model out loud.

Proverbs 18:21 says, “The tongue has the power of life and death.” When you are in a spiritual battle, which is exactly what you're in when praying through issues like this, I find praying out loud to be much more effective. I have regularly experienced more breakthroughs and peace when I pray out loud. Your prayers do not have to be very loud at all. I have found even a faint whisper tends to be far more fruitful than just thinking through these prayers in my head.

Confession prayers, like all of the types of prayers that make up the Finding Freedom prayer model, are relatively simple, straightforward, and very specific to the circumstance you are praying through. The words I encourage people to start off with when confessing are something like, “Father forgive me...”, and follow that up with all the unloving feelings you have held on to, as well as unloving things you have said or done. Here is an example of a confession prayer for someone who has experienced a situation like I have described above. To make the prayer feel more personal, I chose a name, John, to represent the “offender”.

Father, forgive me for holding anger and hatred towards John. Please forgive me for losing my cool and calling him a liar, and a loser. I ask you to forgive me Father for judging John and telling my friends about what he did, so they would hate him too. Forgive me for my pride, thinking that I am better than him and that I would never say or do what he did to me. Lord, deep down I was just really hurt by what John said. I felt rejected by him and retaliated in hopes of hurting him for the way he treated me. I'm sorry, that was a wrong way to respond.

This confession prayer gives you a practical example of the way to begin to remove the wedge between yourself and God. Most people have rarely, if ever, prayed like this when they have been hurt or offended by another person. More people have likely prayed “God I forgive them,” and wondered why their heart and head are still spinning with all the unloving thoughts and feelings. Now, maybe you can see why that one prayer is so ineffective when it comes to helping you get your heart back to peace. Getting face to face with the Father and acknowledging the way we missed the mark in this situation, is critical to assuming a posture of humility before our Lord. If we stand believing we are completely innocent, we are likely deceived and blinded by our self-righteous pride. We need the power of His grace to be released in our lives to help us find the freedom we desire. And I'm sure you know His word which says, “God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble” as stated in James 4:6. I challenge you to start embracing and loving prayers of confession. When you do, you will begin to experience more of His transforming grace which releases His forgiveness and cleansing that your heart desires. Confession is a great start, but as you've seen, we haven't even started dealing with all the judgmental labels and unloving conclusions that were swirling

around in your head. To win the battle of your mind, you will need to learn how to renounce these thoughts which oppose the loving ways of God.

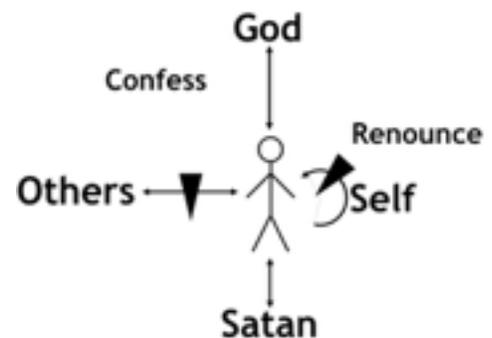
Renounce the Lies

Our minds are the control center of our lives. All of our perceptions of each situation are made by our minds. The beliefs you and I hold true regarding God, others, and ourselves, and how things in life “should be” drive all of our responses to each situation we encounter. True and effective repentance transforms our ways of thinking, and brings our beliefs into alignment with the Word of God, which results in us being more conformed to the image of Jesus. This aligns with the charge we are given by Paul in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

The ability to recognize and renounce lies is one of the most powerful weapons I have found when it comes to bringing my thoughts and beliefs into alignment with God’s ways. I define lies, in the context of our walk with God, as any thoughts we have about God, others, or ourselves, which don’t align with God’s Truth. If a belief or thought is not in alignment with the Word of God, or the unconditional loving words of our Heavenly Father, I call them lies. Many people recognize they have thoughts which oppose the way God would desire them to think, but too often the only solution they are given to help transform their ways is to spend more time in God’s Word. I’m not trying to say spending time in God’s Word is a bad idea. I have experienced time and time again that when people take a stand and renounce the lies which are so deeply engrained in their mind, the transformation of their mind takes place much quicker.

So, what does it mean to renounce? The word *renounce* in the Greek is defined as “to disown.” Can you begin to see the power of this type of prayer? When we come into agreement with God that our ungodly beliefs, conclusions and thoughts need to go, we simply begin to stand in our spiritual authority and make a declaration that we are disowning the old way of thinking. The reality is that these lies we believe have become our truth. While at times God can, and will break and release these lies as we come to a revelation of His Truth, I often find our lies are so strong that His Truth just rolls off these strongly held beliefs of ours like water off a duck’s back. We possess an intellectual understanding of His Truth, but it does not result in our beliefs being transformed in such a way that we are able to live from that Truth day in and day out. Renouncing enables us to pray in alignment with the revelations of the Holy Spirit to begin to chip away at these lies and make room in your mind for God’s Truth. It’s like weeding a garden before you plant the new seed! If the soil of your mind is hard, rocky, and full of weeds, then renouncing allows you to till the soil before you plant the seeds of God’s Truth.

2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” Note the scripture says, “We demolish arguments and every pretension.” This indicates that you and I have an obligation to take an active role in destroying these thoughts. I believe praying to renounce lies is one of the most effective ways you can put 2 Corinthians 10:5 into practice.



In the Finding Freedom prayer model diagram, the word renounce is shown above the wedge in the relationship with yourself. We do not, however, use this powerful prayer weapon to dismantle lies about ourselves. We use renouncing prayers to contend against all lies including, those about others and even God.

Since these lies that we have chosen to believe represent another way that we have missed the mark, they do fall into the category as sin. As such, I often encourage people to confess lies, as well as renounce them. I don't believe, however, that God is a stickler to these details and will not release you from the grip of these lies if you somehow forget to confess them. In addition, I also do not believe that if you don't use the word renounce that somehow God will not answer that prayer either. In the course of your prayers it is key to realize that: 1) these thoughts are sin, and therefore, you are acknowledging to your Heavenly Father that in thinking them you were wrong and desire to be forgiven, and 2) you are coming before God and declaring that you are disowning these lies, and desire to see them broken and removed from your mind. Using some of the lies from the example situation the prayer to renounce the lies would sound something like this:

Heavenly Father, I ask You to forgive me for labeling John a jerk, a cheater, a liar and a backstabber. I come before You today and renounce the lie that John is a jerk. I renounce the lie that he is a cheater. I break the lies that he is a liar and backstabber in Jesus mighty name. Lord forgive me for buying into the lie that John meant to hurt me. I really have no idea what his motives were. I renounce the lie that John meant to hurt me. I come against the lie that he never thinks of anyone but himself, and break the lie that he has never loved me. Lord forgive me for labeling myself stupid and a failure. I break and renounce the lie that I am stupid and renounce the lie that I am a failure. I also ask You to forgive me for believing the lie that You abandoned me and don't love me. Your word says You will never leave me or forsake me. I renounce the lie that in the midst of this difficult time that You abandoned me, and break the lie that You don't love me and are punishing me for mistakes I made in the past.

By taking the spiritual stand against the sinful thoughts that have filled our heart and mind, we take an active role in fighting the battle to see our minds transformed and renewed. While it's not by our power that the sinful thoughts are broken and destroyed, but it does represent an act of faith in alignment with God's desire to renew our mind. Our prayers of faith, in alignment with His will, releases His power to come and work on our behalf. We don't know whether our prayer will completely dismantle the old way of thinking, or just remove a layer and level off the power those have over your life, but I do know there will be some level of change. He loves you that much!

You have now humbled yourself before God and confessed your sins, and taken a stand against the hate-filled, unloving, and faithless thoughts you previously had. Now you are ready to take the next step and pray to forgive the person who hurt and offended you.

Forgive Others

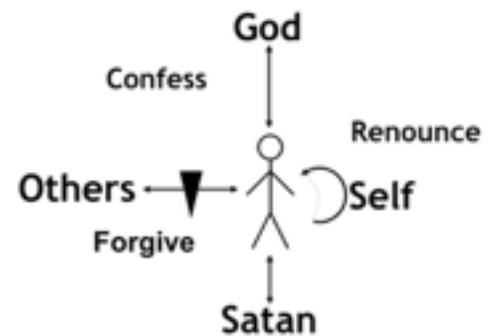
This part of the prayer model is likely the one type of prayer that most people are familiar with. Praying to forgive others is regularly talked about and taught by many pastors and leaders in the church. While people are the most familiar with this type of prayer, I find prayers of forgiveness are some of the hardest to pray when someone has experienced a deep hurt, such as a betrayal of trust. It is my experience, however, that when a person has recognized and taken responsibility for their failures in the situation, confessed their sin, as well as renounced any lies, they will have a much easier time praying to forgive others.

The word *forgiveness* in the Greek means “to send away or dismiss.” This definition paints an image of one person releasing another to go free, and that is exactly what the heart of forgiveness is all about. When we have gotten hurt or offended we believe the other person owes us something. They have dug themselves into a relational debt through their careless, unloving words, or actions. We hold onto our anger, hatred and/or resentment believing that we have the right to punish them for the wrongs they did to us. We can also buy into the insidious lie that holding onto our anger and hatred for them will protect us from them hurting us again. Forgiving so often can sound like a foolish thing because we believe if we forgive them, they will just come back and hurt us again! Sound familiar?

The problem is these rationalizations are made from a wounded heart and a mind gripped by the fear of getting hurt again. You are operating from a place of self-preservation and relying on yourself to protect yourself. As you read this, it should become clear to you that this mode of thinking is not built on faith and trust in God. You need to become convinced that forgiving others is the best way to live. While there are many arguments I could provide why a lifestyle of forgiveness is the best way to live, the most compelling case for me comes from Matthew 6:14-15, which says, “For if you forgive men when they sin against you, then your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

That is not a verse that most people put on their refrigerator. Inside we scream, “I don’t want to forgive, it’s not fair!” However, whether we like it or not, the truth of God’s word in Matthew 6:14-15 will impact our lives. If you choose to not forgive, not only will the wedge between you and the other person remain, but a wedge will remain between you and God! That’s what happens when we disobey God’s commands and miss the mark.

In some ways I see forgiveness as a selfish act. Who is paying the price for withholding forgiveness? You! You’ve probably heard the saying that not forgiving another person is like drinking poison and hoping the other person dies. So who benefits by coming into alignment with God’s ways and praying to forgive the person who hurt you? You!!



Forgiving others is not an admission that what they did was acceptable. By forgiving them you are not condoning their hurtful words or actions in any way. Forgiveness is all about releasing that other person to God. Not because they have done something to deserve it, but because that is just the kind of person you are. If Jesus could hang on the cross after being unjustly tried, whipped, and beaten and then utter the words “forgive them for they know not what they do,” you can find the strength and faith to forgive the person who hurt you.

Do not wait until you feel like forgiving to pray. Your heart will probably not feel fully engaged in the first prayer of forgiveness as you work through an issue, but by praying that prayer you are drawing a line in the sand with the kingdom of darkness and declaring that you will do things God’s way!

When it comes to forgiving others there is one key thing that will help usher you to a breakthrough, and that is to get really clear about what you are forgiving that person for. It’s so much easier to keep it vague and just pray “Lord I forgive them.” My question to you is what are you forgiving them for? What do you believe they owe you? Many times we have

unknowingly assigned meaning to their actions. For example, if a person didn't pay us back some money, not only do they owe us the money, but we also attribute their actions to having a lack of respect for us. The emotional debt that we attribute to a person's actions, may at times be more devastating than their words or actions. As hard as it may be, learning to forgive others even when we are convinced the other person doesn't respect, care, love, or trust us, is paramount to your emotional well-being and your relationship with God.

Prayers of forgiveness are often quite simple. Building on the example I have been using, a forgiveness prayer could sound something like this:

Dear Heavenly Father, the best I know how, I come to You and forgive John for staying out late and not answering my repeated calls. I forgive him for getting upset and yelling at me after I accused him of being with another woman. Lord I forgive him for treating me in such a disrespectful way.

Like I previously mentioned, this type of prayer draws a line in the sand and takes the spiritual stand that you are willing to do life God's way. You will not know the full impact of your prayer on your heart until you begin walk out your relationship with the person who hurt you. Only as you think of this person, or possibly encounter them, will you really know whether you have fully forgiven them, or whether you have just peeled a few layers off the "debt they owe you." Most of the time it does seem to be the latter, which just means you have a little more work to do. The deeper the hurt, the longer it often takes to work in conjunction with the Holy Spirit to peel off all the layers caused by the hurt. Don't let discouragement set in and convince you it's too hard or you can't do it. Forgiveness is a process which comes with huge rewards. How much is peace of mind and a closer relationship with God and others worth to you? Priceless.

Rebuke Demons

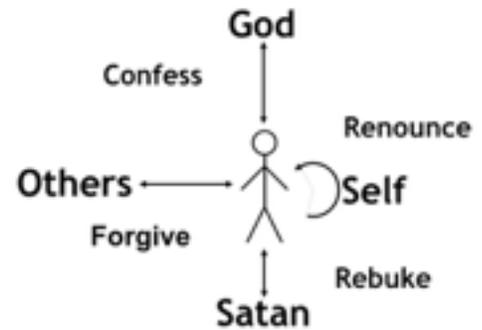
I don't like to give the kingdom of darkness too much credit or coverage, but the existence of the demonic influences on our lives cannot be ignored. In 1 Peter 5:8 the Bible does say we need to "be alert because the enemy is prowling around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour." Unfortunately, too many people in the church today either live with an ignorance of the influence of demons on their lives, or they have swung too far to the other side and give too much credit to the demonic realm. The former never pray against any sort of demonic spiritual activity, and the latter blame the devil for the flat tire they got on the way to work. We need to be alert that the enemy comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10), but we also need to find a healthy and effective balance in warring against the demonic influences in our lives.

Notice that in the flow of this teaching on the Finding Freedom prayer model, rebuking demons is done after confessing sins, renouncing lies and forgiving others. The reasoning behind this is both critical and scriptural. In James 4:7 we read, "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Some people grab onto the phrase "resist the devil" and start every prayer session by swinging their spiritual swords of the Spirit against any demonic influence, whether the person is experiencing fear or a headache. I'm not saying the enemy might not be afflicting the person, but I am a proponent of biblical spiritual warfare.

I do not believe it was a mere coincidence the words, "Submit yourselves, then, to God" preceded the exhortation to resist the enemy. The enemy operates in a very legalistic fashion. When we make choices that oppose the commands and will of God, we open the door to the increased influence of the demonic realm. Think of it like this, when we obey and are aligned with the ways of God, we are under an increased measure of God's protection. When we disobey, we step outside of that increased level of protection and provide demonic spirits

greater access to our lives. It's not God's judgement and punishment against us, it's the consequence of us breaking God's spiritual laws. If it's raining outside, as long as I stay under an umbrella, I have the privilege and blessing of staying dry. When I step out from underneath the umbrella, I experience the consequence of my decision and I get wet. I view our spiritual lives in the same way. When we step out from under the God's protection, the roaring lion can more easily attack

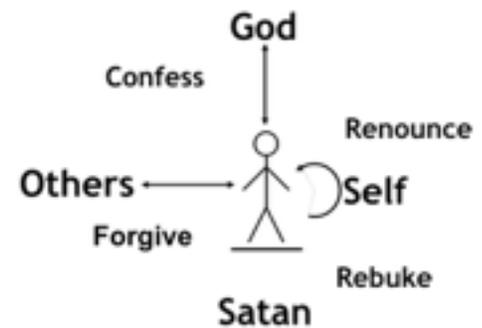
This understanding is important because the battle with the enemy is not a power encounter, it's a Truth encounter. The word rebuke in the Greek means "to declare by order or by law." When we remove the legal rights that have allowed the demonic influence access into our lives, we can stand in our God-given authority and order the demons to leave. It's our job to seek the Holy Spirit for revelation to identify the legal rights, or opened doors, to the demonic influence. Doors to demonic influence are opened when we sin. Hence we are closing the doors of demonic influence through confessing our sin, renouncing fearful, unloving, and faithless thinking, and forgiving those who have hurt us. By praying in these ways we are submitting to God, which gives us the authority and legal right to resist the devil such that he will have to flee! Referring back to our diagram, through prayers of rebuking demons, we break the connection we made with Satan, represented by the vertical line, and place the enemy back under our feet.



I chose to use the word *rebuke* to describe this type of prayer because it is what the Bible says Jesus did when he encountered demons. In Matthew 17:18 we read, "And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him and the boy was cured at once." This doesn't necessarily mean you have to use the word rebuke in your prayer against demons. As long as you are standing in your spiritual authority and using a word that conveys you are breaking the legal tie with that demonic influence and telling it to leave, you're good. A rebuking prayer in the example situation I've been using could sound something like this:

In the name of Jesus I rebuke the spirit of anger. Spirit of anger, I break the hold you have had on me and tell you to go in Jesus mighty name. Spirit of rejection, I break you off and tell you to go in the name of Jesus. All spirits of fear and hatred go now!

When we take responsibility for our mistakes and make the choice to realign our hearts and lives to God's ways we step back underneath His umbrella of protection. As we do, we get to enjoy the rights and privileges of wielding the power Jesus won through His death and resurrection to destroy the works of the devil. If you look at our diagram, you can see we are now back re-aligned with God's perfect plan. By learning to confess, renounce, forgive and rebuke, you can take action to address negative impacts on each of these relationships in your life. However, we're not quite done. As powerful as these prayers are, they have only been focused on removing the negative impacts of the situation. Now that we've broken up the hard soil of your soul and removed some of the rocks and weeds, it's time to plant some good seeds to grow!



Declare Truth

In the Old Testament the prophet Jeremiah was commissioned with the following words by God, "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). Jeremiah was commissioned to build the kingdom and culture that God desired in the hearts and minds of the people of his day. To effectively do that he had to destroy the existing ways, before building and planting the new. This is similar to what you and I are doing in the context of applying the Finding Freedom prayer model in our personal lives. We are aligning ourselves with God to destroy what is hindering us to make room to receive and cultivate the love and Truth He knows will bless us. What I want you to notice is that God used four words to describe the destruction process and two words to describe the reconstruction process. That's a two to one ratio of destruction to reconstruction. The principle I see at work is this, in your prayer times, it will often take a lot more time and effort to break down and get rid of your sinful ways, as compared to the time you spend receiving the healing, and restoration God desires to release to you.

Think about it. How much time and effort does it take to break up the ground, remove the rocks and pull the weeds in a plot of land where you want to build a garden versus the time it takes to poke some holes in the dirt to plant some new seed? Planting the new seed is much quicker and easier, however if you want something new to grow it's critical to take the time, and do hard work of preparing the soil. If you want to experience fruitful prayer times, you'll need to be willing to spend the time and effort preparing the soil of your soul.

So what is this new "seed" we need to receive to get our hearts and minds headed in the right direction? God's healing love, forgiveness and Truth. You'll first need to receive what He gives you, and then do your part to help it grow. One of the critical things our hearts need to receive is His healing love to help restore our wounded and sometimes broken hearts. This is in alignment with God's promise which was first stated in Isaiah 61, and repeated by Jesus in Luke 4, "He comes to bind up the broken hearted." So what does this look like in a prayer time? I simply pray that God's healing love would be released and then pause and wait to see what the Holy Spirit does or says. Some people might feel a release of His presence, others might hear some encouraging words from the Father, or even see a beautiful picture that leaves them with a knowingness of the restoring love that is being released into their hearts. Regardless of what you see, feel or hear, it's important to keep your mind attentive to God and believe by faith that He is working on your behalf.

We must also receive God's forgiveness. 1 John 1:9 starts by saying, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." For some of us, it is really important to pause for a moment and really receive that Truth. You are forgiven. Not because of any great works you've done in the past, but because of the work Jesus did for you on the cross! Because we have grown up around imperfect people who didn't fully forgive us even when we asked for it, we tend to think that God is like that as well. We believe we must grovel, repeatedly expressing how really sorry we are until the other person feels we have adequately done everything to make things right. Only then are we forgiven and welcomed back into their good graces. These are not the ways of God! Psalm 103:8-12 reads, "The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." When we authentically confess our failures, God forgives. That is just the amazingly beautiful nature of our Heavenly Father.

If you find yourself contending with really believing whether you have been forgiven, there may be a lie hidden deep in your soul that you need to renounce. The truth you need to declare in agreement with God's word is nothing more than the statement, "I am forgiven." Hear those words as you speak them out loud and let them sink a little deeper into your heart. Repeating this declaration of Truth a few times won't hurt. You might find it very empowering! Remember, Proverbs 18:21 says, "The tongue has the power of life and death."

Like I just described with this declaration of Truth regarding being forgiven, we need to take the time to declare Truths which oppose the lies and bad conclusions we have renounced. If you are new to praying this way, then it might be helpful to write down the label and lies about others, God and yourself so you can go back and cover them with declarations of Truth. In addition, I encourage you to begin praying for God to help rebuild any relationships that you have done damage to, as well as specifically blessing the person who hurt you. This just comes into alignment with Romans 12:14 which says, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." I like the term I've heard others use to describe these types of actions as *responding in the opposite spirit*. It starts with a prayer, but it shouldn't end there. Your words and actions towards that person, and eventually in their presence, need to align with this Truth if you're really going to live it!

In the situation I've been using, the declarations of Truth prayer could sound something like this: *Father right now I ask for your healing love to come and flood my hurting heart. (pause) I receive your forgiveness Father for all that I have confessed to you today. (pause) I am forgiven. I declare that John is your son. He is a caring, honest and upright guy who loves me. Right now Jesus, I declare the Truth that I am a smart woman, who with your leading is good at building relationships. I stand before you believing and declaring that I am loved. I am unconditionally accepted by you Lord. You are for me and always desire to bless me. I pray right now you would bless John. Comfort him and draw him closer to you in this time. I pray you would release your love and peace into his heart. Father, I pray in the spiritual realms you would cleanse our relationship. Remove any spiritual defilement that has afflicted our relationship due to my reactions to this situation. Help bring us back together in unity in Jesus mighty name!*

I want to address one line in this prayer that some of you may question. In the prayer I stated "John is a caring, honest and upright guy who loves me." The assumption I made is that this woman who is praying has been in a relationship with John and when she steps back and reflects on John's behavior throughout the course of their relationship, she can see the qualities that are true about him. So often when we get hurt by people, all we see in those moments are the ways they have failed us. As we pause and reflect on the bigger picture, and ask the Holy Spirit to show us God's perspective of this person, we are able to see their good qualities once again. Your declarations need to be grounded in the Truth, as well as things you know to be true. Don't just fill your prayers with nice words that you believe someone who loves Jesus might say.

At this point, I have covered each type of prayer that makes up the Finding Freedom prayer model. If I was sitting with the woman who had been praying through this situation I would ask her one simple question as she finished this last prayer. What's going on? Take a moment to reflect as you finish up a prayer session to assess what has changed since you started praying. I often choose to ask a general question like, "What's going on?" instead of "How are you feeling?" This question causes the person to reflect more broadly on what they have experienced during the prayer time, and not just any changes in how they feel. For example, if

you simply ask “How are you feeling?” the person might not share with you how they saw a vision of themselves in a dark cloud and that as they prayed the dark cloud vanished! Begin to notice for yourself and others the different types of experiences people have when they are finding freedom.

If you recall, the definition of *repent* is, “to change one’s mind or purpose.” As you fully apply the Finding Freedom prayer model to a situation, you are making the choice to repent and align yourself with God’s ways. However, it’s very likely your work is not done. You may feel at peace, be able to think some kind thoughts about the other person involved, and sense God’s presence in a special way in this moment, but only as you walk out your life and relationships with other people involved will you really know the true impact of your prayer time. So when is your “work” done? When your natural responses to that person or situation aligns with the heart and mind of Jesus. That is a tall order. Does it seem impossible? It is impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. Remember, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you!