Seven Blessing Blockers & How to Overcome Them

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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

I decided to write this eBook because I want to help others avoid the same mistakes I made as a Christian. For many years I was blocking my God-given purpose—as well as my blessings and favor God had lined up for me. I didn’t have a clue that I was missing out and that my life could be so much more.

You hear Christians talk about that “Season of SUDDENLY” when God all of the sudden rains down wisdom, favor, overflow and prosperity. It hits you like a tidal wave and you are so blown away that you can’t help but to drop to your knees and praise His holy name. You didn’t know God could (or would) move so many mountains on your behalf or open so many doors. God opens up the flood gates of opportunity!

I experienced one of these seasons of suddenly, where God gave me insight—wisdom into His Word—showing me I wasn’t living my best life. I was living according to Satan’s lies and I needed to break free from this bondage I’d been in for many years.

God opened my eyes to Satan’s lies and tactics. It was up to me to change my life and mindset. Basically, I was letting go of everything I knew in order to transform my lifestyle and my mindset into a new way of life. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Here’s the deal—I wasn’t living in obedience to God’s Word. I had this mindset: I’m a good person. I love God. I go to church several times a week. I read the Word and listen to Christian music. I even read Christian books. I’m good!

That mindset was actually keeping me from experiencing what God had in store for me. But God, always wanting the best for His children, showed me a better way to live … His way!

He revealed that my repeated sin was keeping me from His plan and purpose for my life. It was blocking my blessings!

I immediately stopped all repeated sin, got baptized and started living a new life with a new mindset. Just as quickly as I stopped living in sin, I saw God’s favor and blessings rain down on me. Everything I touched flourished. Not only did He move me into my God-given purpose, but He answered long forgotten prayers. He brought alive dreams I had abandoned and given up on.

That’s right! Once I stopped living in sin and started living according to His Word, and once I started putting Him first and my wants and desires last, He answered prayers that I’d prayed twenty years earlier!
I abandoned my lifestyle of doublemindedness, took up my cross and followed Christ.

I want to show you how to get the most out of life. I will demonstrate how sin (especially repeated sin) robs you of your blessings. God’s Word is alive and powerful! If you study His Word, meditate on it and live by it, you will experience all that He has for you. You will develop the closest and most intimate relationship with Him one can have!

But I guarantee if you continue down a path of a little sin here and there in order to participate in worldly pleasures, you will never see all the great things God has waiting for you!

Get rid of the blessing blockers in your life today!

Start living a truly blessed life and experience everything God has planned for you!
I listed sin first because it’s the number one thing that forms a wall between us and God. “But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear” (Isaiah 59:2).

We sin when we purposely violate a rule or break a law. Sin is a breach of the Law of God (Rom. 4:15, Gal. 3:19). You cannot continue down a road of sin and expect God to bless you for it. In fact, there’s a saying I see every so often on social media that rings true: “If you had to sin to get it, it’s not a blessing.”

Recently I was flipping channels on TV when I came across a popular reality show. I heard the mother tell her very famous adult daughter, “God has blessed you so much,” referring to her fame and fortune. The thing is, the daughter’s fame and fortune is the result of a sex tape. I’ve got news for the mother, God did not bless this sex tape. He did not reward her daughter for her sins.

But there is someone who works hard to elevate the sins of others. His name is Satan. He wants young girls to fall into the trap of idolizing women who live in sin. Satan likes to glamorize sin to make it appealing to unbelievers so they, too, will be drawn to a lifestyle of disobedience. His main focus is to steal God’s glory and take His children to hell. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy (John 10:10).

**It's not a blessing if you had to sin to get it!**

Scripture tells us God detests wickedness (Psalm 5:4), so the belief that He would actually bless a person’s sin is not in line with God’s Word.

For a self-professing follower of Christ to actually believe their sinful lifestyle is a blessing from God is proof Satan has the power to blind those who are living in sin. Scripture clearly tells us that God punishes the sinner (Isaiah 13:11). There is no reward in sinning.

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**Veronica’s Story**

I used to live in sin. Honestly, I would go about my day doing whatever I wanted, having no regard for others. I was only living for myself. I was very goal-oriented and my career meant everything. I
worked in real estate and had set high goals for myself. It didn’t matter who I had to walk all over or how much I had to lie to get a sale. All I cared about was making money and if I had to cheat a buyer or fellow sales associate to do it, then I would. I’d do anything to reach my sales quota.

I’d go to bed thinking about work and wake up thinking about making money. I only worked God into the equation when I needed Him, and even then I would pray He’d help me to be more successful and to make more money.

I went to church on Sunday when it was convenient for me, in other words, if I didn’t have any clients that day and wasn’t showing houses. And if I didn’t have a hangover.

My life was full of sin:
I drank a lot.
I cursed like a sailor.
I envied the success of others.
I competed with my coworkers, unbeknownst to them, trying to get more sales.
I was greedy and only out for myself.
I used people.
I was a liar.
I had affairs with married men (resulting in children out of wedlock).
I was neck deep in a life of sin, yet I believed everything good in my life was a blessing from God. Talk about being deceived by the devil himself.
Veronica’s story isn’t that unusual. I hear similar testimonies from Christians quite often. Yes, Satan does have the ability to blind sinners from seeing and understanding God’s truth (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

“One great power of sin is that it blinds men so that they do not recognize its true character”
~Andrew Murray

HOW TO BREAK FREE

“Put to death what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which are idolatry. On the account of these God's wrath is coming” Col. 3:5-6.

Anyone who is under the control of their sinful nature can never please God (Rom. 8:8).

Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, was quite a prankster in his day, and he found great humor in an ingenious practical joke he played on a dozen of his most influential friends. Doyle sent each of them a telegram reading: “Fly at once, all is discovered!” Within a mere twenty-four hours every one of these highly reputable men had traveled out of the country.

No matter our reputation or high status in society, we all have things we’re ashamed to share and hope no one ever finds them out. We all have skeletons in the closet. A clandestine past, we try to keep hidden. The only solution for a guilty conscience is the mercy and grace God bestows upon our lives.

Mindset is everything!

The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8:5-8 that whatever it is we keep our minds set on is what we'll live out. If we keep our minds set on fleshly desires, we will be hostile to God, unwilling and unable to submit to His law. But if we keep our minds set on spiritual desires, we'll find life and peace.

Joy and happiness comes to the person who delights himself in the Lord. “Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart” ~ Psalm 37:4.

When a person doesn’t control his mind, he will fall into a life of sin. Paul explains we should set our thoughts on what the Spirit desires, to bind our minds with the mind of Christ. Paul then writes in Romans 12:2, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

We have the power to break free from the downfall of a sinful lifestyle. Our thinking will be renewed and transformed. It’s this transformed mind that will make all the difference in our walk with Christ.

When I used to drink, I’d get off work on Friday evening and the first thing I did was stop at the store on the way home to buy a bottle of wine. I couldn’t wait to get home so I could pop the cork, go out back and sit by the pool with my glass of wine. There I would drink. That’s all. I didn’t need anything else. Just me, quiet time on a Friday evening, and my wine.
I’d think to myself, *How do people get through life without a drink? Who would even want to? How boring!* I was blinded by my fleshly desires because what I couldn’t really see was the reality I was living in. I believed a sober lifestyle meant missing out when, in reality, I was the one missing out; having to deal with the struggles alcohol caused in my life.

Drama. Hangovers. Anger. Dysfunctional relationships. The list goes on. Once I got in the right mindset, I could see that my alcohol-filled lifestyle was keeping me from experiencing life in full. Let me be more specific: It was keeping me from experiencing **GOD** in full! It was this transforming of my mind that set me back on a straight path so that I could receive all the blessings God had for my life. Any use of a mind-altering substance will cause dysfunction in our lives and a separation from God.

Once I fixed this dysfunctional area of my life, my other sinful areas followed suit because I kept my mind on what the Spirit desires instead of what the flesh desires.
WHATEVER IT IS WE KEEP OUR MINDS SET ON IS WHAT WE’LL LIVE OUT!
BLESSING BLOCKER #2

disobedience

I don’t need to follow Jesus down to the very last detail. I do most of the things a good Christian should do anyway. I go to church every Sunday, and even on some Wednesdays. I believe in Christ and that he died so that I could have eternal life. I believe the Holy Bible is the true Word of God. I’m a good person; better than most people. So what’s a little sin here and there going to hurt? God will still bless me because He knows how much I love Him and how hard I try.

Do you ever experience these thoughts? Maybe they pop into your head occasionally, maybe daily. These are actually lies of the enemy. Satan will fill your head with the above excuses to keep you from living an obedient lifestyle and receiving the Lord’s blessings in your life. These are the excuses of a person who is unable (unwilling) to stop living for himself/herself in order to live for the Lord.

When you choose to live your way instead of God’s way, you are robbing yourself of God’s many blessings. Living in sin and living in disobedience are closely related, but on a different level. To live in sin is to be disobedient to God’s Word; but one can be disobedient while not sinning.

Can you still receive God’s blessings if you’re living a half-obedient life?

Sure you can, but you are missing out on so much more when you choose disobedience, such as a close and intimate relationship with your Creator! If you think God is going to move you into your purpose while you’re living in sin, then you need to know that is not how God operates. God does not bless sin!

When you choose to stop giving in to worldly temptations, when you stop participating in worldly lusts and instead choose to be obedient to God’s Word, your whole world will change! Opportunity will come your way. Doors will start opening. Favor will rain down on you like you’ve never experienced before. That’s God moving you to the next level!

Drunkenness, drug abuse, fornication, adultery, hatefulness, cursing, cheating, lying … these repeated behaviors rob you from experiencing God’s blessings in your life. They are the WALL between you and your God-given purpose.

I’m not saying you have to be completely sin-free in order to experience God’s favor, but repeated sin will always knock you down. It’s destructive in every area of your life because it gives the devil a foothold. When you make a choice to ignore God’s Word in order to live in sin you will not receive the blessed life God has waiting for you.
We all trip up and stumble occasionally. I know I do! It’s to be expected. I’m not writing this chapter in order to shame anyone. But God put it on my heart to stress the importance of obeying His commandments. He wants you to experience Him in His entirety, but far too often we have a habit of allowing disobedience to separate us from His love. This pains Him because He longs for us to live in His presence, experiencing all that He has for us. If you want a powerful prayer life, obedience to God’s Word is key!

Heavenly Father,

I know You have created me with a purpose and plan for my life. I know You desire me to have a life filled with joy, favor and victory. Please help me to deny myself so that I can be an obedient follower of Christ. I know in order to fulfill the destiny you have for my life, I must live in obedience to Your Word, keeping my mind and my heart focused on You. Help me to attain self-control in all areas of my life, and to be sober-minded in everything I do. Examine my heart and show me those places where I may lack obedience. Give me discernment about the things which keep me from obtaining my goals and achieving the desires and dreams you have put in my heart in Jesus’ name!

Amen!
Matthew 16:24-25

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.”
One way we can severely block our blessings is by failing to bless others. Many times God will bless us greatly so that we can turn around and be a blessing to someone else. Sometimes these blessings will be monetary, sometimes they will be miraculous healings, and sometimes they will be as simple as giving/receiving advice.

When you see the hand of God in your life and you are able to pass your blessing on to someone else, do it. Not with the intentions of receiving reward from God (although, you will), but do it because He commands it of you.

If you’re not sure how to be a blessing to others, ask God for discernment. He doesn’t put people in our lives without a reason. We all have a purpose in each other’s lives. Pray about it and then listen for God’s instructions.

If you’re racking your brain trying to figure out what you can do today to be a blessing in some else’s life, but you don’t have money or time to give, fret no more. God actually supplies everything you need in order to bless others. You already have what someone else needs. It’s as simple as tapping into your own resources.

There are several things we can do on a daily basis to bless others:
PRAY

If you know anything about me, then you know I’m a HUGE Prayer Warrior! I love to talk to God, even if it’s just to make small talk. I not only pray for myself, family, and friends, but I pray for strangers, I pray for my enemies, I pray for the homeless, the sick, and the lost. Prayer is my life because it opens up a line of communication with my Creator.

God takes prayer very seriously. King David writes in Psalm 116:2, “Because he bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath!” God listens and God answers! One of the most life-altering things you can do for another person is to pray for them.

On several occasions a friend of mine saw a young lady standing on the corner of a Walmart parking lot on his way home from work. She held a cardboard sign asking for money so that she could get back to her home in another state. My friend stopped one day and asked her what was going on. She explained she had spent the last of her money on moving to our city for a job that ended up not panning out. She was living out of her car in the Walmart parking lot hoping to get enough gas money to get home.

My friend asked her if he could pray over her and she happily obliged. Afterwards, with tears streaming down her cheeks, she told him, “People stop and give me money, but you are the first to pray over me. Thank you so much.” She seemed to be more grateful for the prayer than she was for the money. Why? Because prayer will move mountains and create the miracles she needs in her life so that she can get back to a place of safety. Money runs out, but God’s blessings rain down on us for an eternity.

FINANCIAL GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Of course, monetary gifts or donations are always helpful. If you’re able to give in this manner, then by all means, do it. God gives to us in a way so that we can give to others. One of these ways is financially. If you’ve been blessed in your finances, pass some of it along. Let Him lead you in your giving.

VOLUNTEERING

If you can’t give monetarily, then how about giving some of your time. You could volunteer at a hospital, church, food bank, and so forth. Do you have a gift you can share with others? What about your vocation? Maybe you’re a counselor who could give out free counseling a couple hours a week.

Some doctors and dentists give free medical check-ups or services to the homeless once a week/month. Some chefs cook for the homeless. You get my drift. God has blessed us each with a special talent or spiritual gift that we are to share with others. What’s your special gift and how can you use it to bless others?
FRIENDSHIP

Some people are struggling because they’re lonely. You can help others just by lending your ear; being a shoulder to cry upon. Offering advice is a great way to show someone you care about what they’re going through. Check in on them occasionally just to see how they’re doing. Visiting retirement or nursing homes is a great way to give companionship to someone who may be lonely.

Karyn’s Story

My younger brother is a police officer and received a call one night about a domestic disturbance between a couple. When he arrived at the location of his call (the couple’s home) he was faced with a “he said, she said” situation. He had to count on his training in these types of circumstances in order to make the right call. Even though he felt like the girlfriend was making up lies about her boyfriend and what had actually taken place in their residence, she had marks on her body that caused my brother to have to arrest her boyfriend. He had to follow procedure regardless of his personal beliefs.

Some time went by and he forgot about the incident—until one night when he received another domestic disturbance call from the same residence. When he arrived at the house, it was the same
couple in a similar situation as the first one. Again, he had a “he said, she said” situation on his hands. Once more, he had to make a decision about what to do.

The girlfriend explained that an intense argument between them ensued so she had locked her boyfriend out of the house. He had then kicked the door in. Scared for her safety, she called the police. To no surprise, the boyfriend had a much different version. He claimed she had asked him to retrieve something she’d left in her car and when he went outside she locked the door, refusing to let him back into the house. In anger, he kicked the door open.

Even though my brother believed the boyfriend’s story and felt the girlfriend was attempting to get him into trouble, he had to arrest the boyfriend, once more, because he’d broken the door down. On the way to the police station, my brother decided to offer this gentleman some relationship advice. He could see this was a very unhealthy and toxic situation for this fellow. My brother explained to him that in his line of work he’d seen numerous similar situations and they never got better. He would receive repeated domestic calls from the same people on a regular basis.

He explained to the gentleman his life would, most likely, always be filled with unhealthy incidences, drama and chaos if he continued to stay in his current relationship. He told him he could have a much happier, healthier and more fulfilling life if he separated himself from the people who were toxic to him.

Months later, my brother got off work and stopped at a convenient store on his way home. Still in uniform, he was standing in line when the man he’d previously arrested excitedly approached him. He told my brother he had taken his advice and, because of it, his whole life had been transformed. My brother was taken aback when he realized who this man was, but was curious just the same.

The man eagerly told his story about how much his life changed after he’d been arrested that second time and had taken the advice my brother had given him. He said he’d broken up with his girlfriend and had moved on. He had a new job selling cars and felt happier and emotionally healthier in his new life.

Coincidentally, I was in the market for a new car and I’d been searching for something specific, but unable to find it. My brother gave me this man’s business card and explained their history to me. I had little hope he could find me what I was looking for, since no one else seemed to be able to, but I called him anyway. I explained to him what I wanted and he immediately told me he could have it brought to his car lot later that day. I was ecstatic, to say the least!

I met him that evening and bought my perfect car from him. I was his first sale! It all started with a police officer who cared enough to offer this man some helpful advice, which in turn transformed the man’s life, causing him to get a new job in which his first sale was to the officer’s sister! If you cannot see God’s divine hand in this situation, then you need your head examined. (Wink!)

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**God works in mysterious ways!**
We were all placed by God in each other’s lives. My brother was meant to be the one who answered that domestic disturbance call, not once, but twice. He was meant to say all the right things to this gentleman, and they were meant to run into each other that morning at the store. The fact that I was his first sale at his new job was just God’s way of telling him, “I care and I will always take care of you!” It was supernatural happenings that confirmed God’s hand in this guy’s life.

If my brother would have not cared, or chosen not to help this man that night by speaking some kind words of advice, he may have stayed in that toxic relationship and who knows how far things would have escalated!

We can bless others richly using just our words!
A few years ago, I was talking with an atheist about God. Although he had many questions about the Lord, he was far from ready to accept the fact that the Bible is the true Word of God. One thing that really stood in his way was the idea of submission. If there was a God in heaven, he would have to submit to Him, and he didn’t like the idea of submitting to anyone.

Surrendering his life was too overwhelming for his pride. Confessing his sins and repenting for them at the feet of Jesus (bow down to someone?) was out of the question.

Pride is a serious offense and can lead one down the road to destruction. The core of Satan’s sin was pride. He wanted to be as glorious as God and wanted to replace Him. This is how Satan succeeds at tempting us. He’s familiar with pride, his ultimate downfall. He will tempt us where he knows our flesh is weakest. He’ll work in different ways with each person.

Satan tempts us with anger, lust, pride and worry:

> When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path. The seed falling on rocky ground refers to someone who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. The seed falling among the thorns refers to someone who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, making it unfruitful.

Matthew 13:19-22 (NLV).

When we allow too much pride in ourselves over accomplishments, we are allowing it to become an idol in our lives. When pride becomes conceit—whether it be over our looks, possessions, bank accounts, jobs, intelligence—we no longer feel the need for God because we feel superior in our lives.

God’s Word warns us not to act superior or to speak arrogantly. He knows our deeds and we will be judged accordingly. When we work hard and accomplish our goals, it’s human nature to want everyone to see how successful we’ve become. The thing is, what man thinks of us is not important. It’s only what God thinks that matters.
I used to sell real estate and I worked in an office with only one other salesperson. I came to work on time every day; she didn’t. I stayed and worked the entire day; she didn’t. I would come up with ideas for advertisements and open house parties; she would take the credit for them. When a potential buyer would pull up, she’d time it perfectly so that she’d be walking past the door as they came in, or she’d stand in front of it so that she could greet them first. This way, she would get first dibs at the commission instead of taking turns as we were supposed to do.

It would eat me up that our boss didn’t know what was going on in that office and that she was taking credit for my ideas and cheating me out of sales. I always had God’s favor, though, because my sales were high regardless of her working against me.

I prayed every night to God about my situation and misery with this person. I would be upfront and confess exactly how I felt about her and then I would repent for any ill feelings I had. God’s answer to me was this: “It doesn’t matter what your boss knows or doesn’t know. It only matters that I know, and I can see everything she’s doing.” He also revealed that He would turn the situation around to benefit me. I don’t need to state the obvious, but that’s exactly what He did!

Because I chose to stay humble during this period and to keep on keeping on, being faithful and obedient to God’s Word, He blessed me with my dream career as a writer. I got to move on to bigger and better things while she remained in an unhappy environment with a boss she hated.

God is good and He always takes care of His obedient children. Pride crushes our blessings because it puts us in a false, elevated position to where we feel we’re so superior we don’t need God’s help. In my situation at work, I never felt as if I didn’t need God to help me. In fact, it was just the opposite. I gave Him full control over the situation and obeyed His commands of me. And boy, did He ever take care of it!

Humble yourselves before the Lord. Admit you can’t do it without Him and you need Him to complete you. Your greatest attributes are not beneficial or count as gain if you don’t have God.

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“Love the Lord, all you faithful ones! For the Lord protects those who are loyal to him, but he harshly punishes all who are arrogant”

~Psalm 31:23
I witness a lot of spiritual pride on social media. So many religious people like to brag about how much they know about religion and theology. Their purpose is not to bring glory to God, but to bring glory to themselves by patrolling the Internet looking for spiritual people to debate with; looking to show off their own knowledge. God doesn’t like this. In fact, He despises it to the core. Spiritual pride is by far the worst kind of pride.

Jesus was well aware of spiritual pride and explained that a promise of blessing would be given to those who humble themselves before God, but the spiritually proud would be punished.

Jesus told this story to some who had great confidence in their own righteousness and scorned everyone else:

Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not like other people—cheaters, sinners, adulterers. I’m certainly not like that tax collector! I fast twice a week, and I give you a tenth of my income.’

But the tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed. Instead, he beat his chest in sorrow, saying, ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted (Luke 18:9-14).

Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. ~Matthew 5:16
In today’s world there is no time. It seems we are rushing around, on a pretty consistent basis, in order to get things done and by the end of the day we find ourselves completely exhausted. Then we do it all over again the next day. We have no rest periods in today’s busy world. This is no way to live.

Think about this, my peeps, even our omnipotent God set aside a day to rest. If God felt He needed (or wanted) a day of rest, shouldn't we? Of course we should. He set this example for us. If we're not getting adequate rest and down-time then we'll fall short in other areas of our lives, such as our private time with the Lord. We might find ourselves skipping our morning prayer session because we feel exhausted and want that extra time for sleep.

Above all else, make time for God! Set aside prayer time in the morning, even if this means praying while taking your shower. That’s actually one of my favorite times to talk with God. It’s so relaxing.

God has a mission for us—a plan and purpose for our lives. Find some quiet time to actually listen to Him. When you take time out for God, great things happen. First, it strengthens your relationship with Him. It causes His voice to become clearer each time you talk with Him. Solutions to problems seem to pop up much quicker, and you will experience a kind of peace you’re not used to—maybe for the first time in your life.

Secondly, when you spend time with God in the morning you are preparing yourself for the day. You’re suiting up in the Armor of God before you even leave your home. Why wait until the end of the day to pray? That means anything we’ve faced during the day has come and gone without us being protected! Who enters onto the battlefield with no armor?

But don’t get me wrong, praying before bed is a must as well. We get the chance to thank God for another day and to unload on Him, humbling ourselves and admitting we need Him in all areas of our lives.

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you”
~ 1 Peter 5:7
Finally, we should never neglect our relationship with the Lord. We are His children and He longs to have a relationship with each and every one of us. Don’t put it off.

There’s a legend about the devil calling upon his posse in order to come up with a plan on how to keep the world on his side. One of his demons wanted in on the scheme and said, “Send me there. I’ll tell them there is no God.”

Satan replied, “They will never believe you. Most of them know there’s a God.”

A second demon said, “Send me. I’ll tell them there’s no heaven or hell.”

Satan shook his head, “That won’t do. They know there’s life after death.”

Then a third spoke up and said, “Send me. I’ll tell them there truly is a God, a heaven, and a hell, but there’s no hurry to decide.”

“Ah,” said Satan with satisfaction, “that is the best plan!” He was sent out into the world to spread this lie. (Source unknown).

The very first Christian book I read as a child was “The Man Who Didn’t Have Time” by Yvonne H. McCall. It’s the story of an innkeeper who was so preoccupied with his own life and worries during the birth of Christ that it prevented him from having involvement in God’s most glorious gift to man.

Look what happened when Jesus visited Martha and Mary (Luke 10:38-42). Martha was busying herself playing host while Mary sat at the feet of Jesus listening to Him speak. The only thing on Martha’s mind was that she was doing all the work while Mary was hanging out with Jesus. When she voiced her distaste, He told her to stop worrying about all the little things and to instead focus on what’s important.

In other words, leave your small worries behind and keep God at the center of your life. *C'mon Martha, the dishes can wait—Jesus is speaking! Grab a seat, crazy woman!* In layman’s terms, drop everything in order to put God first. The time it takes to go through the Starbucks drive-through every morning can be omitted. Your favorite TV program can be saved and streamed later in your free time. Find that quiet time for God. Put Him first!

When we look at the prayer life of Jesus, it’s clear to see His relationship with the Father was a very intimate one. Luke 5:16 tells us “Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.” Note the word “often.” Spending quiet time with the Lord is something Jesus did on a regular basis.

In Jesus’ final moments of freedom, prior to His crucifixion, how was He spending His time? He was in prayer at Gethsemane. Jesus lived a life full of prayer. So much so that we even hear Him praying on the cross when He cried out to God, “*Eli, Eli lema sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Matthew 27:46.

Does your prayer life resemble the prayer life of Jesus? Do you take time out for God, no matter what’s going on around you?
When you make the decision to serve God, you’re actually making a decision to serve others as well. Serving and loving others is a part of serving our Father. The apostle Paul explains we’re called to be free, but that we are to use our freedom to serve one another humbly in love, not to indulge the flesh (Galatians 5:13). Solomon warned too much of something—especially the wrong thing—can be wearisome to the flesh (Ecclesiastes 12:12).

Serving and giving to the church and others is, unfortunately, an area that can be easily faked. A self-professing Christian can give large sums of money to the church yet have no love of God in him/her. This was the case with the Pharisees, whom Jesus called “hypocrites.” They looked as if they led obedient lives, but inside they were greedy and self-indulgent.

When we search Scripture, we find one of the most important illustrations in giving, and it happened to be one of the smallest contributions ever recorded:

Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins.

Jesus called his disciples to him and said, “I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on” (Mark 12:41).

It may be easy to sit in the pew every Sunday, write out a check and feel everything is good with God, but that’s false security. It’s no small challenge to give in a way which pleases God. People who love God give in a way that delights Him.

The Word of God is alive and powerful, exposing our innermost thoughts and desires (Hebrews 4:12). Because of our love for God, we should want to give freely, serve freely and be happy to do so. For God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).
I was one of the most self-indulgent people around, but had absolutely no clue. I just did what I wanted regardless of how it affected others—even how it affected me. My health was bad because I ate whatever I wanted, didn’t exercise, and didn’t take vitamins. I didn’t care. Those things seemed too hard to keep up with.

I drank and smoked. It was a release for me. I felt best and happiest when I had a drink in one hand and a cigarette in the other. One-night-stands weren’t unusual for me either. I didn’t treat women with respect. In fact, I wasn’t very respectful to anyone. I mean, if I didn’t have respect for my own body, why would I respect someone else’s?

Here’s a shocker (or not) … I went to church two to three times a week. Did I throw in some green when the collection plate came around? Yes, I sure did. Was I giving out of my heart? That’s also a yes. Did I understand why I was giving? Not at all. My understanding was limited to the extent that I give because I’m supposed to.

It’s so much more than that!

When I finally admitted my self-indulgent lifestyle was killing me physically, emotionally and spiritually, I got on my knees and prayed God would save me from myself. That’s when I learned what it means to give. I’m not talking only about monetary giving. I’m talking about giving friendship to the lonely, supporting friends going through hard times, feeding the hungry, volunteering time to help the unfortunate, showing the homeless you care for them.

I’m talking about loving the unloved, the hard to love, and the unlovable.

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The only area where we should be self-indulgent is in God’s Word!
Saturate your mind in Scripture and you will discover it is alive and breathing. It holds the answers to your questions in life. It supplies the instructions for clean living. And it is pleasing to God when you meditate on His Word.

This is what it means to truly live a freeing life!
Finally, perhaps the biggest of all blessing blockers is unforgiveness. God expects us to forgive others who wrong us because He forgives us. We forgive our enemies, not only because God commands it, but because if we don’t then God won’t forgive us our trespasses (Matthew 6:15).

I used to struggle with forgiveness to the point where I didn’t even give it much energy because I felt it was something I couldn’t achieve. Forgive someone who purposely set out to hurt me? Um, let me think about that for a minute … Done! Nope! Not gonna happen.

As I matured in Christ, I was able to get over feelings of unforgiveness and my inability to forgive because not only was it disobedient to God’s Word, but it took (stole) too much of my energy. Did you know it takes energy, not to mention thought and intention, to create hate? I’m not going to let the enemy get so much of me. Once I realized forgiveness is freeing, it came much easier, my friend. Trust me on this.

But what enables me to become a forgiving person is the fact God fully disapproves of hate and anger. I’m not going to allow the enemy to steal my right-standing with God. Do you see where this is going now?

Forgiveness is between you and God, not you and the one who has hurt you!

Forgiveness is for God’s sake. It’s also for our sake. It actually has very little to do with the person who has hurt or wronged us, but it has everything to do with God and our obedience to Him. Forgiveness never means we’re accepting of abusive behavior or that we’re sending a message that it’s alright for people to treat us badly because we’ll forgive them regardless. On the contrary, it frees us from the web or cycle of abusive people.

We have every right to cut off an abusive person and still be able to forgive them. We’re allowed to close the door on hurtful relationships. We have that freedom! Cutting off someone who is toxic to us doesn’t mean we hate that person or that we can’t forgive them. It means we realize we deserve
(and demand) better for ourselves. There’s absolutely nothing wrong with wanting to be happy in life. God doesn’t expect us to keep abusive people around.

So God’s Word tells us if we don’t forgive others He won’t forgive us. We instantly learn unforgiveness blocks our blessings. The apostle Paul informs us how we should treat our enemies: “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads” (Romans 12:20). Then he says, “Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good” (v.21).

 Forgiveness does not minimize, justify or excuse the wrong that was done. It frees us from the pain and brings us peace. Forgiveness is not between us and the person who wronged us, it’s between us and God! Forgiveness doesn’t mean we have to associate with that person again. We can forgive from afar and the Lord will heal our hurts!

Whether we receive an apology from our offender or not, we must make the decision to forgive anyway (Matthew 5:44). We may be able to forgive, but does that mean we automatically forget the offense against us? It’s impossible to erase memories or thoughts from our minds, but we must work to forget what is behind and strive toward what is ahead (Philippians 3:13).

We must focus our hearts on forgiveness and love so that a root of bitterness does not spring up in our hearts (Hebrews 12:15). Don’t allow bitterness, anger, and hate to rob you of God’s reward (2 John 1:8). Forgiving our offenders and putting the hurt in our rearview is the right idea, but let’s not act as if the sin never occurred.

 If someone has abused you then precautions need to be taken. Forgive the offender, but if it puts you in danger to be around this person, then you need to take action and sever the relationship. Forgiveness and trust are two totally different things. “The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it” Proverbs 22:3.

 Sometimes we think we’ve forgiven a person, but then thoughts of what they did to us won’t let us be, angering us each time we think about it. Then we believe we haven’t genuinely forgiven that person—why else would we still be feeling anger? Here’s the thing, memories are going to pop into our heads without our control. That doesn’t mean we haven’t forgiven our offender, it just means we’re human and our thoughts sometimes get the best of us.

 One thing to keep in mind is that forgiveness happens in the heart, not the head. Once the heart forgives and decides to move on, having sporadic thoughts about the offense later, along with a twinge of anger, does not mean you haven’t forgiven that person. Those feelings stick around for a while, helping us to put things into perspective and caution us against trusting that person too quickly next time.

 Again, forgiveness boils down to what God wants for us. He wants us to keep His Word so that we can be forgiven (Matthew 6:14) and receive our blessings (1 John 1:8).
Free yourself today from anger, hate, and unforgiveness. Align your mind with the mind of Christ. Start living in victory!

To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.
~ C.S. Lewis
Karyn Masters is a gifted writer, speaker and blogger. Some of her topics include spiritual warfare, serving Christ, prayer, marriage, divorce, infidelity, living single, dealing with grief and life’s struggles. She believes a strong prayer life creates strength in all areas. She holds a B.S. in Theology from Liberty University. She started writing poetry and short stories at a young age and won numerous Creative Writing awards. Her poetry was first published at age sixteen. She’s a seventh generation Texan (born and raised), and currently resides in San Antonio with one extremely demanding and pesky fur kid (A.K.A. Bratty Cat).

Books by Karyn

God, Fix it!
Spiritual Warfare, My Battle.
Silent Storm
When Deep Sleep Falls
The Girl Inside
Arion and Azura: The Adventure Series

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