

Breaking the Cycle of Defeat

**How To Live a Life
of Limitless Possibilities!**

Scott Johnson

*“No matter how elaborate the castles and fortresses men
may build, all are subject to change against an
unpredictable and changing world.”*

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FOREWORD BY DAVE DUELL

I have known Scott for sometime and have found him to be a great blessing. His servant attitude is a joy to anyone with whom he comes in contact. He has proven himself to be a faithful brother and we are excited to see this book get into your hands.

Scott has laid out the answers to the many problems of today. Life is not fair but God is good! Life will give you all the problems you can handle, and Scott gives answers to many of those problems people face these days. Many do not know who they are and why they are living today. They have no purpose. This book will help you find your identity and purpose for life.

Learning to walk in the Spirit is not an easy task in life. We have trained our minds in such a way that we haven't learned to walk and live in the Spirit. We think what is happening to us is normal and that we must accept it. Wrong! Learning how to come out of defeat and religion takes time.

God's plan in sending Jesus is beyond what you can think or even imagine. The Good News message is that God is not angry with you, but He loves you with an everlasting love. He took out all of His anger on His own Son, Jesus. It is not what we do that satisfies God but what He has already done. It's not what we think about ourselves but what God thinks about us.

Many people do not know how to live the abundant life and live in a defeated life style that is a shame to the Gospel of Christ. Scott will show you

how to get yourself into a new position of living. The lies and deceptions of the devil will be revealed to you. Where you are ignorant is where the devil will get you. You will only operate in as much faith in any area of your life according to what you know and believe of God's Word. I saw a bumper sticker once that read, "Ignorance is Expensive!"

Find out that everything has been put right between you and God! Righteousness is a free gift and there is nothing you can do to add to what Jesus already accomplished. If you try to add to this, it is self-righteousness.

I know you will be blessed and set free as you read this inspired oracle of God.

Dave Duell
Faith Ministries International Network
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❧ INTRODUCTION ❧

Breaking the Cycle of Defeat is a book that will open your eyes to many of the ways we learn to function in life and why God through His son Jesus Christ is the only answer.

We are not talking about some sort of forced “believism” to which you have to work yourself up emotionally. God’s not like that, he won’t tell you to memorize a bunch of rules, use positive self talk, or to put on a “fake it until you make it” mental attitude. His answers go well beyond the superficial answers that wear thin when taken out into the real world. I am sure that you have already discovered this for yourself to some degree. It is possible that this is one of the reasons you have picked up this book.

Please don’t misunderstand what I am saying here. We do what we do because sometimes we believe that there is no other option. Trying to change things by having a positive mental attitude is certainly more productive than having a negative attitude.

But, I have found that every life-improvement method, when compared to God’s answer, is a superficial remedy to a much deeper problem. Our society has tried and continues to try to address and cure our problems through modern psychiatric medicine, self-help books, new age and metaphysical techniques, and the like, which seem to abound all around us.

These well-meaning efforts, in many ways, are like painting an old car without first removing the surface rust. It may carry the beautiful shine of a newly painted car; but, before long, the old, dilapidated condition of what's really underneath reappears. The self-improvement market earns billions every year painting and repainting the minds of millions of people - with little or no long-lasting results.

The sad truth is that millions of good sincere people have strived throughout the centuries to attain what Jesus has already freely given us. Could it be possible that the answer has been there all along and we have walked right past it? If that is true, then why haven't we heard it? And if we have heard it why is it that so many still struggle to have what I call a livable Christianity?

Religion has a way of twisting and distorting God's message to the world. You have heard the good news message that says, **“For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.” (John 3:17)** Hey, that's good news! The Bible is full of good news about forgiveness, freedom, living a life of victory, joy and peace.

Jesus didn't deny that there would be difficulty, but he did promise that through Him, we could experience victory over and above the trouble we face in life. **“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)**

Jesus also said, **“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me— watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay**

anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly." Matt. 11:28-30 (MSG)

Let's face it, God has gotten a bad rap, and unfortunately our religious institutions have been a major part of the problem. We start out experiencing "the unforced rhythms of grace" and before long we get caught up in a religious death march.

Much of the difficulty is that as Christians we intellectually and theologically make Jesus the center of our faith, but emotionally and functionally, *we* have become the center of our faith by trying to perfect God's work in our lives through our own effort. "Works righteousness" will kill you every time and will lead you to some wrong assumptions about God and yourself. Some people, after spending years serving God in the Church, become cold and in-different, while others become angry because they somehow believe that God has abandoned them and let them down.

Eugene H. Peterson, writing in his introduction to the book of Galatians in *The Message*, says, "When men and women get their hands on religion, one of the first things they often do is turn it into an instrument for controlling others, either putting or keeping them in their place."

The Apostle Paul dealt with people who would pervert the gospel message in his day. They would follow him around echoing the same message as Paul, to "Believe on the Messiah, that he is the way of salvation." Yet they preached the way to righteousness in a far different manner. They told people that the way to righteousness was through the works of the law.

Here's the good news! God has sent his son Jesus into the world to redeem humanity back to himself, and it is a finished work. Paul's message to those who would dilute the gospel by their own efforts was loud and clear. He wrote:

Those who think they can do it on their own end up obsessed with measuring their own moral muscle but never get around to exercising it in real life. Those who trust God's action in them find that God's Spirit is in them - living and breathing God! Obsession with self in these matters is a dead end; attention to God leads us out into the open, into a spacious, free life. Focusing on the self is the opposite of focusing on God. Anyone completely absorbed in self ignores God, ends up thinking more about self than God. That person ignores who God is and what He is doing. And God isn't pleased at being ignored. Romans 8:5-8 (MSG)

This book will open your thinking concerning how we learn to function in life, the human dilemma and how God through the completed work of Jesus Christ meets us at our very need. There is only one answer and that is the power of the gospel to produce change in our lives. The definition of the word *gospel* is, "good news." It is the power of God that will set you free as you hear the good news!

The truths in this book will reshape your thinking about how you view God and how you view yourself in light of God's word.

❧ CHAPTER 1 ❧

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DEFEAT

A woman struggles with being overweight. Each time she loses a few pounds she is disappointed when she gains it back. After trying weight program after weight program, she still does not understand her problem.

A young girl suffers with feelings of unworthiness. She feels like a misfit, thinking that everyone looks down on her. She wonders if life is worth living.

A middle-aged woman suffers from constant depression. She believes her frustration is caused by the fact that she has to care for her ailing elderly father who lives with her. She believes this burden is just too much to handle. Years later, after her father has passed away, she still finds herself suffering from the same depression.

A man holds within him the wrongs of everyone around him. His constant mission in life is to “discern” and secretly criticize those he meets. He suffers physically and doesn’t know why God won’t heal him.

A pastor, who secretly struggles with drug issues and immoral desires, finally confesses. *“There is a part of my life that is so repulsive and dark that I’ve been warring against it all of my adult life. For extended periods of time, I would enjoy victory and rejoice in freedom. Then, from time*

to time, the dirt that I thought was gone would resurface, and I would find myself thinking thoughts and experiencing desires that were contrary to everything I believe and teach.”

The list of difficulties is endless when it comes to dealing with the human condition. People from all levels of life deal with all types of issues. The list is endless as well as mind numbing.

When we use the term dysfunctional, we are referring to people who have been impaired in one way or another from normal life experience. All around us we see people who are broken in one way or another, people who have been locked in by life’s circumstances, with no way out. One young woman said, *“That’s just the way I am.”* Another claims, *“I just can’t help myself.”* I remember an individual whose emotional outburst was excused as, *“Can’t you see, I just need time to heal.”* Jesus called these people the poor, the brokenhearted, the bruised and blind; He proclaimed that He was sent to them. We know that, as a result of His life coming to us, there have been hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life within our lifetime who will readily testify of having experienced the healing touch of His hand.

The Church’s Greatest Challenge

I believe that the greatest challenge facing the Christian church today is to present of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in relevant and applicable terms. More precisely, to unveil to the human heart the reality of a livable Christianity. After all, isn’t that the reason we came to Christ? We each came to Him because we realized that we were in one way or another impaired and dysfunctional. We became aware that we were living in cycles of defeatism and we needed His life to be lived out through us in order to see these chains broken. We realized that we had fallen short of life’s mandate to be functional and whole. As the scripture plainly points out,

“...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”

(Romans 3:23).

Falling short of God’s glory really speaks of our inability to live life fully functional. It points to how you and I were created to live a life of limitless possibility but are no longer capable of doing that because we have been shut out from God’s nature in us. Because God’s nature is not in us we no longer are living from the inside out, instead we learn to function from the outside in.

In many instances people look to the church to solve their problems. Instead of finding the rich full life that is offered to us in Scripture, they discover legalism and religion which compounds the problem. God desires for us to work through our problems by dependence on Him, discovering Christ as life and the source of everything we need and not from some outside mandate.

Disillusionment

Unfortunately, many come to Christ with hopes of healing and deliverance only to walk away defeated and disillusioned. The counseling offices are full of people who have been unable to incorporate what they have heard on Sunday morning into their everyday experience.

Recently, while attending a neighborhood Bible Study, a woman who was sitting across from me was complaining about the person next to her who had been testifying about the constant joy she had been experiencing in her life. Obviously perturbed about this person, she complained about the difficulty she herself had in living out the Christian life.

“I struggle between what is preached on Sunday morning and everyday life.” She continued by saying, “For instance, not having enough money to last the month, or having to go down and pick up my kid out of juvenile hall. What I hear now and what I hear on Sunday morning does not

fit into my everyday experience. Joy? Don't talk to me about joy. The only people who are happy and joyful on a continual basis are the mentally ill!"

It was obvious that this woman was extremely reactive to her circumstances and for one reason or another, what she heard on Sunday morning was not addressing what she felt inside. It was probable that she thought her feelings were unique to her own self. The truth of the matter is that thousands of others like her deal with the same feelings of ineffectiveness.

In any city you enter, you will find more drop-outs no longer attending church than people who are in them. Many people have come to the conclusion that they can no longer win the game of Christianity. They feel condemned when they are not reaping the promises of God.

Questions flood the mind; *"Maybe I'm not praying or reading my Bible enough? Maybe I have failed God in some other way?"* Like the person in our previous story, it becomes easy to misjudge the reality of other people's testimonies when you yourself are not experiencing the same.

Identifying The Basis of Cycles of Defeat

You may be asking the question, *"What is the basis for much of our struggle and how can I break the cycle of defeat that seems to be over my life?"* First of all, let's define the word *cycle*. Just what does it mean? It is defined as a period of time occupied by a series of events that repeat themselves regularly and in the same order, in other words, a recurring round of events.

A good example of this would be to look at the cycle of defeat the nation of Israel found itself in on an ongoing basis. In the Old Testament, we see Israel again and again entrapped into slavery to other nations. Our master may not go by the name of a nation but entrapments and cycles we deal with

on a day to day basis can be just as real and just as powerful over our own lives.

Take a look at this partial listing showing the years Israel spent in slavery.

EGYPT.....	400 years	(Genesis 15:13, Exodus 1:8-12:36)
BABYLON.....	7 years	(Judges 3:7-8)
MOAB.....	18 years	(Judges 12-14)
PHILISTIA.....	Time unknown	(Judges 3:31)
CANAANITES.....	20 years	(Judges 4:1-3)
MIDIAN.....	7 years	(Judges 6:1)
PHILISTINES & AMMONITES.....	18 years	(Judges 10:6-18)
BABYLON.....	70 years	(2 Kings 24:14-16)

In the same way Israel became servants to other nations, we become servants to cycles of defeatism in our lives. Things like:

Mental Entrapments - negative thought life, wrong believing, distorted understanding, wrong values, thoughts of torment, fear, worry, confusion, lust and so on.

Emotional Entrapments - phobias, anxiety, worry, inferiority, anger, guilt, depression, compulsive behaviors, and stress disorders

Physical Entrapments - substance addictions (legal and illegal), all types of infirmities, financial dilemmas

It is obvious that we live in a dysfunctional society. People are hurting all around us, lives are being torn apart. What's worse, as each generation passes the baton of their dysfunction on to the next generation, and what was once labeled as impairment is now accepted as normal behavior. It has become evident that our society for the most part is in self-denial.

The rhetoric of our society is, *“I am free to live my life how I choose.”* But in the end we find ourselves in the graveyard of despair and hopelessness with seemingly no way out. Invisible chains bind us to what we once despised and in the end we accept our chains as “normal” living with the eventual outcome of blindness even to our own plight.

What is amazing is that after thousands of years of cognitive thinking, experts have concluded that humanity’s dysfunctional ways are not the result of some inherent malfunction but the early childhood programming gone awry. The agenda of certain “human potential experts” would have us believe that the study of man has so advanced in the last few centuries that we are able to be totally and completely self-corrective where it concerns the human psyche. Psychiatric medicine believes that it has come to correct the conclusions concerning the cause and effects of certain emotional difficulties.

What they haven’t discovered is that man’s dilemma goes far beyond human insight and they are absolutely helpless in their attempts to cure the problems discussed here.

The Making of a Man

One night a man stumbled into the local police station. He had no idea who he was. All he remembered was a nasty bump on the head. After being admitted into a local hospital and examined by many medical professionals, it was concluded that this man suffered from what is commonly known as amnesia and that there was little hope of his memory ever being restored. After many months in quiet solitude this man’s health began to wither away. With a look of lifeless despondency in his face he would just sit there staring. The doctors, becoming alarmed at his rapid deterioration, began to run tests of all sorts on his body in hope of saving his life. It seemed to them that if he had all the components of a healthy running body, there should be no reason that he was dying.

It suddenly dawned on them that there was something that this man did not have – an identity! The doctors quickly resolved that if he had no identity, he had no value; if he had no value, he had no significance in life. Like a book with empty pages, his life lacked the most important quality of all. It is this one quality that is crucial to all human life, they thought, and without it he would die. The doctors were now faced with a most perplexing question: How do you impart into a human being this quality called an identity? You certainly can't open a man's brain and hope to insert something you can't see.

They reasoned, *"If his brain is like a book with pages, standing empty, why can't we just write them?"* The first thing they did was to move him from the solitude of the quiet hospital to a home where there was a lot of activity. They felt that if they were to expose him to a lot of people within a short amount of time he would begin to build relationships. Eventually, in those relationships he would find mirrored back to him some idea of who he was. Every day he began to hear his new name called and spoken. He began to find out what ideas, concepts, and things society valued and considered important. These became the building blocks of his personality and self-esteem, the components of what they thought were to be a properly adjusted self-concept.

The doctors stood amazed. *"Why, we've just created a man!"* In their enthusiasm and self-applause, they never stopped to think that what they had just performed was exactly what the human soul has been accomplishing since the Fall of Man. In much the same way that the doctors tried to reshape and remold the identity of this man, the human soul reaches outside of itself, looking for information as a point of reference for the reshaping of its own identity. Because you are born into this world "in sin" you have no knowledge of God or intention for your life. As a result you reach outside yourself into a fallen world in order to establish some sense of identity. This starts from the womb and does not end until you are dead.

Our outside world view contains and restricts us because it is based upon the beliefs of our experiences which are subjective. Instead of living a life of limitless possibilities we “learn” to live in limitation.

The sad thing about this is that we accept this as normal without even realizing God’s full intention for our lives. Jesus said, “I have come that you might have life and to have that life in abundance”. This is the Good News message that we in this generation must hear.

Questions

1. What is the church’s greatest challenge?
2. Define the word cycle.
3. Who in the Old Testament is a good example of cycles of defeat?
4. In the same way Israel became servants to other nations, we become servants to?
5. Name the meaning of the 3 types of entrapments:
6. What is the rhetoric of our society?