Practicing The Beatitudes

The Beatitudes are the foundational tools that we have to not only possess, we have to learn how to use them in real life. First we have to understand what they are and what they do. Then we have to allow God to put them in our lives so they are ready for use, when we face a life situation that requires them.

We are going to take the people God handpicked to be in His Bible and use them as examples. Some of these people succeeded in using these principles and won at life. Others failed to use them and were damaged in various aspects of their lives. By our being able to see how these Beatitude tools work in these Biblical examples, we will see how to use them in our own lives.

Adam And Eve

The first example comes to us as a couple; they are our great, great, great….grandparents. They started out just like us, even though they didn't ever have a life as a baby, then grow into teenagers, and then into being adults, they still had the same basic type of life we did.

They started out being innocent (not knowing the difference between right and wrong); they weren't responsible for any spiritual mistakes they made. But then God spoke to them and gave them a law; it was the law that they were not to eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Once Adam and Eve received this law, they faced the same temptations we face as the Holy Spirit speaks to our conscience and tells us what is right and wrong. Satan came to them just like he comes to us; but, he came to them in the form of a serpent. However, the words he spoke to them are very similar to the thoughts he puts in our mind. So, let's get started comparing their life with ours as we see how to use the Beatitudes to win at life.

Setting The Stage For Adam And Eve Exercising Their Free Will:
Gen 2:7 (NIV) the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Gen 2:8 (NIV) Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed.

Gen 2:9 (NIV) And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. <u>In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil</u>.

Before We Try To Explain The Things Of God:
God uses the Bible to explain WHY He does WHAT He does; but, there are a few things we need to consider, as we start on the journey into moving from knowledge to understanding what that knowledge means. We are getting ready to try to explain why Adam and Eve failed the test concerning good and evil. We will be taking Biblical concepts from all over the Bible to provide the reason why God put a tree in the garden and then made a law that said they couldn't eat the fruit from it.

Human Limitations:
There are two problems with us understanding why God does anything He does. First has to do with the incredible, supernatural knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and power of God.

Isa 55:8 (NIV) "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares the LORD.

Second, the main reason why we don't think like God does is because we can't. It would be like an ant trying to think like a human or understand human concepts.

God KNOWS what the right things are; He KNOWS what are the right things to do. He doesn't make any mistakes; but, He wants us to have at least a "human" understanding of why He does what He does.

Isa 55:9 (NIV) "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."

The Communication Barrier:
How do we train an animal that has a far inferior brain than we do? First, we are faced with the problem of being able to communicate what it is we want them to do. If we are able to work though the communication barrier, we then have to help the animal learn how to do what is we are trying to teach them.

It is easy to understand that it is difficult at best for the concepts of God to be "translated" into human understanding; but, nothing is impossible for God. He will help us learn how to get the information we need provided that we have a "poor in spirit" attitude. He isn't trying get our approval or blessing on what He is doing; He is just helping us understand it so we can feel good about it. So, with this purpose in mind, let's see if we can get the help we need.

Getting A God-Given Free Will:
We all get a free will from God; but, we all have to have something to exercise our free will on. We also need to know what is good for us to choose and what is bad for us. We are all given the ability to analyze things; we are given the confidence to make choices; and we are given the ability to see ourselves as individuals. We want what is best for us through a desire for self-preservation.

Neutral, Right, And, Wrong Spiritual Issues:
And the LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. There are things that are spiritually neutral; God made things for us that are good for us from a natural standpoint. They aren't spiritual issues that we have to make moral choices over; they are just normal, natural human needs.

In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. These two trees are different from all the other trees; these two offer spiritual choices. If we humans were able to see things from God's perspective, the choice between these two trees should be obvious. However, we humans lack powers that are too great for us to possess.

Limited Power:
We don't allow children to play with explosives; we don't let them drive cars; and we don't allow them to have certain rights and privileges until they are mature enough to be able to be responsible for them. That is the way God is with many of the things He has.

If our children want to have access to things that are too powerful or dangerous for them, we either do certain things for them or we let them do them while under supervision. There are a lot of these things we need with God; the power, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding are resident in Him. But, we can gain access to them through prayer and Bible study.

Good But Powerless Laws:
Laws point out spiritual issues; they define what is good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral, and righteous or evil. It was vital that Adam and Eve have something to exercise their free will on. It was vital that they have a law that pointed out which choice was good and which one was bad for them.

But, when God set out a law against the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, that opened the door for Satan to use it to trap Adam and Eve. They didn't have to fall into that trap; they could have accessed the mighty knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and power of God.

Trustworthy And Untrustworthy Sources:
For us, we have a few more sources that will be trying to trap us. In addition to Satan trying to push us toward things that would hurt us, we have our body wanting to take spiritual shortcuts, we have other people trying to involve us in things that are wrong, and we have the world system setting false rules, laws, and standards that lead us in the wrong direction.

Many grownups could save a lot of children from having to suffer those bad decisions children typically make. But, they often use their free will to exclude these adults and learn the hard way. That is because most children don't have a poor in spirit attitude.

The Stage Is Set:
So, we have man's God-given free will, we have two things to choose from (the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), we have a law that points out what is good for us humans and what is bad, we have humans who have the ability to analyze things, we have evil resident in Satan, AND we have GOD Who embodies ALL good.

The Neutral Issue:
Gen 2:15 (NIV) The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.

This is the neutral aspects of life; for the most part, taking care of the Garden of Eden doesn't have spiritual issues. As long as Adam isn't lazy and doesn't refuse to work it and take care of it, there are no real right or wrong aspects to this part of his life.

The Good Issue:
Gen 2:16 (NIV) And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden;

This is the commandment concerning good; God is telling Adam what will bring happiness, peace, satisfaction, and success to his life; however, this IS a commandment or law. If a parent tells a child that they can play in the yard, that sets the parameters for where they are safe and secure. It also sets the parameters for where they cannot play; it establishes where they are not safe and secure.

The Evil Issue:
Gen 2:17 (NIV) but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

This is the commandment concerning bad; God is telling Adam what will bring pain, unhappiness, stress, disappointment, and damage to his life. He is free to disobey these two commands or laws; he has the God-given ability to analyze the situation; and, he has the God-given freedom to decide what he is going to do about them.

The People Issue—Adam Gets A Wife:
Gen 2:18 (NIV) The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

We now move into the major aspect of the Beatitudes; most of it involves us and other people. Being poor in spirit majorly only involves us and God; it typically only deals with our being willing to listen and follow God's directions on how to succeed at life.

Now we have a wife for Adam to interact with; this opens the doors for the two of them to need the rest of the Beatitudes to yield to. We also have two other relationships to always keep in mind…God and the devil.

The Innocents Period:
Gen 2:25 (NIV) The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

We are all born innocent; but, unlike Adam and Eve at this point, we are born with a sinful nature. Adam and Eve didn't get their sinful nature until AFTER they sinned. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil gave them their ability to know the difference between right and wrong. The moment they knew that, they became RESPONSIBLE for that knowledge; they were no longer innocent.

James 4:17 (NIV) Anyone, then, who KNOWS the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins.

The moment they got this ability by receiving a conscience, they knew what was right and what was wrong. They knew why it was wrong; but, they lacked the power to do the right thing and resist the wrong thing. That is WHY God made the law that they were not to eat from this tree.

Adam And Eve's Battle With The Beatitudes

The Temptations Of Satan:
Gen 3:1 (NIV) Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?"

The Bible doesn't spend a lot of time explaining about the origination and existence of Satan. We will pick up some knowledge on this as we go through the Bible. But, for now, we just need to know he exists and came in this form to Adam and Eve.

We will now apply the principles of the Beatitudes to this situation and show which of the eight Beatitudes will need to be applied, when we face this type of temptation.

Questioning Our Credibility:
He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" Being poor in spirit is the first attitude needed in order to win against this attack or temptation from Satan.

Gen 2:16-17 (NIV) And <u>the LORD God commanded the man</u>, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die."

Being poor in spirit makes God's words to be the FINAL AUTHORITY in our life. **Did God REALLY say** is Satan's effort to see if we are settled in our poor in spirit attitude. If we aren't poor in spirit, we are headed back into those things that hurt us. We HAVE to realize that God has taken all the good things in life and made them a part of Who He is.

Trying To Confuse The Issue:
Did God really say, 'You must not eat from ANY tree in the garden' is his effort to draw us into a debate. It is at the point where someone fails to understand all the facts that we can show how smart we are. But it is often a trick just to get us discussing things that are designed to pull us into things that damage us. God's law said they could **eat from any tree in the garden** except **from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.**

God didn't say, you must not eat from ANY tree in the garden; and, Satan knew that all the time. But, if he can get us to talk about it, discuss the issue, or debate the subject, he stands a change of changing our mind. He can't make us do it; we have a God-given free will; but, MAYBE he can get us to change our own mind.

Knowing Where Our Power Is:
The only power we have is located in God; if we get into a debate, start reasoning with the temptation, or start wondering whether or not what God said in the Bible is true, we are on our way to defeat. It is very important for us to know HOW we end up making decisions that take us down a wrong path.

When Satan causes a question or doubt to come into our mind that challenges a statement of God, we only have one recourse. Quote the statement of God to ourselves and to the thoughts of doubt. God is the only One Who loves us with a sacrificial love; He loves us more than we love ourselves. Being poor in spirit with our heavenly Father is vital for our future.

We Must Know The Enemy's Techniques:
Here are some similar questions or doubts that can come up in our mind: Did God really mean that? Is that what He really said? I believe God wants me to be happy! This statement has truth and a lie in it; it is true God wants us to be happy; however, it is not true that, that thing we think will make us happy will actually make us happy.

It looked like the fruit on the forbidden tree would make people happy; but, instead it put a sinful nature in Adam and Eve and all their posterity. If we trust and yield to the God Who wants us to be happy, we will LET Him lead us into TRUE happiness.

The devil isn't likely to be coming to us in the form of a snake and talk to us. Instead,

- He will come in the person of a "friend" who is trying to talk us into going against what the Holy Spirit is telling our conscience.

- He will come in the form of a thought that tries to get us to do something that we feel is against what we have read in the Bible.

- He will come in the form of a feeling that is drawing us into experiences or relationships that will addict us or trap us.

- He will come in the form of our body's desires that will pull us into extreme pleasure that we will want to experience for the rest of our lives.

- He will come in the form of TV programs, movies, magazines, novels, internet sites, or video games that trap us in things God is trying to protect us from.

- He will come in the form of our emotions and try to depress us, get us angry, create fear in us, make us feel hopeless, or try to destroy us with great guilt and condemnation.

- He will come in the form of conflicts in relationships with friends, relatives, associates, spouses, children, business partners, and even enemies.

What To Do When The Temptation Comes:
Gen 3:2-3 (NIV) The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, <u>and you must not touch it</u>, or you will die.'"

Eve is on her way to defeat before she even enters into this battle with temptation. Why? Because she hasn't gotten herself ready for such an issue. But, we can give her a little break because she hasn't been given all the tools we have been given. However, we aren't here to critique Eve, we need to do this study as if WE are Adam and Eve.

The Beatitudes are the characteristics we must ALREADY have WHEN we face this kind of temptation. In order to keep this from being a study about what Adam and Eve SHOULD have done, we will need to see how we need to get ourselves ready by studying and learning how to USE the Beatitudes to help us win at life.

Using The Beatitudes To Get Ready Before Temptation Comes:

- **Poor In Spirit** is to have a teachable attitude. This means that we need to BE WILLING to learn all those things we are going to need during a battle. We must be ready for temptation BEFORE we get into it. If we come into this battle in Eve's condition, we are approaching it with self-confidence. We are using self-confidence to argue with our thoughts, feelings, friends, or whatever source is presenting the temptation.

  If we are being tempted with depression, for example, our emotions would come to us with negative feelings. Our mind would try to come up with a reason for why we were depressed. Rather than using the poor in spirit attitude and coming to God with the issue, we would try to diagnose and solve our own emotional problem.

  The Eve problem in us would cause us to neglect to use the provisions that God has given us to fight this battle. We would be using our own thought processes to try to decide what to do about this temptation.

  Let's make the Eve statement into our statement:
  We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <u>but God did say</u>, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

  This could be a statement of faith in God and His Words, if it came from a poor in spirit and meekness attitude. We would be saying that this is what God said; this is what I believe; and, as God gives me the strength, this is what I am going to continue to believe.

  But, in the Eve statement it was not a statement of faith; rather, it was just a point of clarification as to what God actually said. His words were being treated as words that were open for discussion. They weren't "final authority" words from the God of the universe. They weren't with respect for Who God is; they weren't taken into consideration that He loves us, wants the best for us, and spoke them for our benefit and safety.

- **Mourning** is allowing God to show us what our real problem is within ourselves. If we are being tempted with a relationship issue like friendship, business clients, divorce, marriage, or child raising, for example, we may assume that the other person is the problem. Rather than allowing God to go through OUR heart and show US where WE are part of the problem, we can resist mourning and try to justify or forgive our part of the problem.

  Now, let's make the Eve statement into our statement as it relates to mourning:
  We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <u>but God did say</u>, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we allow God to show us that we have attitude and character issues that are hindering us. If we get to the place where we can see we aren't our answer and that we are part of the problem, our faith can be much stronger in God and His words.

- **Meekness** is accepting professionals and experts as being people we need to put some part of our life in their hands. If we are being tempted with an addiction, for example, we may decide to try to handle it with our own skills, talents, power, knowledge, understanding, and wisdom. Or, we may choose some person who isn't a Christian to be our expert or give us professional help.

  Meekness is the process of us accepting God as our only expert in the area where we need help. If we are poor in spirit (teachable) with someone other than God and the people He picks for us, then we have become meek with the wrong person or group.

  Now, let's make the Eve statement into our statement as it relates to meekness:
  We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, <u>but God did say</u>, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

  This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we have opened our heart to accepting Him as our expert or professional for doing things for us that we are not capable of doing for ourselves. We can see God as being the expert of all experts, the authority on all subjects, the professional of all professionals, the leader of all leaders, and the God over all creation.

- **Righteousness** is the attitude and act of doing those things that are good for us, those around us, and God's plan. It is also the avoidance of all those things that are bad for us, others, and God's plan. However, what is good and what is bad is established only through what God says they are.

  If we are being tempted to spend more money than we should, for example, to hunger and thirst after righteousness is to go to our heavenly Father and ask Him to show us what is the good way to spend our money and what is the bad way. We should ask Him to show us who is being benefited by the system of spending, we are using, and who is being hurt.

Now, let's make the Eve statement into our statement as it relates to righteousness: We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we see the true character and attitudes of God's righteousness. Without us being able to see this clearly, we have a little doubt or question in our mind as to whether or not God's word on the matter is true, best, right, or good IN OUR CASE. Without this hunger and thirst, we may think things like, He may be right on this subject for other people; but, this doesn't apply to my situation.

- **Mercy** is to give someone something good that they don't deserve or to refuse to punish them for doing something they deserve punishment, retaliation, or brought to justice for. In this case, there is only Eve, Adam, Satan, and God involved in this temptation issue. Up to this point, Satan does not qualify for mercy; Eve and Adam haven't done anything YET that requires mercy; and God doesn't need mercy.

  Not all of the list of Beatitudes will always apply to every situation we face. Like in this case, there will be situations that won't need to take advantage of a particular Beatitude item. In that case, we just move on to the next item and see how it is to be applied to the temptation we are facing.

- **A Pure Heart** is to have motives that are filled with love and righteousness. It is to have God's love that is listed in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a and the righteousness listed in Galatians 5:22-23. This is a place where we have to ask God to search our heart. Since our heart is buried in a deep place where it can't be analyzed by us, and since it can't be reasoned with by our mind, we need the Holy Spirit to guide us with the prayers we need (Romans 8:26-27).

  Jer 17:9 (NIV) The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? We are up against a part of us that is impossible for us to diagnose. We will NEVER be able to examine our own motives for why we are doing something, We will never know FOR SURE that we are doing it with pure motives. Trying to justify ourselves won't do it; and trying to convince ourselves and others that we are doing things with a pure heart won't do it.

  If we don't take our heart to God, the One Who nothing is impossible for Him, we WILL be fooled by our heart. We MUST allow God to search our heart and help us see what our REAL motive is for why we want something, why we are thinking, feeling, saying, or doing something, or why we are living a certain way.

No matter what it is we are being tempted with, our heart will have a hidden agenda for why it is trying to justify doing the wrong thing. It can make us want to yield to the temptation with a very strong emotional desire. It will be irresistible without God's power to help us with it.

Now, let's make the Eve statement into our statement as it relates to a pure heart: We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words, if we have a heart that is being shown to us by God. In Romans 8:26-27 we have a way of being presented heart motives that are typically hidden from us. If we are praying and yielding to the Holy Spirit's presentations of things that need to be healed in our heart, we will be able to put our whole trust in God and His words.

- **A Peacemaker** is a person who has God's peace already in their own heart and life. They are those who are willing to share this peace with those who are struggling with having peace in their own life and in their relationship with other people.

  This is another Beatitude item that doesn't apply in this particular situation. Satan doesn't qualify for it, God doesn't need it, and Adam and Eve aren't arguing about anything. However, it would have been good if Adam had put up some resistance concerning what Eve was doing with Satan.

- **Persecution** is any outside human resistance against what we believe and know God has told us to believe and know. In this situation with Adam and Eve, their situation is more of a temptation than a persecution. Rather than being attacked for what they believed and knew, they were being lured into changing their own beliefs and knowledge.

  God had told them what they needed to believe and know. It could have saved and protected them from any kind of temptation. Satan couldn't force them to change their beliefs or training. All he was able to do was try to convince THEM to do the changing.

  Persecution is more of an effort to force us to change our beliefs and truths. It can come as a verbal attack of making fun of us, criticizing us, accusing us falsely, gossiping against us, and saying all kinds of evil things about us. It can come as a rejection socially, cutting us off relationally, or punishing us through governmental systems.

  Persecution can come as a physical attack of hitting us, abusing us physically, torturing us, or even killing us. It is all aimed at trying to FORCE us to give up on Jesus and His words.

Now, let's make the Eve statement into our statement as it relates to persecution: We say to the temptation, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'"

This could be a statement of faith in God and His words even in the face of persecution, if we are able to see how important and valuable Jesus and all He has given us is. We can become so blessed and filled with appreciation and clarity as to all we shall inherit now and in eternity, that we would even be willing to give up our temporal life rather than deny Jesus as our Savior.

Challenging What We Think We Heard From God:
He said to the woman, "Did God REALLY say, 'You must not eat from ANY tree in the garden'?" Now it is time for us to apply this type of temptation to our own situation. **Did God really say,** is the point where we have thoughts, doubts, or have people challenge the validity of what we "think" God is saying to us.

We can be talking to a person about why we do or don't want to do something; and, we can have them say: "Oh, God doesn't expect you to do or not do that!" They are acting like THEY are the authority for how the Bible is to be interpreted. They are saying that THEIR interpretation is superior to ours. We will not be open to these attacks on our interpretation of the Bible, if we have gone over the Beatitudes and allowed God to help us with our spiritual attitudes.

Satan Trying To Be The Final Authority In Our Life:
Gen 3:4 (NIV) "You will NOT surely die," the serpent said to the woman.

Here is what God actually said: **"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die (Genesis 2:17)."**

We will receive feelings inside us, thoughts inside us, and people's words coming at us that are DIRECT contradictions to what the Bible says. These thoughts, feelings, and words are Satanic attacks that are trying to take the AUTHORITY POSITION in our heart, mind, and life. They will speak authoritatively with great confidence trying to use it as a technique for stealing our faith.

Satan is evil, hateful, a thief, a liar, and a killer; yet, he wants us to trust and believe his words over God's. In other words, the way the Beatitudes help us measure people, sources of influence, and temptations is based on how they fit into righteousness. Where does an idea, philosophy, relationship, or decision fit into right and wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, and righteousness or evil?

If we believe, trust, rely, or depend on the WRONG SOURCE, the information, guidance, direction, and destination will always be damaging and maybe even fatal. The RIGHT SOURCE provides us with life giving help, healing, blessings, and success.

Choosing the right source will eliminate confusion; the Bible is always the right SOURCE. This keeps us from having to always be trying to figure out which is the right INFORMATION. If we know what is the right source, we will automatically know we have the right information.

Attacking The Credibility Of God:
Gen 3:5 (NIV) "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be <u>like God, knowing good and evil</u>."

For God knows is saying that God has bad motives for trying to keep us from getting what is good or best for us. We are then at a place where we may be looking at the words that are being presented to us. We may start asking ourselves, is this temptation something I want? Rather than judging and evaluating the SOURCE, we are judging and evaluating the INFORMATION. The true question is, is this a source I should base my life on? Should I trust it or them over God and His Word?

Accepting The Wrong SOURCE As Being True:
Gen 3:6a (NIV) When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom,

Accepting The BAIT:
When the woman saw is the place where the temptation takes on a life of its own. There is always a point of no return; it is a place where we take the BAIT and swallow the hook. Bait is different from food; it is different from those things that meet our basic, daily needs for normal life. Bait looks like the very best food, benefits, blessings, help, and happiness a person can find. There is just one problem with it; it has a hook in it!

Our Body Ignores Consequences:
Our body wants pleasure and prefers extreme pleasure; it does NOT take into consideration what the consequences are. It does NOT care if the end results will be damage, guilt, emptiness, and wrong deeds against others. It just wants to have fun, enjoyment, thrills, and happiness right here, right now. If we allow our body to take over some decision, any decision, it will be a choice based on happiness and pleasure WITHOUT consideration for the consequences later.

Considering The INFORMATION Rather Than The SOURCE:
When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom was the moment the battle was lost. When we allow ourselves to make decisions based on what looks good to us, we suffer many FUTURE consequences. Why? We CONSIDERED the issue rather than the source that was presenting the issue.

Who loves us more than we love ourselves?…God does! Who knows everything; us, our friends, "experts," the world, or God? Who can see into the future and know what a decision's outcome will be?...God does. He says things to us like: **"But you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, <u>for when you eat of it YOU will surely die</u>."**

Sin Spreads:
Gen 3:6b (NIV) She took some and ate it. <u>She also gave some to her husband</u>, who was with her, and he ate it.

Another bad thing about sin is that it spreads; we usually give some of it to those around us. It is a VERY contagious spiritual disease; people see how we are living, assume it is a good thing, and fall into the same trap. Also, some sins have to be committed WITH or AGAINST someone else.

Sin Has AUTOMATIC Consequences:
Gen 3:7 (NIV) <u>Then the eyes of BOTH of them were opened</u>, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

It isn't until AFTER we have done something the Bible tells us not to do that we see clearly why God said something. Learning the hard way is never the way to live life. The purpose of the Bible is to be our spiritual road map that keeps us from having to learn the hard way.

Now let's take a quick look at sin's consequences and God's discipline. When God said: **"for when you eat of it you will surely die."** He wasn't saying, if you do it I will kill you. He was saying that the sin would kill them spiritually. He was explaining the CONSEQUENCE of the sin. Later we will take a look at God's discipline; its purpose is designed to set us free from yielding to temptation in the future; it is different from the consequences of sin.

The Consequences Of Sin:
Gen 3:8 (NIV) Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, <u>and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden</u>.

Death means separation; the moment Adam and Eve ate the fruit they were told would cause them to die was the moment they died spiritually. The moment we did something the Holy Spirit told us not to do through our conscience was the moment WE died spiritually. From that point on, we needed salvation to help us be BORN AGAIN!

Both the unsaved and the saved have a tendency to hide from God because of the fact that they have sinned. But, that is the moment we desperately need to turn TO God. However, something happens to us humans, when we sin. When sin enters our life as a sinner or even as a Christian, it brings fear with it. It is a fear that tries to cause us to run from God rather than to Him.

We Must Diagnose Where Are We Spiritually:
Gen 3:9 (NIV) But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"

This is a spiritual question that is trying to help Adam and Eve look at where sin took them. This is the purpose of the Beatitude item, mourning; it helps us diagnose where we are spiritually. If we don't see anything wrong with what we did, we not only sinned, we are stuck in the sin.

Whether we are Christian or an unsaved person, if we don't see anything wrong with what we did, we not only sinned, we are stuck in the sin. A person will have an affair with another person; that is a sin. But, some people don't repent of that sin; they want to stay in the adulterous relationship; that is a lack of mourning.

Some people come to God for salvation and then commit a sin. The next decision they make will decide whether they are a true Christian or are a person who was just trying Christianity out.

If our want moves from desiring God and the things of God to wanting to stay in a sin, then we have established whether or not we are a true Christian. Yielding to mourning helps us BE a true Christian who wants the righteousness of God (those things that are good for us, other people, and God's plan).

Sin Brings Fear:
Gen 3:10 (NIV) He answered, "I heard You in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; <u>so I hid</u>."

Let's break this verse down and see the spiritual principles and characteristics of sin. Let's see what it does to us and what we have to do to get free from its control.

God Always Calls Us Back:
I heard You. When we sin, God starts calling us back into a relationship with Him. He still loves us very much; but, He still honors our God-given free will. It is up to us as to whether or not we want His help; the problem is, we may not know what we want.

- We may decide that we are no longer WORTHY to have a relationship with God.
- We may decide that the sin is PROOF that we must not really want or love God.
- We may decide that GOD no longer wants or loves us.
- We may decide that we would like to postpone the relationship for a while so we can enjoy sin for a season. Then when we have had our "fun" we will come back to God and reestablish the relationship.
- We may decide that God loves us, we love Him, and we want to repent (make a U-turn) and make things right with God immediately. This, of course, is the right way to feel about God; and the right way to respond to a sin.

Sin Always Hurts Our Relationship With God:
I was afraid. This is a fear that typically comes as a part of sinning. Here is the constant relationship we have with our heavenly Father, if we want it: **Rom 8:15 (NIV) For you did not receive a spirit <u>that makes you a slave again to fear</u>, but you received the Spirit of SONSHIP. And BY Him we cry, "Abba, Father."** Abba also means father; but, it is a special word for father that carries the feelings of endearment.

When we sin, whether accidently or on purpose, we can immediately run back to our heavenly Father for His help. Our relationship is one of freedom from fear that God has rejected us. Sin has caused us to reject God, to some degree; but, God has NOT rejected us.

This is a moment where we are exercising our God-given free will and deciding what we want the relationship to be:

1. Do we want forgiveness through a desire to repent (make a U-turn)?

2. Do we want to keep sinning but keep our relationship with God?

3. Do we want to quit our relationship with God and go back to a life of sin?

Question number one is the one that God would like for us to make our relationship to be. Question number two is one that God will not offer as a possibility. We have to make a choice between whether we want sin or we want God.

We will sin a lot of sins during our lifetime; but, we MUST always choose to either run back to God and desire His deliverance from it, or, we MUST choose to reject God and go on sinning. We CANNOT want to keep on sinning and expect to keep our relationship with God.

Question number three is the one that God does NOT want us to EVER choose. But, we have the God-given right to choose this path, if we want.

Repentance Is To ADMIT We Have Sinned:
Gen 3:11 (NIV) And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? <u>Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from</u>?"

This too is a spiritual question; the question is, do we realize and admit that we have sinned?

1. If we are wanting to keep growing in being **poor in spirit,** we will be teachable enough to allow God to decide whether or not what we did was a sin.

2. If we are wanting to keep growing in being one of **those who mourn,** we will be willing to allow ourselves to feel bad about what we have done and be ready to repent.

3. If we are wanting to keep growing in being **meek,** we will accept what the Bible says is right or wrong, good or bad, moral or immoral, righteous or evil and admit it is the final authority on the subject. We will accept God as the expert, our Lord, our God, and our Judge. We will allow Him to evaluate what we have done and let Him tell us whether or not it was a sin.

4. If we are wanting to keep growing in being one of **those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,** we will want to pray and ask God to help us replace this sin with those things that are good for us and those around us. We will pray to be delivered from all those things that are bad for us and those around us; such as the sin we just committed.

5. If we are wanting to keep growing in being **merciful,** we will be willing to make it right with those who deserve to be asked for their forgiveness AND with those who do not deserve to be asked. We will also be willing to ask God for His help to forgive those who do not deserve our forgiveness for the sins they have sinned against us.

6. If we are wanting to keep growing in being **pure in heart,** we will bring our heart before God and allow Him to inspect our motives. Sometimes God is dealing with us concerning something that typically ISN'T a sin. The Holy Spirit is making us feel bad about something; but, it is difficult seeing what it is we did wrong.

   Many times it is a **pure in heart** issue; we sometimes to the right thing for the wrong reason. This situation takes a lot of prayer and work with God. Since our heart is so hidden from us and impossible to cure on our own, we have to pray and ask God what it is we need to pray for (Romans 8:26-27).

7. If we are wanting to keep growing in being a **peacemaker,** we will allow God to keep putting more and more peace in our life so we will be content with what we have. Often sin is caused be us wanting something God hasn't given us. God gave Adam and Eve every tree in the garden for food except one; so, which tree did they want?

   Growing peacemakers also help others who are creating problems because they want something God isn't giving them. Trouble makers are usually people who are trying to take matters into their own hands. They are trying to cause things to happen that they either don't want to get through God, or they don't want to wait until it does come through God.

8. If we are one of **those who are persecuted,** we can discover that persecution can actually CAUSE us to sin. When the forced efforts of evil people come against us trying to make us give up on God and His message, we can find ourselves giving in to their pressure. However, this doesn't mean that, that was what we WANTED to do.

   We need to take the issue before God and let Him show us what went wrong in that situation. Did we expose ourselves to people we shouldn't have been hanging around? Did we care more about people's opinions than God's truths? Did we allow fear of suffering to be more important to us than our relationship with God? What was it that happened that needs to be helped and healed in our heart and life?

Blame Keeps Us From Repenting And Going The Other Way:
Gen 3:12 (NIV) The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

Very often there is another person involved in the sins we commit. And, very often that other person had a part in influencing our decision to sin. And, very often we are TEMPTED to put the WHOLE blame on them for MAKING us sin.

Unlike Adam and Eve, we can't take our "partner in crime" and have an audience with God to discuss whose fault it was. Our discussions with God are in our heart and in our mind; we feel guilty about something in our conscience; or, we get ideas in our head from the Holy Spirit that point out differences between what the Bible says and what we did or are doing.

If someone else was involved with what the Holy Spirit is speaking against in our conscience, or if they were influencing our decisions about something the Holy Spirit is bringing into evaluation through the Scriptures, we may blame the whole thing on them and not take it to God. As long as we fail to find a reason for repenting before God, the sin problem remains.

Sins that haven't been dealt with can be very dangerous; they can grow, get worse, produce bad consequences, and hinder our relationship with God. Even if we feel it wasn't our fault, wasn't all that bad, or someone else got what they deserved, we need to discuss it with God in prayer.

God Will Work With All Who Are Involved:
Gen 3:13 (NIV) Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

We need to notice that God dropped the issue with Adam and went straight to Eve. But, we will also notice that He eventually gets back to Adam. Blame may make us feel better for a little while; but, God will always come back and make us face what is hurting and damaging us.

God cares about those who have influenced us to sin; He loves them and wants them to get the help and healing they need. He wants them to see how they can be delivered from hurting themselves and other people. And, He will try to do whatever it takes to help them get set free.

But, God also loves us; He isn't going to allow blame to cheat us out of getting the help we need. However, blame can make us struggle with our poor in spirit attitude. We may allow it to cause us to be unwilling or unable to hear what God wants to say to us. We must never forget that God honors the free will He has given us.

God Will Deliver Us From Satan:
Gen 3:14 (NIV) So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life.

The decisions God made in His dealing with Satan and the serpent that Satan used is another issue. These are subjects that won't help us grow in our relationship with God. They are spiritual issues that are to be accepted on face value. If we start studying and trying to learn more about them, they will distract us from the issues that God is very interested in.

Many have moved into this area of study and spent large quantities of their precious time on this earth trying to understand and teach subjects the Bible doesn't give us much information on. If we look at what God just mentions here and there throughout the Bible without much explanation, we know they are things He just wants us to simply accept as fact. If we look at what He goes into great lengths to talk about, explain, give illustrations concerning, and Jesus puts into commands, then they are the subjects we need to spend our time on.

Jesus Gave Us The Victory Over Satan:
Gen 3:15 (NIV) And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

This is a summary of the battle Jesus won over Satan through the cross. The cross looked like Jesus' head was crushed and Satan just got his heel struck. But, in the spirit realm, all Satan's authority was taken from him and even though Jesus died on the cross, it brought salvation for all who accept it; plus, JESUS ROSE FROM THE DEAD!

This verse is the one God put His emphasis on and it is the one we have illustrations, instructions, examples, and large quantities of Scriptures about. This is where we need to spend our time, effort, prayer, faith, study, and faith-action on.

Discipline Produces Spiritual Growth:
Gen 3:16 (NIV) To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

When we put the blame on others rather than simply allowing God to deal with OUR PART in the sin, it only delays the work that brings the healing. This work that God does in Eve's life was just what she needed in order for her to be able to live a successful life. There were some characteristics in her that were killing her spiritually.

When God rebukes us or disciplines us, it may seem harsh to us; but, it is like a surgeon cutting out a cancer. The surgery is very invasive and painful; the aftermath of recovery can be long and uncomfortable; but, it saved a person's life.

We see the mistakes, sins, shortcomings, misdeeds of our body, and things we do to ourselves and others and fail to see what kind of damage and pain it will EVENTUALLY cause. Adam and Eve had no idea what their sin would do to the human race. If we are poor in spirit, open to mourning, meek in our relationship with God, and have a hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be able to appreciate and yield to all those things God does to bring healing to us.

Discipline Targets The Area Where We Need Help:
Gen 3:17 (NIV) To Adam he said, "<u>Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it</u>,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

Discipline is vital to us from time to time; we all get careless and sometimes determined to damage ourselves. Pride, ignorance, and social pressure can all cause us to do things that will hurt us for life. Those that God has accepted into His family get special guidance that those who are rejecting salvation don't get.

Discipline Makes Important Adjustments In Our Life:
Gen 3:18 (NIV) It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

This may seem mean and harsh; but, spiritual death and eternal separation from God would have been a lot worse. When we compare what God is saving us from with the discipline, the discipline seems very mild. If Adam had been left to his own devices, he would have destroyed his own life. This new ability to know the difference between good and evil made him responsible for every action he took.

Discipline Directs Us In The Right Direction:
Gen 3:19 (NIV) By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Adam needed to start working for a living; he needed to be kept busy so he wouldn't have too much time on his hands. Work kept him from doing more damage than was necessary. The discipline showed Adam what the consequence of sin was. But, the discipline is never NEARLY as bad as the consequences that sins would have produced in us. Plus, discipline helps us not feel like breaking God's laws are worth it.

Jesus Endured The Greatest Discipline For Us:
Heb 12:2 (NIV) Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus took on our punishment for breaking the law; He took the wages of sin which is death and died in our place. He not only died for our sins, He was beaten for our emotional, financial, relational, and physical healing. Instead of going the route of Adam and Eve, He obeyed the laws of God and demonstrated what great blessing come out of that.

This Is To Help Us Not Give Up:
Heb 12:3 (NIV) Consider Him Who endured such opposition from sinful men, SO THAT you will not grow weary and lose heart.

Spiritual principles are VERY hard for us to understand; we see Jesus coming to earth, going to the cross, dying, and raising from the dead and can miss the whole purpose and plan for it. But, if we will simply listen to the Holy Spirit, He will help us see why Jesus suffered and died.

The Holy Spirit will give us the desire to have the power of God's determination to **not grow weary and lose heart.** If such a violent sacrifice had not been made, we would have missed the whole work that Jesus did. But, when we REALLY see how great a sacrifice Jesus made for us, it helps us look to God for **not grow[ing] weary and los[ing] heart.**

Our Experiences With Discipline Are Easier:
Heb 12:4 (NIV) In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

In your struggle against sin: We inherited the sinful nature from our distant grandparents, Adam and Eve; this nature isn't sin; it is the pressure in our body where IT wants to sin. This pressure of our body WANTING to sin then pushes us into sinning.

So, we not only sin and need salvation to get forgiveness for those sins, we STRUGGLE **against sin** after salvation; but, we **have not yet resisted to the point of shedding [our] blood.** We haven't had to fight it to the point where we had to go to a cross and hang on it until dead.

Sinners Get Consequences:
Heb 12:5 (NIV) And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and <u>do not lose heart when He rebukes you</u>,

From time to time God is going to have to do something with us like He did with Adam and Eve. Discipline is totally different from consequences; the consequences of sin are eternal death, destruction, hopelessness, massive depression, and unbearable pain.

There is no family relationship with God in the consequences of sin; there in no love in these consequences. But with discipline there is a Father Who loves us enough to do what it takes to help us keep heading the direction of great success and blessings.

Christians Get Discipline:
Heb 12:6 (NIV) because the Lord disciplines <u>those He loves</u>, and He punishes everyone <u>He accepts as a son</u>."

Why? Parents know things about life that children do not know yet. They keep their children from doing things that the child wants to do VERY bad. But, if the parents were to allow the child to have their way, great damage would take place. But, the child is mad at the parent because they didn't get their way.

Let's say the child goes ahead and rebels against the rule their parents set; the parents know that a bad thing may not happen right away; but, the potential for great harm is in the act that the child went ahead and did. So, rather than just allowing the child to go ahead and rebel until great harm happens to them, they discipline them.

Appreciating The Difference Between Discipline And Consequences:
As we have already said, discipline is totally different than consequences. God uses discipline to generate enough pain that His children get the point; but, the pain is nothing in comparison to the pain we would have experienced had God let us go on and rebel without discipline.

The CONSEQUENCES of sin are worse than anything else that could possibly happen to us. We can't in our wildest imagination think of what the consequences of sin will ultimately do to us. All we know is how much we didn't like the discipline we actually experienced. Because the discipline KEPT us from experiencing the consequences of sin, we don't have the RESULTS of these two to compare.

We may choose to not trust and believe in the love and care of our heavenly Father. We can assume that He is disciplining us unfairly; we can choose to disagree with His decisions and discipline. But, the truth is, He loves us more than we love ourselves; He knows everything; He wants the very best for us; and He WILL NOT do anything that will damage us or those around us.

Hardship Is God's Discipline:
Heb 12:7 (NIV) ENDURE hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father?

It sounds like God is going to force us to face discipline AGAINST OUR WILL. But, the word "endure" is talking about us avoiding and keeping the discipline from having an affect on us. We can start on a personal program that resists and works around God's discipline, if we WANT to.

We Can Choose Discipline Or Consequences:
Heb 12:8 (NIV) If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons.

There is a way to avoid God's disciple completely; we can reject being His child. In other words, if we would rather have the consequences of sin than God's discipline, we can reject God and go with the life of sin; these are the two free-will options.

There Are Only TWO Free-Will Choices:
Heb 12:9 (NIV) Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. <u>How much more should we SUBMIT to the Father of our spirits and live</u>!

This is a Scripture that is trying to help us CHOOSE God AND His discipline over the consequences of sin; but, the choice is ours. We may want to have more than two options; we may wish to be able to exercise our God-given free will on a third choice. But, God has already considered everything and has determined that all other options are not really options.

We may think we are choosing a third option only to discover that it was REALLY just a variation of one of the two choices; that is what God is telling us. There are ACTUALLY only two choices any being anywhere have…good or bad.

God has incorporated all the good there is in all of existence into Himself; He has rejected all bad outside of Himself. That is why there are only two choices available to all of us. No matter what other choices we make, they are either a choice for good or a choice for bad.

God's Discipline Has A GOOD Purpose:
Heb 12:10 (NIV) Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; <u>but God disciplines us for our good</u>, that we may share in His holiness.

If we use our free will and choose God, we choose good; but, we also choose discipline. Why don't we get another choice as to whether or not we want discipline, after we choose God? This is because a lack of discipline WOULD NOT BE GOOD! **God disciplines us for our good.**

That we may share in His holiness: Holiness is a perfect manifestation of all those things that are good for us and others. It is like righteousness but is perfect righteousness.

Yielding To A Good Kind Of Pain:
Heb 12:11 (NIV) No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. <u>Later on, however</u>, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace <u>for those who have been trained by it</u>.

Painlessness is one of our original goals; we all started out in life trying to find happiness and the absence of pain. All of the choices we have been making all the days of our lives has been motivated by these two goals…happiness and painlessness. However, if our goal becomes getting good and being set free from bad, then we will get a superior type of happiness called joy.

Those who face the realities of life know there also types of pain that are good. Having a goal of avoiding all pain removes the person from a lot of good. We all know about the pain athletes force on themselves, the pain students force on themselves, and the pain successful business people force on themselves. But, because their goal isn't avoidance of pain but striving for success, they find a better way.

Our willingness to suffer good pain isn't motivated by success; it is motivated by seeking righteousness. Wanting to think, feel, say, and do good things; AND, wanting to avoid thinking, feeling, saying, and doing bad things becomes our goal. This **produces a harvest of righteousness and peace <u>for those who have been trained by it</u>.**

The Family Of The Sinful Nature:
Gen 3:20 (NIV) Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living.

Even though God provides us with deliverance from and help with the consequences of sin. There are still some issues that are created from the sins we commit. Adam and Eve are now contaminated with the sinful nature. Eve is going to be **the mother of all the living** and Adam is going to be the father of all living except for Jesus.

A Sacrifice By Substitution For Sin:
Gen 3:21 (NIV) The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them.

This is the first sacrifice for sins; an animal paid the price for a human's sins; rather than the human dying for their own sins, an animal was substituted for them. This is giving us an illustration of Jesus and how He is clothing us with His righteousness. We had an innocence period just like Adam and Eve; we were naked and free from all knowledge of good and evil. Then one day, our conscience came alive and we sinned against it at some point.

Jesus was sacrificed and we were clothed with God's righteousness. It was a work of grace where our record was cleansed and we were forgiven of all past, present, and future sins. Now we need to take advantage of this grace period and learn how to put to death the misdeeds of our body.

Rom 8:13 (NIV) For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; <u>but if by the Spirit YOU</u> put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.

Forgiven But Reaping:
Gen 3:22 (NIV) And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of Us, knowing good and evil. <u>He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever</u>."

Now let's take a look and the difference between consequences, discipline, and reaping. Consequences come from sins that the sinner commits and DOES NOT repent of. Discipline comes from sins that a Christian commits but DOES repent of. Reaping comes from the natural sequence of events that doing something like this PRODUCES; it NATURALLY produces bad results.

Gal 6:7 (NIV) Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.

God's forgiveness keeps us from the consequences of the sins we repent of; He disciplines us so we will see the importance of not heading in that direction ever again; but, we will still REAP the results of the decisions we made. If we bought the wrong thing, we will still have it. If we took the wrong job, we will still have to decide what to do about it.

We Need God's Help:
Gen 3:23 (NIV) So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken.

We have to simply pick up life from the point of being set free from the consequences of sin, of yielding to the discipline of God for the sin, and then living on the basis of reaping the results of the sin. The Garden of Eden is gone; all the freedom of everything being provided is gone; Adam working the ground was now the new way of life.

Reaping isn't a punishment for the sin; and, it isn't the consequence for the sin. The consequence of the sin would have been eternal separation from God (death). It isn't a part of the discipline of God for the sin; it is just the natural sequence of events of the sin producing a bad result that mistakes like that make.

Gen 3:24 (NIV) After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

This is one of those Scriptures that we are to just accept. Some have wasted their lives majoring on thing they will never REALLY understand. Let us spend our time studying the Scriptures that prepare us for life and eternity.