

Knowledge~ Relationship~Decisions

The foundation of ***Boot Camp*** is the study of God's Word, and the practical application of scripture to our lives. ***Boot Camp*** will build one scriptural principle upon another for the strengthening and transforming of our lives. Begin this study as a recruit, desiring to be a soldier of Jesus Christ. He is our commanding officer, and He leads us to tremendous victory in our lives.



My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

—Hosea 4:6

The Heart of God...

The book of Hosea is an allegorical account of the man Hosea (a righteous and innocent husband) and his adulterous wife and children of unfaithfulness. As God speaks through Hosea he poignantly illustrates for us the pain and destruction that are the result of the way we live and the decisions we make. This verse gives us the distinct advantage of viewing our life from God's perspective. We begin to understand the real battle going on. Through the man Hosea, we begin to see the heart of God. We begin to hear the voice of God as He speaks to His chosen and beloved people, the nation of Israel.

Who are "my people?"

When God says "my people," God is speaking directly to His children. In this Old Testament book, "my people" are the Israelites. They were the chosen people of God, favored to receive all His blessings. Today, God is speaking to Christians because we are living under the new covenant formed through the sacrifice of Jesus. We are joint heirs with Christ into the kingdom of our Father. We are truly His children, His people! Just as Hosea is always faithful to his unfaithful wife – he even buys her back from the man with whom she is committing adultery – God is always faithful to us. Despite our unfaithfulness, God bought us back with the blood of His Son, Jesus. God is faithful to us! He sees the destruction in our lives and is broken-hearted. He calls to us, not to chastise us, but to rescue us. How willing are we to listen to Him?

"My people" are Christians. Many of us have been Christians for a long time. We have attended church, taught Sunday school, know much of the Word of God by memory, and yet God is singling us

out to hear these words. God is saying to us, if there is destruction in our lives we need to listen; there is something we do not know! Even though we are saved, even though we may minister to others, God is saying – Yes, you are my people, but your lives are being painfully destroyed.

Destruction

What are the signs of destruction in our lives? Depression, marital strife and divorce, stressed and hurting families, financial crisis and rising debt levels, isolated and violent adolescents, suicide, addictions (food, drugs, alcohol), abuse (physical, sexual, verbal) and many more! All indicate the destruction in our lives with grave clarity. Yet God does not call these things the problem. We are not destroyed because of them. Instead, God gives other reasons for our destruction. The painful deterioration and destructive situations of our lives are only symptoms, a tangible indication of our struggling with our relationship with God. In a strong relationship with God we allow God to lead us, protect us and provide us with everything we need.

Knowledge=Relationship

The word knowledge comes from the root word “to know.” To “know” someone indicates that we have built some type of relationship with him or her. To demonstrate this let’s consider three people in an analogy: First, a short-time acquaintance, then a close friend, and finally your spouse or a family member. How well do we “know” each one? We realize that we “know” our spouse much better than a friend or acquaintance.

Building Blocks of Relationship

- **Time spent together.**

What are some of the building blocks of “knowledge” determining those relationships? Think about the differences in these relationships. How much time do you spend with each person, how long have you known him or her? It is easy to see that the more time you spend with someone, the better you will know him or her. The first building block of knowledge is **time spent together**.

- **Shared experiences.**

The second building block of relationships involves your activities. How many and what type of experiences do you share with these people? Personally, it is easy to see that I share many more activities with my spouse than with either a short-time acquaintance or even a close friend. I take walks; clean my house, go camping, biking, shopping etc. with my husband, Steve. These everyday-shared experiences enhance our knowledge of each other. Because of these times, I know my husband well. The second building block of knowledge is **shared experiences**.

- **Vested interest.**

Next, is there something that is important to you and also important to the other person? When something is important to us, our response is to vest ourselves into it. We place a value upon the person or situation and vest special attention and effort to bring about a favorable outcome. With

someone you have just met you might find one item, or issue that you know is important to both parties. One common interest will help initiate a relationship, but rarely will it, alone, give us what we need to sustain that relationship. What about a close friend? What type of vested interest do we share with a close friend? A close friend of mine is also my teammate in counseling. Boot Camp Ministries is important to both of us. She attends the same church I do, and her children are close friends with my youngest child. Her kids are important to me and my child is important to her. As we vest ourselves in the ministry, in our church and in our children we vest ourselves in our relationship as well. This vested interest helps us know each other better. What is important to both my husband and myself? Nearly everything! We are both deeply vested in our children, our home, our church, our retirement and future, and much more! The more things we are vested in together, the closer our relationship becomes. The third building block of relationship is **vested interest**.

- **Depth of communication.**

Finally, what do you talk about with someone you have just met, as opposed to your friend or spouse? How well would you get to know someone if you only spoke about the weather that day? The depth of communication of your thoughts and feelings serves to develop your relationships. The fourth building block of relationship involves **depth of communication**.

These building blocks of relationship serve exactly the same purpose in our relationship with God. Hosea 4:6 states, "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge," and knowledge equals relationship. The closest relationship we will have on earth that reflects the relationship God wants with each of us is the closeness and intimacy of the marriage relationship. When Christ returns He will come to claim his bride. How intimate is your relationship with Him?

Building Blocks of Relationship with God

Time spent together

How much time do you spend with God?

Shared experiences

Do you share your moment-by-moment experiences with Him every day?

Vested interest

Do you realize that every little thing that is important to you is important to God? Have you vested your self in what is important to God as well?

Depth of communication

Do you truly share your thoughts and feelings with God and seek to know what He says to you about them?

Applying the teaching to your life.

Boot Camp is comprised of a three-part process. First, we want to know what God says. We are trying to get an understanding of the verse. Second, through the use of analogies and examples we are looking at why God says it. And finally, we need to know what this looks like in our lives. In an attempt to facilitate this final part of the process in your life I have put together a series of personalized questions. I recommend that these questions be answered in writing. Allow God to help you find the answers.

As you begin this Boot Camp training, take the questions below and begin the process of applying the Word to your personal life.

1. What are some ways people are destroyed?
2. Can you see destruction in your life, and what does it look like?
3. Is your relationship with God more like that of an acquaintance, a close friend or an intimate, wonderful marriage relationship?
4. What building blocks of knowledge do you need to enhance in your relationship with God?

Knowledge, Relationships, and Decisions

God gives us the true cause of destruction in our lives. He says, "my people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge; because you [the priestly nation] have rejected knowledge, I also reject you that you shall be no priest to Me." (Amplified bible) In this verse, God is telling us that many of the situations in our lives are caused by us not knowing what to do, or by us not handling the situation God's way. How do we usually handle situations and decisions we make every day? How do these choices and decisions affect our relationship with God? To help answer these questions I would like to consider my relationship with my husband as an example. If I were to decide in the afternoon to do something after work and did not phone to ask if it would work out okay for our family, or let's say I didn't even tell him what I was doing, what would happen? Uh oh! Can I make a decision to do something without including my husband in that decision? Probably not, if I want to keep peace and harmony in our relationship. How well does the relationship work if I don't consult him and make him a part of the decision? Not well. The choices and decisions we make have a dramatic affect on our relationships, especially with God!

How many choices and decisions do we make every day? So many it's impossible to count! What percentage of situations (decisions) in our lives have we handled by asking God and what percentage have we handled any other way? When that question was first presented to me, my percentage handled by asking God was somewhere around 20%. As civilians, most of us will admit we usually handle our decisions the best way we know how, in our own way, and based on the information we have at the time. We go by our feelings, by what seems logical to us, or by what the circumstances seem to dictate. Now you need to ask yourselves an important question: How well is your way

working? I know that in my life, handling decisions my own way was not working! Praise God that He is faithful and full of mercy. There is no condemnation in Jesus and when I asked myself that question and saw the answer His love was there to encourage me, His mercy was there to forgive me and His Spirit was there to direct me.

Entry into Boot Camp...

Now, you have an opportunity to volunteer for God's Boot Camp; you have an opportunity... to volunteer... to learn... to change. Jesus will become your commanding officer. Although He will often challenge you to look at what you base your choices and decisions on, He will also give you the direction and protection that comes from hearing His voice. In Boot Camp you will change from a civilian into a soldier and your decisions and choices will reflect your new identity. As you answer this call of God, you will see the confusion, pain and destruction in your life end. You will walk in the victory your Father God wants for you.

How Do We Avoid Landmines?

A landmine is a metal box, full of explosives, and buried in the ground. When a person steps on a landmine it will explode. In life, we are constantly faced with a minefield of situations, circumstances, and relationships with others that blow-up as a result of decisions we make. Have you ever stepped on a landmine? As you look over your shoulder do you see the craters left behind – reminders of the pain inflicted.

Let's consider two important questions. Who plants the landmines? Who knows where the landmines are? Just as the enemy in a military setting plants a minefield, the landmines of our lives are planted by the enemy—Satan. He knows where they are, and he has no intention of telling us. His only purpose is that we might step on them. As Christians, so many of us have lived our lives nearly unaware of and gravely underestimating Satan. Yes, he is real and he is a work in our world and in our lives. As we go on in this study, we will expose our enemy; learn more about his strategies, and more about how we can stop him. Satan plants the landmines!

Who gets hurt when we step on a landmine? First of all, we do. When we step on a landmine in life, in our relationships and decisions, we get hurt and sometimes killed. But who else gets hurt? If you are in a platoon of soldiers walking through a field and you step on a mine the debris hits everyone around you, and they are hurt also. In life, stepping on landmines affects us, and everyone around us. The ones who are closest to us will get hurt the worst... our spouse... our children... our friends. How are we going to miss the landmines?

Spiritual Headset...

My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge...

Let's leave the landmines a moment and go somewhere else. A common experience in all of our lives is going through the drive-thru of a fast food restaurant. The employee inside is able to take our order, tell us how much it will cost and send us to the window. At the same time their hands are free to fill the order. What is that person wearing on their heads, allowing them to talk and listen to

us? They are wearing a headset. It is the first and most important piece of equipment issued in Boot Camp. This may seem silly, but I am totally serious. Right now I am issuing you this most important piece of equipment, a spiritual headset!

Think about how a headset works. One part is for talking and one part is for listening. I share with everyone that it works best when it is 30% talking and 70% listening. Remember, your hands are free to do other things, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.

Ending the destruction...

Now... lets get back to those landmines. Who else, besides Satan, knows where the landmines are? Surely God! How are we going to miss the landmines? ASK GOD! Ask our Father, for he never wants us to step on a landmine. He knows where they are, and will tell us how to avoid them. He says we "are destroyed from lack of knowledge." We need to ask ourselves this question. "Have I every really asked the Lord what He wants me to do?" The majority of the time, most of us will answer "No." Yet when we ask God how to handle our choices and decisions the Word of God and His still small voice will direct our choices and keep us in His will.

If I have asked God 20% of the time, that means I don't Him 80% of the time. Thankfully, this can change. I often ask people, if you are asking God 20% of the time today, can you ask Him 21% tomorrow? If you are at 21% tomorrow, can you be at 22% the next day? Can you be at 23% the next day and so on? There is tremendous hope in this. As we increase the percentage of the time that we include God in our choices and decisions we will see the destruction ending in our lives. We will begin to miss the landmines.

1. How do you usually handle situations and decisions?
2. What percentage of situations and decisions in your life have you handled any other way besides asking God?
3. How have you been seeking the knowledge of God?
4. How can you have the direction and protection of God in every decision?

Rejection...

Because you have rejected knowledge...

How can you avoid the landmines in your life? Once we have asked God, what else needs to happen? If there was a landmine planted in a hallway, and you need to go down that hall to exit where you are right now, how would you avoid that landmine? I know what I do all too often. I think I know just where to walk to miss that landmine. After all, it's a familiar hallway and I walk down it frequently. But just as I take a step, BOOM! Ouch, that's not what I wanted to see happen! You see, I thought I knew what to do, but it didn't work. I didn't set out to get hurt, or to have others hurt, but that was the result.

How can I know I can avoid that landmine? I can ask God! There is a direct relationship between our lack of knowledge and rejection of that knowledge or relationship that God has offered us.

Sometimes we are unaware of our rejection of knowledge, but when we don't stop to ask God and listen to Him regarding our choices, decisions and responses to others, we are actually rejecting knowledge.

Obedience...

So now you decide to ask God and try again. You say, "God, how can I avoid the landmine?" And He replies, "Take two steps forward and one to the left." Do you have a choice? Sure you do, you can either do as He directs or walk down the hallway on your own. You need to ask yourself what you would do. What would happen if you tell God, "It's no fair, I shouldn't have to take two steps forward and one to the left?" What would happen if you go straight down the hallway, as I have done? At these times rejection of God's way is blatant, and this root of rejection is the heart of the problem. So often, God gives us clear direction on how to handle a situation. Yet we do not do as God directs. We make a choice and our decision is either to obey God or to reject Him.

Landmines in life...

What does this look like in our lives? I need to pause a moment in this teaching to make sure something is understood. When I share about my husband and myself it is to let others see into our lives... to see that we have stepped on just as many landmines as anyone. It is to say, "Hey guys, there's a landmine there, I stepped on it, but here is how you can step around it." So, although I share the rough times it is vitally important that I not undermine my marriage, or my husband. Steve is a wonderful husband! We have experienced wonderful healing and victory in our relationship with Christ and with each other. I praise God for the gift that Steve is to me! Everything I write here, I do with his permission. So...

As great as Steve is, he is still human, and when he gets tired he gets grumpy. Let's say I'm home making supper and he walks in the door and says something that hurts my feelings or raises anger inside me. Is there a potential landmine there? There sure is! How am I going to avoid this landmine? Responding from what I think or feel I should do without asking God is simply subtle rejection. If I truly want to avoid the landmine I'll ask God, "How do I respond Lord?" When the Lord says "Reach out in love, reach out in forgiveness." I might say to Him, "Wait Lord, he's the one who is grumpy, that's no fair. Why should I be the one who reaches out in love?" Then, if I respond in anger rather than how God directed, what happens to the landmine? What happens to Steve and to me? BOOM! Who gets hurt? Both of us do. This is where repentance comes in. As I began to see these principles of lack of knowledge and rejection of knowledge my heart responded with repentance... "Lord forgive me for not asking you for direction... Lord forgive me for not handling this your way!"

Symptoms of destruction in our lives are brought about because we reject God's way of doing things and replace God's way with our way – what we feel, what we think, often what the circumstances seem to dictate. When we do this, problems occur.

Think about the next questions and apply this teaching to your life...

1. Why have you rejected what God has asked you to do, once you have received His direction?
2. What are some times in the past that you have rejected the directions God has given you?
What has been the result?

Is God rejecting us?

I also reject you as my priests...

What kind of loving and merciful God would reject us? This question can best be answered by an example. Let's say I am a new employee at your place of work. It is my first full day and I have a task to complete that must be done a certain way in order to be correct. I come to you for advice in completing the task. How do I handle the advice? Do I follow what I was shown or do I do the task some other way? Let's say I don't follow your advice, do the job another way and then need to come back to you for directions again. Then... again I don't follow your advice. Maybe even a third or fourth time, I ask for directions but choose to do the task some other way. Will you continue to give me the instructions? When you finally say, "No, you are not listening to me so I'm not going to continue to give you instructions," would you be rejecting me? Would it be your heart to reject me? No, it probably wouldn't be. Now, how does this relate to the verse? Do we do the same thing with God? Yes, we do. Is He rejecting us? Does He want to reject us? Of course not!

...because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

How often do we see problems in our lives being repeated? We see continued patterns of behavior that seem to be in us, and in our families. I am not saying this to blame our parents, but to recognize the cause of destruction and to see the tremendous hope of long lasting change when someone stops the pattern of rejection. What we do affects our kids!

Destruction often follows the generations because parents have rejected God's directions in their lives. If a child cries out to God, He will never ignore him, but we must understand that the problems we see so often in adults are the direct result of the inability of parents to fulfill the role God has ordained for them. This is the result of both lack of knowledge and rejection of knowledge. What we do affects our kids!

1. How has your rejection of God's direction affected your relationship with Him?
2. What has been passed from generation to generation within your family because of the lack of knowledge and the rejection of knowledge?
3. How does God want to empower you to change this for your family and yourself?

Recharge the batteries...

Remember our spiritual headset? There is a cord attached to it that leads to a pack the person wears on the belt. Inside this pack are batteries. How well will that headset work when the batteries run down? Recently, as I was trying to hurry through a drive-thru, all communication ceased in the middle of my order. After waiting quite a while I just drove around to the window. The embarrassed young lady said, "Wow, I'm so glad you drove around, my battery went dead." In an

instant, when that battery went dead, I wasn't able to hear what she had said to me. I didn't know if she had heard my order or how much my food was going to cost. Now, how does this relate to this verse? "my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge..." Our spiritual headset also has a battery pack. If we let the batteries run down, our communication with God is hindered or ceases. But, how do we recharge the batteries?

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. -2 Timothy 3:16-17

We recharge our batteries with the Word of God! As we spend time daily in the Word reading, meditating, and seeking God, He will guide and direct us. When we have our batteries charged, we are able to hear God through His word and by His Holy Spirit. If we fail to recharge our batteries they can and will go dead. Communication requires that we recharge our batteries.

The Heart of God

My people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.

Many of us have not begun to equate our relationship with God with our decisions. The idea of asking God in moment-by-moment decisions is foreign.

Proverbs 1:7 says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline."

There comes a time in our relationship with God that we have to balance the truth that God is a loving and merciful God, with the truth that He is also a just and fair God. He will not force His will upon us, we must choose. As we ask God's direction and choose His way of doing things...we begin to miss the landmines! We begin to have victory in our lives!