

Emptying

(Kenosis)

“Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant ...”
(Philippians 2:7)

James Kim

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Introduction

One of the expressions of faith most frequently heard today in the everyday conversations of Christians and from church pulpits is “letting go.” Through the writings of a faithful missionary to Mongolia, this expression deeply resonated spiritually with the Korean church and its believers. Since then, “letting go” has become a familiar expression used by many Christians to describe their faith, extending beyond matters of church office and calling. I, too, have used this expression for many years. However, as I have meditated more deeply on Scripture and observed the lives of believers in pastoral ministry, I have begun to wonder whether the expression “emptying” might reveal the essence of biblical discipleship more clearly than “letting go.”

“Letting go” carries the sense of temporarily setting down something that I am holding in my hands. We let go of greed, let go of attachments, and sometimes let go of our rights or personal interests. Of course, this is an important discipline of faith. Yet it has one limitation. Setting down what is in our hands does not necessarily mean that the heart that wants to grasp it has been changed. I may let something go today but grasp it again tomorrow. Outwardly, I may have let go of greed, while deep within I may still desire to be the master of my own life. When circumstances change and situations shift, I may once again cling to my own will and desires. Therefore, what Scripture requires of us does not stop at the simple act of letting something go. To empty ourselves of the very thought that we are the masters of our lives and to surrender the center and sovereignty of our lives to God is discipleship at a deeper level. At the heart of this is Jesus Christ’s “self-emptying.”

Philippians 2:7 says: “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Jesus was one with God in His very nature, yet in order to save us, He humbled Himself and took the form of a servant. When Scripture says that He “emptied himself,” it does not mean that Jesus gave up His divinity. Rather, it means that He did not insist upon His own glory and rights, but humbled Himself, descended to the place of a servant, and completely obeyed the will of God. This is the way of self-emptying that Jesus Christ showed us. Therefore, “emptying” does not mean possessing nothing. It means emptying myself of the desire to be the master of my own life and yielding that place to Christ. It means emptying myself of stubbornness and receiving the will of God. It means emptying myself of pride

and learning humility. It means emptying myself of greed and fear and trusting in the faithfulness of God. Seen in this way, emptying is not simply giving something up.

Emptying prepares us for a new fullness. I empty my thoughts so that they may be filled with the Word of God. I empty my greed so that I may seek the will of God. I empty my pride so that I may embrace the humility of Christ. I empty my hatred so that I may be filled with love. I empty myself of the desire to be my own master so that Christ may become the Lord of my life. Therefore, the life of a believer must not end simply with the question, “What should I let go of?” We must ask two questions together: “What must be emptied from within me?” And: “What must fill the place that has been emptied?”

To live as a disciple of Jesus is to place ourselves before these questions every day. It is to examine, in the light of God’s Word, our thoughts and desires, our pride and stubbornness, our greed and fears, our hatred and wounds, and our attachments to the world—and to empty ourselves of them. Then we are to fill those emptied places with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the love of Christ. Of course, this is not something that can be accomplished by our willpower and effort alone. By our own strength, we cannot fundamentally transform long-established habits of sin and self-centeredness. Therefore, we must depend upon the grace of the cross.

We must look to Christ, who gave Himself for us, and seek the help of the Holy Spirit, who works within us. The “emptying” spoken of in this book begins precisely at this place of grace. In the chapters ahead, we will look at ourselves in the mirror of Scripture and examine, one by one, the things hidden in various areas of our lives that must be emptied. Together, we will consider the path of emptying ourselves of pride, greed, hypocrisy, falsehood, hatred, evil thoughts, lust, resentment, and jealousy. Yet the purpose of this book is not to condemn us endlessly. Rather, it is to turn our eyes toward Christ, who first emptied Himself for us. No matter how hard we try to empty ourselves, without the grace of God we will simply become filled again with the very things we tried to empty. Therefore, while acknowledging our weakness, we must seek the grace of Christ in every place where emptying is needed. And we must yield ourselves to the Holy Spirit so that He may fill the hearts He has emptied with the Word and love of God.

Now we are going to stand quietly before the mirror of Scripture. What am I holding on to? What is it that I still refuse to release? What must be emptied from the deepest places of my heart? And what am I filling those emptied places with? When we refuse to avoid these questions and instead face them honestly, “emptying” will no longer be merely a slogan of faith. It will become a practical path of discipleship that transforms our lives. I hope this book will serve as a small guide for those who walk this

path. In the process of writing this book, I also received assistance from artificial intelligence. The content of this book is based on the meditations and reflections I have recorded over many years of meditating on Scripture and preaching the Word in pastoral ministry.

Artificial intelligence referred to the biblical meditations and sermons I have written over the years, helping me organize the themes and flow and refine sentences so that the thoughts I wished to communicate could be expressed more clearly. Nevertheless, the spiritual direction of this book, its understanding of Scripture, and the central convictions concerning what must be emptied and what must fill the emptied places remain under my responsibility. Above all, I have sought to examine, discern, and refine everything in this book anew before the Word of God. My prayer is that everyone who reads this book will look beyond human writings to the Word of Scripture, and beyond the person who wrote these words to Jesus Christ, who first emptied Himself for us and gave Himself on our behalf.

Longing humbly for the holy work of emptying that the Holy Spirit performs, emptying myself again today of the desire to be my own master, and praying that Christ alone would be the Lord of my life,

Shared by James Kim

September 12, 2026

Even in my weakness, when I have not fully emptied myself of self-centeredness and at times still cling to the very things I ought to empty, I seek only the faithful mercy of God ...

Part I:
The Biblical Foundation of “Emptying”

Chapter 1:

What Is “Emptying” (Kenosis)?

What Is the “Emptying” That Jesus Christ Demonstrated?

In Philippians 2, Paul presents to us the humility and self-emptying demonstrated by Christ. Jesus humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, and obeyed the will of God to the very end. What, then, is the “emptying” of which Scripture speaks? To understand the answer, we must first look at **Philippians 2:7: “Rather, he emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness.”** Contained within this single verse is an essential path that Christian discipleship is called to follow.

Emptying Begins with the Incarnation

We call the event in which Jesus Christ, who is God, took on a human body and came to this earth the **Incarnation**. John 1:14 testifies: “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” The “Word” spoken of here is the One who was with God from the beginning and who is Himself God (v. 1). All things were created through Him (v. 3), and in Him was life, and that life was the light of mankind (v. 4). Yet that Word became flesh. The Creator who made us descended to the place of the creatures He Himself had made. The One who enjoyed the glory of heaven took on a human body, and the One who deserved to be exalted came to a lowly place. The Incarnation is one of the most astonishing mysteries of the Christian faith. The Creator came among His creatures, and the Lord descended to the place of a servant. It is precisely here that the biblical meaning of “emptying” begins.

What Does “Kenosis” Mean?

The Greek verb translated “emptied himself” in Philippians 2:7 is **kenōō (κενόω)**. From this word comes the theological term **Kenosis**. What, then, does it mean that Jesus emptied Himself? The first thing that must be made absolutely clear is this: **Jesus did not empty Himself of His divinity.** When Jesus became human, He did not cease to be God. The incarnate Jesus was truly God and at the same time truly

human. To understand Jesus as having given up His divinity would distort the very heart of both the Incarnation and the gospel. What, then, does it mean that He “emptied himself”? The meaning becomes clearer when we look at the entire context of Philippians 2. Although Jesus existed in the form of God, instead of clinging to His status and glory, He humbled Himself. He took the form of a servant, became like human beings, and was obedient unto death—even death on a cross (vv. 6–8). Therefore, Jesus’ self-emptying was not an emptying in which He gave up His divinity. It was an emptying in which He humbled Himself and descended to the place of a servant. Rather than insisting on His rights, the Lord served us. Rather than displaying His glory, He humbled Himself. Rather than putting His own will first, He obeyed the will of the Father. Finally, on the cross, He gave Himself for us. This is the **Kenosis** that Jesus demonstrated.

Emptying Is Not “Ceasing to Exist,” but “Offering Ourselves”

Here we discover an important principle concerning emptying. To empty myself does not mean that I become a person of no value or significance. Nor does it mean indiscriminately abandoning everything I possess. Biblical emptying means emptying myself of the desire to be the master of my own life and offering myself to the will of God. Jesus did not erase His own existence. Rather, He offered Himself completely to God. Therefore, emptying is not passive surrender but active obedience. “Lord, I will choose Your will over what I want.” “Rather than insisting on my rights, I will serve in love.” This is biblical emptying. This is biblical emptying.

Jesus’ Emptying Was Revealed in Service

In Philippians 2:7, Jesus’ self-emptying is immediately expressed in one particular form: “Taking the form of a servant.” It is not enough simply to say that I have emptied myself in my heart. If I have truly emptied myself, the result must be revealed in a life of serving others. Jesus was the highest of all, yet He descended to the lowest place. The Lord deserved to be served, yet instead He served people. In Mark 10:45, Jesus described His mission this way: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” Therefore, Jesus’ emptying was not simply an event in which He “gave something up.” It was an event in which He gave Himself so that others might live. This raises an important question for us. What must I empty? But before asking that, we should ask: **For whom must I empty myself in order to serve?** In this way, Christ’s emptying is always revealed through love and service. Emptying always moves us toward love and service.

What Should Fill the Place That Has Been Emptied?

Yet there is another important truth we must remember. Emptying itself is not the goal. Simply creating an empty heart is not enough. What fills the emptied place is even more important. Emptying itself is not the goal. The emptied place must be filled with the mind of Christ. Ultimately, the purpose of emptying is to have the mind of Christ. That is why Philippians 2:5 begins: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” This is precisely why Paul explains Jesus’ self-emptying. He is not merely telling us to look at Jesus. He is exhorting us to have the mind of Christ and to live in His likeness. Therefore, Christian emptying is not an act of self-destruction. Rather, it is offering ourselves so that Christ may live and work more fully within us.

Jesus’ Emptying Must Continue in Our Lives

Jesus’ self-emptying does not end merely as an event of the Incarnation that took place in the past. Christ’s self-emptying must continue today in the lives of the disciples who follow Him. Just as Jesus humbled Himself, obeyed the will of God, and served from the place of a servant, we too must empty ourselves of the desire to be our own masters and embrace the mind of Christ. Therefore, “emptying” is not completed by a single decision. It is an ongoing process of discipleship in which we follow Christ day by day.

At the End of Emptying Stands Christ

Jesus’ Kenosis was not a path of losing Himself. It was the path of offering Himself completely for the will of God. The Lord did not give up His divinity; He humbled Himself. He did not insist on His rights; He served. He did not seek to preserve Himself; He gave Himself for us. Finally, He became obedient unto death—even death on a cross. Therefore, the “emptying” of which we speak must follow this same path. Emptying does not mean erasing myself; it means emptying myself of the desire to be my own master. Emptying does not mean abandoning everything I possess; it means acknowledging that God is the Lord and Owner of everything I possess. Emptying does not mean leaving nothing behind; it means making room to be filled with the mind of Christ. And at the end of this emptying, we once again turn our eyes to Jesus: “Have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” From this point forward, following Scripture, we will examine one by one what specifically must be emptied from our lives. Following Christ’s self-emptying, we will stand before the Word and examine, one by one, what must be emptied from our own lives. Every act of emptying must ultimately be an emptying that makes room for the mind of Christ.

Chapter 2:

What Does Emptying Mean for a Christian?

In Chapter 1, we examined the Incarnation and self-emptying of Jesus Christ—that is, the meaning of **Kenosis**. When we say that Jesus emptied Himself, it does not mean that He gave up His divinity. Rather, although He was the Son of God, He did not cling to the glory and rights that were His for His own advantage, but humbled Himself by taking the form of a servant. And that emptying was brought to completion through His obedience and death on the cross.

Now, then, we must ask: **As disciples of Jesus, how are we to empty ourselves?** Christian emptying is not simply a religious resolution to give something up. Nor is emptying completed merely by letting go of one desire, giving up one plan, or sharing a portion of our possessions. Christian emptying is a life in which we acknowledge that God, not we ourselves, is the Lord of our lives, and offer ourselves to the will of God. Paul demonstrates this kind of emptying through his own life. In Philippians 2:17, he confesses: “But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you.” The “drink offering” Paul speaks of here refers to the Old Testament practice of pouring wine over an offering as part of a sacrifice. Paul confesses that if even his life and ministry could be offered to God, he would count it a joy. This confession shows us how far Christian emptying is meant to go. Emptying does not end with possessing a little less. It goes as far as offering ourselves to God.

Christian Emptying Means Emptying Ourselves of the Desire to Be Our Own Master

As we go through life, we constantly try to be the masters of our own lives. We want to make the plans, make the decisions, remain in control, and have things work out in the direction we desire. That is why, even when we pray to God, we often actually ask Him to accomplish our own will. But Christian emptying begins here: **“My life does not belong to me; it belongs to God.”** This confession must become a reality in our daily lives. Even when what I desire does not happen, I must trust God. Even when a path opens that differs from my plan, I must ask what the Lord desires. Even when honesty costs me something,

I must choose honesty. Even when I believe I am right, I must examine myself again before the Word of God. This is what it means to empty ourselves of self-sovereignty. Emptying does not mean doing nothing. Rather, it means actively living according to the will of God. Our prayer changes from: “Lord, please make things happen the way I want,” to: “Lord, let Your will be done rather than what I want.”

Christian Emptying Means Honestly Emptying the Sin and Desires Within Us

When we begin to empty ourselves of the desire to be our own masters, we naturally begin to see what has been occupying our hearts. There may be pride. There may be greed. There may be a desire for recognition. There may be a desire to appear to others as a good person. There may be stubbornness that wants to prove that I am right. Even while outwardly living a diligent life of faith, such desires may remain deep within our hearts. Therefore, Christian emptying means placing our hearts before the Word of God every day. “Lord, what still remains within me?” “What am I holding on to?” “What is making me angry?” “What am I afraid of losing?” “What am I doing in order to gain the approval of others?” We must be honest before these questions. And when God reveals something to us, we must acknowledge it and repent. Emptying begins not by hiding the sin within us, but by exposing it before God. If we discover pride, we must bring that pride before God and empty ourselves of it. If we discover greed, we must acknowledge that greed and empty ourselves of it. If we discover hatred, we must not conceal it but empty ourselves of it. If we discover hypocrisy, we must strip it away and empty ourselves of it. We will examine these specific areas of emptying one by one in Chapters 4 through 12.

Christian Emptying Means Filling the Empty Place with Christ

Yet we must not forget a very important truth. Emptying itself is not the goal. We may empty greed from our hearts, only for another form of greed to take its place. We may think we have emptied ourselves of pride, only to become proud of the fact that “I am not proud.” Therefore, the emptying described in Scripture does not mean simply making the heart empty. It means filling the emptied place with Christ. Christian emptying does not mean leaving the heart in an empty state; it means progressively filling the emptied place with the mind of Christ. Ultimately, Christian emptying is the process of becoming more like Christ. That is why Paul exhorts us in Philippians 2:5: “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus.” The reason we empty ourselves is not simply to become “good people.” It is so that the mind of Christ may dwell within us.

Christian Emptying Is Expressed through Self-Denial

Jesus spoke very clearly to His disciples about the Christian life: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Mt. 16:24). To “deny oneself” does not mean denying our existence or hating ourselves. It means emptying ourselves of the desire to be the ultimate master of our own lives. It means putting the Lord’s will before our own. It means choosing love over personal comfort. It means choosing service over our rights. It means choosing reconciliation over our pride. It means choosing truth over personal gain. This is self-denial. Therefore, self-denial does not end with a single emotional decision. It takes place through our daily choices. Today, will I choose my own will, or will I choose God’s will? Today, will I insist on my rights, or will I serve in love? Today, will I exalt myself, or will I build someone else up? These small choices come together to form a Christian life of emptying.

Emptying Myself in the Home

Where, then, should this emptying begin? It must begin in the place closest to us: **the home**. It is difficult to hide who we really are at home because our spouse and children see us more closely than anyone else. Therefore, emptying in the home must be very practical. Instead of waiting for my spouse to understand me first, I should first seek to understand my spouse. Instead of waiting for the other person to apologize first, I should be the first to extend a hand of reconciliation. Rather than clinging only to the thought, “I am right,” I should listen to the other person all the way through. Rather than bringing up past wrongs one by one in order to attack the other person, I should forgive and begin again. Rather than viewing my children’s future as a means of enhancing my own honor and success, I should entrust them to God and raise them in love. This is emptying in the home. Husbands and wives, in particular, should love and respect one another according to the love of Christ rather than insisting on their own rights (Eph. 5:25, 33). In the home, the first person I need to empty is not the other person, but myself.

Emptying Myself in the Church Community

Emptying must also be expressed very practically in the church. When we hold a position of responsibility in the church, a desire for recognition may arise. We may want others to notice what we have done and acknowledge that we are right. But in the Lord’s church, what matters is not how high I have risen, but how much I have helped others to grow. Jesus said: “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all” (Mk. 9:35). Emptying myself in the church does not mean abandoning my position or ministry. Rather, it means understanding that a position in the church is not a place for exalting myself, but a place for serving. It means giving glory to God when I am praised, listening humbly when I

hear opinions different from my own, quietly doing what needs to be done even when no one recognizes it, and willingly making room for others so that they may grow. **I am not the Lord of the church. Jesus Christ alone is the Lord of the church.** Therefore, rather than exalting ourselves because of our position, experience, or knowledge, we must humble ourselves in order to build up the body of Christ.

Emptying Myself in the Workplace

The workplace is also an important place where Christian emptying is tested. We want recognition at work. We want promotions. We want greater compensation. Sometimes we may think that a little manipulation or exaggeration is acceptable if it helps us defeat a competitor. But Christian emptying means choosing honesty in the workplace as well. We should not work diligently only when our supervisor is watching; we should be faithful even when no one sees us. We must not use others for our own benefit. We must not lie or speak maliciously about competitors in order to bring them down. We must not misuse company property, time, or resources as though they belonged to us personally. Even when we encounter unfair treatment, we must not repay evil with evil. Why? Because the ultimate Master we serve is not a human being, but God. Ephesians 6:7 says: “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people.” Emptying in the workplace means emptying ourselves of a life governed by the eyes of other people and living honestly before the eyes of God.

Emptying Is Expressed through Service

From what we have seen so far, it becomes clear where Christian emptying leads. Emptying naturally leads to a life of service. Through His self-emptying, Jesus became a servant, and as a servant He served us. In Matthew 20:27–28, the Lord said: “Whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus’ emptying moved toward the cross. And on that cross, the Lord gave His life for us. Therefore, Christian emptying must lead to a life of loving and building up others. Only when I empty myself of the desire to be at the center can I truly notice the needs of others and serve them in love. In this way, emptying makes love possible, and love expresses itself through service.

Three Ways to Practice “Emptying” Every Day

How, then, can we train ourselves in emptying in our daily lives? Ask yourself three questions each day.

First, what am I holding on to today?

Examine what you may be clinging to excessively. It may be money. It may be honor or status. It may be the approval of others. It may be your own will and plans. It may be past wounds or resentment. Acknowledge it honestly before God and empty yourself of it.

Second, what will I choose today?

Emptying does not end in our thoughts. How will I speak when I am angry? How will I act when I suffer a loss? How will I treat someone who does not recognize or appreciate me? How will I receive someone whose views differ from mine? It is precisely in moments like these that self-denial becomes real. Choose the way of the Word rather than the way your emotions want to go.

Third, what will I use to fill the place I have emptied?

Do not stop after emptying. Do not stop after emptying. Fill the emptied place with the Word and the mind of Christ. Above all, choose the mind of Christ. When emptying and filling go together in this way, our faith moves beyond mere self-discipline and becomes a path of discipleship through which we grow in the likeness of Christ.

Emptying Leads to a Life of Service

Christian emptying does not simply mean giving up what belongs to me. It means acknowledging that I am not the Lord of my life. It means emptying myself of my own will and choosing the will of God. It means emptying myself of greed and choosing love. It means emptying myself of my rights and choosing service. It means emptying myself of self-glory and exalting Christ. And it means filling the emptied place with the Word of God and the mind of Christ. Just as Jesus humbled Himself and took the form of a servant, we too must humble ourselves in our daily lives and serve our neighbors in love. Therefore, Christian emptying can be summarized in one sentence: **“Emptying myself of the desire to be my own master and offering myself to God so that Christ may be the Lord of my life.”** And this emptying must necessarily move to the next step. **The person who empties himself becomes a person who serves.** If Jesus emptied Himself and became a servant, then we who follow Him must likewise empty ourselves and move into the place of serving our neighbors.

Chapter 3: What Does It Mean to Empty Ourselves and Serve Our Neighbors as Servants?

In Chapters 1 and 2, we examined the meaning of Jesus Christ emptying Himself and what a life of emptying requires of Christians who follow Him. One question, then, remains: **“How does a Christian’s self-emptying actually appear in daily life?”** The answer Scripture gives is clear: **A person who empties himself becomes a servant and serves his neighbor.**

Emptying does not end simply with giving up our selfish desires. When we empty ourselves of the desire to be our own masters and are filled with the mind of Christ, we naturally begin to look not only to our own interests but also to the interests of others. Therefore, one of the clearest fruits of a life of self-emptying is **service**. Jesus Christ, though He was in very nature God, emptied Himself and took the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6–7). The Lord of the entire universe did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many (Mt. 20:28). How, then, should we who have received the grace of Christ’s self-emptying live? At home, in the church, in the workplace, and before every neighbor we encounter, we must move away from a life that exalts ourselves and toward a life that empties ourselves in order to serve others. This is most clearly demonstrated in the account of Jesus washing His disciples’ feet.

A Person Who Empties Himself Humbles Himself and Serves

In John 13:14–15, Jesus says to His disciples: “Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.” Jesus did not teach service only with words. He personally got up, took off His outer clothing, wrapped a towel around His waist, and washed His disciples’ feet (Jn. 13:4–5). In those days, because people wore sandals and walked on dusty roads, their feet commonly became covered with dirt and dust. Washing someone’s feet, therefore, was an act of serving another person from the lowest position. But who performed this task? Jesus—the Teacher and Lord of the disciples. Even while following Jesus, the disciples often argued about who among them was the greatest. Yet as He faced the cross, Jesus did not

exalt Himself. He personally bent down and washed His disciples' feet. Before those very disciples, the Lord bent down instead of lifting Himself up. **This is the emptying Jesus showed us.**

Emptying is not simply giving up what we possess. It is emptying ourselves of the desire to exalt ourselves. It means emptying before God our desire to be recognized, our desire to be treated with honor, our desire for others to acknowledge our hard work, and our desire to stand above others. Therefore, humility does not simply mean thinking little of ourselves. True humility means emptying ourselves of the expectation that we deserve special treatment and willingly choosing the lower place for the good of others. Jesus was Lord, yet He took the place of a servant. Likewise, we should not think that our church position, career, education, wealth, or social status entitles us to be treated as superior to others. Instead, we should use what we have to serve others. At home, in the church, and in the workplace, rather than seeking to display and exalt ourselves, we should willingly choose the lower place for the needs of others and the good of the community. **This is the life of emptying ourselves and becoming servants.**

A Person Who Empties Himself Covers the Faults of His Neighbor

As we meditate on Jesus washing His disciples' feet, we are also led to consider how we should respond to the weaknesses and faults of others. Just as the Lord humbled Himself and served His disciples, when we discover the weaknesses of others, we must not use them as a means of elevating ourselves. Instead, we should embrace them in love and seek their restoration. We discover other people's weaknesses very easily. The closer someone is to us, the more faults we see. We know our spouse's weaknesses, our children's shortcomings, our coworkers' mistakes, and the weaknesses of fellow church members better than most people do. The question is what we do after we see those faults. The world often exposes the faults of others in order to elevate oneself. But when Christians discover another person's fault, they should not exploit it but cover it with love. Proverbs 17:9 says: "Whoever would foster love covers over an offense, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." To cover a fault does not mean pretending that wrongdoing never happened or ignoring sin altogether. Rather, it means that when we see someone's wrongdoing, we do not spread it to others or use it as a weapon of condemnation, but seek to restore that person with love and truth. First Corinthians 13:5 also says that love "keeps no record of wrongs." The Greek word translated here as "keep a record," **logizomai**, carries the meaning of calculating or recording something in an account book. Love does not record another person's wrongs in the ledger of the heart so that they can be brought out and used against that person later. Therefore, emptying ourselves in love appears in the following ways.

First, we do not repeatedly bring up past wrongs.

When husbands and wives argue, they should not continually attack one another by saying, “You did the same thing before.” When a coworker makes a mistake, we should not dig up mistakes from years ago and use them to judge that person’s present character. If we have forgiven someone, we should not continue recording that wrongdoing in a ledger of condemnation.

Second, we do not recklessly interpret another person’s motives as evil.

We easily misunderstand other people’s actions. “They must have said that to disrespect me.” “They must have acted that way because they dislike me.” “They are doing that because they want to take my position.” When we make definite judgments about another person’s heart based on unconfirmed assumptions like these, we may turn something that never actually happened into a sin in our own minds. A person who has emptied himself does not make his own judgment the absolute standard. He first asks: **“Could I have misunderstood?”** Whenever possible, he speaks directly with the person, confirms the facts, and remains open to the possibility that the other person may have had good intentions.

Third, we do not continually nurture hatred and resentment in our hearts.

If we repeatedly replay another person’s wrongdoing in our minds, even a small hurt can grow into anger and resentment. Therefore, rather than holding on to another person’s fault and allowing hatred to grow, we should entrust the matter to God and respond in love. We can cover the faults of others because we ourselves have first received God’s forgiveness. God knows all our faults, yet He has forgiven us in Christ. Therefore, those who have been forgiven forgive. Those who have received grace extend grace. The greater the forgiveness we have received, the more our attitude toward the faults of others should be transformed.

A Person Who Empties Himself Serves Not Merely with Words, but with Actions

After washing His disciples’ feet, Jesus said: “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you” (Jn. 13:15). The Lord did not stop at explaining service. **He did it Himself.** This is also an extremely important principle for us today. **Emptying must be demonstrated through action.** First John 3:18 exhorts us: “Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.” Even in those days, there were people who said that they loved their brothers and sisters but in

practice turned away from those who were in need. John did not recognize such love as genuine. If we know what someone needs but do nothing, merely saying that we love that person is not enough (v. 17). Love must appear in action. The hungry must be given food. We must make time to be with the lonely. We must give practical help to those who are struggling. Those whom we need to forgive must be forgiven. If I am the one who should apologize first, I must apologize first. When I see someone who needs help, I should not simply walk past thinking, “Someone else will do it.” These are concrete expressions of a life in which we empty ourselves and live as servants.

James likewise says that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). The same principle applies to love. **Love without action cannot bear the fruit of love in our daily lives.** No matter how passionately we worship at church, how much biblical knowledge we possess, or how beautiful our language of faith may be, if we do not serve our spouse at home, show consideration for our coworkers at work, or care for neighbors who are struggling, our emptying has not yet become a way of life. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. Therefore, we too must ask: **Whose feet should I wash today?** Of course, this does not mean only that we must literally wash another person’s feet today. The important question is whether we are willing, out of love, to do what we do not want to do, what no one else will recognize, and what our pride resists doing. Can I be the first to do the work that no one notices? Can I love first even when the other person has not first treated me well? It is before questions like these that the reality of our emptying becomes visible.

Emptying Ultimately Appears as Service

We can now clearly see the direction of a life of self-emptying. Jesus emptied Himself. The Lord who emptied Himself took the form of a servant. The Lord who became a servant washed His disciples’ feet. And He told His disciples: “Do as I have done for you.” Therefore, Christian emptying is never merely a spiritual discipline for oneself. It is a life in which others are restored as much as I am emptied, others are built up as much as I humble myself, and God’s love flows to my neighbors as much as I serve. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: Am I emptying myself of the desire for recognition and serving even in places where no one sees? When I discover another person’s faults, do I expose them, or do I embrace that person in love? Do I love only with words, or do I love through concrete actions? We must stand honestly before these questions. Emptying myself does not mean that I disappear. Nor does it mean abandoning my personality or responsibilities. Rather, it means emptying my heart of the desire to enthrone myself as king and receiving the mind of Christ in its place. In a person who is filled with the mind of Christ, emptying

bears the fruit of love and service. When I empty myself of the desire to be at the center, I can look to the interests of others and willingly serve them.

Jesus emptied Himself in order to serve us. Now, as people who have received that grace, we too must empty ourselves of the desire to exalt ourselves and to be our own masters. We must live by seeking God's will and the good of our neighbors before our own will and interests. True emptying does not end simply with giving something up. We must fill the place we have emptied with the mind of Christ and move into a life of serving our neighbors with the humility and love that the Lord Himself showed us. Ultimately, Christian emptying does not mean erasing ourselves. **It means emptying ourselves of the desire to be our own masters and yielding the center of our lives to Christ.**

Part II:
What We Must Empty from Within Us

Chapter 4:

Emptying “Pride”

Previously, we saw that Jesus Christ emptied Himself and took the form of a servant, and that the emptying of those who follow Him as disciples must be expressed through love and service. From this point forward, we will examine, one by one before the Word of God, the specific things within us that must be emptied. The first is “**pride.**”

Emptying does not mean hiding the sin within us. It begins by exposing and acknowledging that sin before God. When we discover pride, we must bring it before God and turn away from it. We must expose, in the light of the Word, our desire for honor and recognition, our desire to rise above others, and our stubborn insistence that our own thoughts are right. Only then does true emptying begin.

One of the most deeply rooted sins in fallen human nature is pride. Pride causes us to forget the grace of God who saved us and to take for ourselves the glory that rightly belongs to God. Instead of giving thanks for the place and grace God has given us, pride uses them as a platform for self-exaltation. If we say that we serve the Lord in the workplace, at home, and in the church community, yet expect others to honor us, become angry when our wishes are not accepted, see the faults of others clearly while failing to see our own, then we must examine whether pride has taken root within us. Pride is not merely a personality trait of having a strong sense of self-respect. It is an orientation of the heart that puts ourselves before God and a sinful attitude that seeks to take for ourselves the glory that belongs to Him. Therefore, unless we expose the pride within us before the Word and empty ourselves of it, no matter how much work we do or how many people we serve, it will be difficult for us to live as servants who fully embrace the mind of Christ.

Pride Is the Heart That Exalts Myself Above God

First, we must clearly define pride before the Word of God. Proverbs 16:5 says, “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.” Scripture speaks very seriously when

it says that the Lord detests the proud in heart, because pride is not merely a problem in our relationships with other people. It is a sin that damages our relationship with God. God is the Master, yet I act as though I were the master. What I have is God's grace, yet I boast as though I had accomplished it myself. God has established His order, yet I place my own thoughts and judgments above it. This is pride. That is why Proverbs 16:18 warns us again: "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." Pride always appears to elevate a person, but in the end it brings that person down. At first, it may seem to bring success and honor, but ultimately it leads a person away from God, destroys relationships with others, and even makes the soul sick. Therefore, we must examine whether pride is within us. Am I overly sensitive to the recognition of others? Do I become hurt when my opinion is not accepted? Do I become jealous when someone else receives more recognition than I do? Do I feel disappointed when people fail to notice what I have done? When someone points out my mistake, do I immediately begin making excuses? Do I try to teach others while refusing to learn myself? If these questions make us uncomfortable, we should not ignore that discomfort. It may be the very moment when God is showing us the pride within our hearts through the mirror of His Word.

Pride Places My Thoughts Above God's Word

One characteristic of a proud person is placing the Word of God beneath his own thoughts. Jeremiah 43 describes people who heard God's Word but refused to accept it. They accused the prophet of speaking falsely and acted according to their own judgment. God had given them a clear word through His prophet, yet they placed their own reasoning and calculations above that Word. They claimed that God's Word was wrong and even suspected that someone else was manipulating the prophet. We are not very different today. When Scripture or counsel based on Scripture conflicts with our own thoughts, we must ask whether we reject it immediately before examining it in light of God's Word. When God's Word conflicts with our desires, if we try to change the Word, question the motives of the person who delivered it, or accept only what we want to hear, that too may be an expression of pride. A humble person first examines himself before God's Word: "Lord, what am I seeing incorrectly?" "What must I empty?" "What do You want to break within me through this Word?" But a proud person first judges someone else: "Why is that person saying that?" "That teaching does not fit me." "I know better." Pride adjusts the Word to fit oneself, but humility adjusts oneself to fit the Word.

Pride Causes Us to Regard God's Grace as Something Small

Another characteristic of pride is failing to recognize God's grace as grace. In Numbers 16, Korah opposed Moses and Aaron. Moses reminded them how great a grace God had already given them by setting them apart to serve at the tabernacle: "Isn't it enough for you that the God of Israel has separated you from the rest of the Israelite community and brought you near himself to do the work at the LORD's tabernacle and to stand before the community and minister to them?" Korah's problem was not that God had given him too little grace. The problem was that, although he had already received great grace, he regarded it as something small. Pride causes us to take what we presently have for granted. We take for granted the position God has given us, the opportunity to serve, and all the grace we have received until now. Then, looking at what another person has, we begin to ask, "Why am I not in that position?" At that moment, gratitude disappears and comparison and complaint begin to occupy the heart. Therefore, the path of emptying pride often begins with gratitude: "Lord, everything I have now is grace." "It is grace that I am able to serve in this place." "My abilities, opportunities, and relationships have all been given by You." When we confess this, we no longer mistake what is in our hands for something we earned solely by our own merit.

Pride Destroys Community

Pride does not remain confined to an individual heart. Eventually, it flows into the community. Korah's pride did not end as his private dissatisfaction. He gathered people and opposed Moses and Aaron. When pride enters a community, it divides people into factions, creates suspicion, causes people to oppose leaders, and destroys the peace of the community. Pride tries to persuade others that "I am right." Therefore, a proud heart easily gathers people around itself. It communicates its dissatisfaction to others and plants suspicion in their hearts. Eventually, an individual emotion grows into conflict throughout the community. Therefore, before gathering people in the church, we must first examine our own hearts: "Am I speaking for the glory of God, or am I gathering people in order to force my feelings and wishes through?" "Am I seeking the good of the community, or am I trying to build my own side?" "Am I seeking to establish truth, or am I seeking recognition for myself?" We must stand honestly before these questions.

Pride Is Often Revealed More Easily in Success

Pride is often revealed more easily in success than in failure. Ezekiel 28:17 says concerning the pride of Tyre: "Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor." When the beauty, wisdom, and success a person possesses cease to produce gratitude toward God and instead become self-glorification, grace itself can become material for pride. Ezekiel 28:5

likewise says: “By your great skill in trading you have increased your wealth, and because of your wealth your heart has grown proud.” Material possessions and success are not themselves sinful. The problem is forgetting who gave them. Deuteronomy 8:17–18 teaches us something very important. We are not to say, “My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me,” but rather, “Remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.” It is true that I worked hard. It is true that I made an effort. It is true that I studied and prepared. But who gave me the life, health, wisdom, and opportunities that enabled me to do all these things? God did. Therefore, the more successful we become, the more humble we should become. If we possess much, we should become more thankful. If we have received much, we should serve more. Success should not become a reason to exalt ourselves. It should become a reason to humble ourselves further and serve.

Uzziah Became Proud After He Became Powerful

Second Chronicles 26 shows King Uzziah’s failure very clearly: “His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful. But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall, and he was unfaithful to the LORD his God...” Behind Uzziah’s success was God’s extraordinary help. Yet Scripture records that after he became powerful, his heart became proud. This is a very important warning for us. When people are weak, they may seek God, but when they become strong, they can easily fall into the illusion that they can live without Him. When business is going well, when ministry is growing, when people recognize us, when we become financially comfortable, or when our influence increases, we must become even more careful. At such times, thoughts like these can easily arise in our hearts: “This happened because I did well.” “I accomplished this because I am capable.” “Now I can handle things myself.” At that very moment, we begin to turn the grace God has given us into our own ability. Uzziah’s tragedy was not that he became powerful. His problem was that after becoming powerful, he forgot his proper place before God.

Hezekiah Became Proud Even After Receiving Grace

Second Chronicles 32:24–25 shows us another side of Hezekiah: “In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah’s heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him...” Hezekiah had experienced great grace. His prayer had been answered, and he had experienced God’s extraordinary help. Yet even after experiencing such grace, his heart could still become proud. This teaches us an important lesson. Having many spiritual experiences does not automatically free us from pride. Rather, the more

grace a person has experienced, the more humble that person should become. “I have experienced this, so I am fine.” “I have been a Christian for a long time, so I am fine.” “I have done much ministry, so I am fine.” From the moment thoughts like these enter our hearts, we may begin exalting ourselves again. That is why Paul warns in 1 Corinthians 10:12: “So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!” The very moment we think we are spiritually standing securely may be the moment when we are most vulnerable to falling.

At the Deepest Level of Pride Lies “Self-Righteousness”

Pride does not appear only through wealth and success. There is an even deeper and more hidden form of pride: **self-righteousness**. In Luke 10:29, after asking Jesus a question, a teacher of the law wanted “to justify himself.” Instead of acknowledging his shortcomings, he tried to prove that he was right. This is religious pride. “I have done this much.” “I am better than others.” “I am different from that person.” “I know the Bible better.” “I have believed longer.” These attitudes may appear religious on the outside, yet at their center may lie a desire to exalt oneself. Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18 shows precisely this. Although the Pharisee was praying to God, in reality he was boasting about his own righteousness. He presented his fasting and tithing as though they were his personal merits and compared himself with others. The tax collector, however, stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and prayed: “God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” Jesus said that it was not the Pharisee who exalted himself, but the tax collector who humbled himself and sought God’s mercy, who went home justified. A proud person clings to his own righteousness. A humble person clings to God’s mercy. The difference is enormous.

The Word Is a Mirror That Reveals Our Pride

How, then, can we discover our pride? Deuteronomy 17:19–20 emphasizes keeping God’s Word near, reading it throughout one’s life, and living in the fear of God. It says that by doing so, one’s heart will not be lifted above one’s brothers. God’s Word is a mirror that shines into our hearts. The purpose of reading Scripture is not to discover what is wrong with someone else. “That person needs to hear this verse.” “There is someone like that in our church.” “There is someone like that in my family.” If we read Scripture this way, we may read the Word and still fail to discover our own pride. The Word must first be applied to me. “Lord, I see myself in this Word.” “Lord, I am this person.” “Lord, this pride is also within me.” When we stand before the Word in this way, emptying begins. Emptying pride does not mean claiming that

I am not a proud person. Rather, it means acknowledging that I am capable of pride and exposing that pride before God every day.

Pride Appears in Arguments and Conflict

First Timothy 6:3–5 describes those who do not follow sound teaching and connects pride with controversies, quarrels, envy, strife, malicious talk, and evil suspicions. A proud heart can make us obsessed with unnecessary arguments in order to prove that we are right. That is why a proud heart finds it difficult to apologize. “I was wrong.” Those few words can be extremely difficult to say because we think that apologizing makes us smaller. But the gospel teaches us the way of becoming low, because Jesus Himself humbled Himself. Humility is not defeat. Humility is acknowledging God’s sovereignty. Humility means acknowledging that I cannot judge everything correctly, that I do not know everything, and that sometimes I need to listen to others.

The Pride of the Corinthian Church Prevented Them from Seeing Sin as Sin

In 1 Corinthians 5:1–2, Paul rebukes the Corinthian church because, although serious sin existed among them, they had become proud rather than grieving over it. This passage shows us another frightening aspect of pride. Pride not only leads us to sin; it can prevent us from recognizing sin as sin. We sin, yet make excuses. We do wrong, yet first talk about what someone else did wrong. When rebuked, instead of repenting, we defend ourselves. And gradually, our hearts become hardened. The most frightening condition is to sin and no longer feel sorrow over it. “What did I do wrong?” “Doesn’t everyone do something like this?” “That person did wrong too. Why are you only criticizing me?” When we begin rationalizing our sin this way, pride grows deeper. Therefore, a person who lives a life of emptying repents first when he discovers his sin. Repentance comes before excuses. Examining oneself comes before judging others. Seeking God’s mercy comes before defending oneself.

Saul Changed from Humility to Pride

Whenever I meditate on the problem of pride, I think of King Saul. Saul was not proud from the beginning. In 1 Samuel 15:17, Samuel said to Saul: “Although you were once small in your own eyes, did you not become the head of the tribes of Israel?” At first, Saul considered himself small. But after becoming king and gaining power, his heart began to change. Here we discover a very important truth. Humility is not something we acquire once and then possess permanently. Being humble today does not guarantee that

I will be humble tomorrow. Depending on God today does not guarantee that I will depend on Him tomorrow. Therefore, we must examine ourselves every day. Saul's first failure appeared when the circumstances before his eyes became greater to him than God's Word. When the Philistine army gathered and the people began to scatter, Saul became afraid. He could not wait for the time God had appointed and offered the sacrifice according to his own judgment. Circumstances overwhelmed faith. When his eyes shifted from God to the situation, he began placing his own judgment above God's Word. Pride can begin exactly this way: "The situation is too urgent. I have no choice." "I need to use my own judgment and handle this." "If I follow the Word, I will lose something." "Let's make an exception just this once." But the moment circumstances become greater to us than God's Word, we begin relying on ourselves rather than God.

Saul Exalted His Own Name Above God's Glory

Another aspect of Saul appears in 1 Samuel 15:12: "Saul has gone to Carmel. There he has set up a monument in his own honor..." If God had given the victory, Saul should have given glory to God. Instead, Saul erected a monument for himself. This is the essence of pride. It is making what God has done appear as though I did it. It is explaining God-given grace as my own ability. It is using God-given success as a tool for exalting my own name. Even more tragically, after Saul disobeyed God, rather than sincerely repenting, he tried to preserve his honor before the people. He asked Samuel to "honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel" (v. 30). The opinion of people had become more important than God. This is pride in its final form: knowing that I am wrong before God while still wanting to appear good before people.

The Path of Emptying Pride Begins with Repentance

How, then, can we turn away from pride? We find an important answer in Hezekiah. Second Chronicles 32:26 says: "Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart..." Hezekiah also became proud. But he acknowledged his pride and repented. Here we find hope. The goal of a believer is not to say, "I have become a person who is never proud." Rather, it is to become a person who, upon discovering pride, immediately brings it before God. "Lord, I was proud." "I exalted my own name." "I desired the recognition of people more." "I judged others." "I mistook Your grace for my own ability." "Even when I was wrong, I made excuses." We confess these things honestly before God. This is where emptying begins. Not by hiding sin, but by exposing it. Not by concealing pride, but by acknowledging it. Not by asserting our own righteousness, but by seeking God's mercy.

Humility Is a Life That Lowers Oneself in Order to Exalt God and Others

Proverbs 16:19 says: “Better to be lowly in spirit along with the oppressed than to share plunder with the proud.” Scripture does not teach humility as despising ourselves. Humility is willingly lowering ourselves in order to exalt God and love our neighbors. Jesus did this. Though He was in very nature God, the Lord humbled Himself and took the form of a servant. He washed His disciples’ feet. Therefore, emptying pride does not simply mean thinking, “I am not an impressive person.” It means choosing love over my rights. It means seeking opportunities to serve rather than seeking special treatment. It means exalting God’s name rather than displaying my own. It means choosing the peace of the community rather than proving that I am right. And it means rejoicing when someone else is lifted up. This is the mind of Christ.

Pride Cannot Remain Where Love Dwells

First Corinthians 13:4 describes the nature of love: “Love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.” Where genuine love exists, pride cannot remain. Pride says, “I must be exalted.” Love says, “I want you to flourish.” Pride says, “I must be recognized.” Love says, “It is enough that God receives the glory.” Pride says, “I must prove that I am right.” Love says, “I will seek first to understand and serve.” Pride lowers others in order to exalt itself. Love lowers itself in order to seek the good of others. Therefore, emptying pride does not simply mean suppressing our self-esteem or indiscriminately putting ourselves down. It means rightly recognizing who we are before God, confessing that all glory comes from Him, and no longer placing our own righteousness, honor, and rights at the center of life. It means regarding obedience to God’s will as more important than proving that I am right, and finding greater joy in giving life to and serving others than in receiving recognition myself. Ultimately, the opposite of pride is not self-deprecation but **the humility of Christ**.

Jesus humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, and obeyed the Father’s will even to death on a cross. Therefore, emptying pride does not mean regarding myself as worthless. It means emptying myself of the desire to be my own master and descending to the place where I serve others with the mind of Christ. This is the essence of “**emptying**.” It means not hiding the pride within me, but exposing it before God and acknowledging that it has been controlling my thoughts, words, and actions. And as the Holy Spirit shines the light of the Word upon the pride within my heart, I bring each expression of that pride before God and ask to be filled with the humility of Christ. Pride continually says, “Exalt yourself.” But the gospel says, “Exalt Christ.” Pride says, “People must recognize me.” But the gospel teaches us to be

satisfied with the truth that **God knows us**. Pride says, “I must defend my rights.” But the love of Christ sometimes leads us to empty ourselves of the desire to insist upon our rights and instead choose the good of others. Therefore, every day we should ask ourselves: “Why am I saying this right now?” “Am I truly acting for the glory of God, or am I acting to protect my pride?” “Am I trying to establish truth, or am I trying to prove that I am right?” “Am I speaking in order to help the other person, or am I exposing that person’s fault in order to display my own righteousness?” Emptying pride begins by standing honestly before these questions.

Pride is so subtle that it is difficult to recognize it within ourselves. Pride may be hiding even at the very moment we think we are humble. We may easily judge and condemn the pride of others while failing to see the pride within ourselves. Therefore, the first step in emptying pride is not discovering the pride of others but examining our own hearts before God. Just as David prayed, “Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts,” we too must ask the Holy Spirit to shine into the deepest places of our hearts (Ps. 139:23). We must pray that the Lord will reveal even the pride we cannot see. Then we begin to understand that pride is not a sin found only in unusually arrogant people. It resides in every human heart that seeks to place itself at the center. A high position does not automatically make a person proud, nor is pride found only in those who possess much. Even a person who possesses nothing can be proud. Conversely, a person may possess much and still live humbly, acknowledging that everything has come from God.

Therefore, emptying pride is not about changing our outward circumstances. It is about emptying ourselves of the desire to be our own masters and acknowledging that God is the Lord of our lives. It means refusing to mistake the grace we have received for our own merit and recognizing that our wisdom, abilities, possessions, and positions have all been entrusted to us by God. Such a person does not boast when successful. When failure comes, he does not blame others. When praised, he gives glory to God. When corrected, he first examines himself. When he discovers another person’s fault, he shows mercy rather than condemnation. Even when serving costs him something, he seeks a way to serve in love. These are the fruits that appear in the life of a person who has emptied himself of pride. Ultimately, emptying pride does not mean eliminating the “self” within me. It means entrusting myself completely to God. And it means filling the emptied place with the mind of Christ. It means seeking God’s will above my own will, God’s glory above my own glory, and the good of my neighbor above my own rights.

Therefore, today again, we should pray before God: **“Lord, empty me of the desire to prove that I am right. Empty me of the desire to be recognized by people. Empty me of the desire to exalt my**

own name. Empty me of the desire to insist upon my rights. And fill that emptied place with the humility and love of Christ.” When this prayer becomes our life, pride gradually begins to lose its power. Then, at last, we begin to descend to the place of a servant that Jesus showed us and become people who serve our neighbors not merely with words, but with our lives.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Pride”

How, then, can we empty ourselves of pride in everyday life? Pride is not a sin that disappears through a single decision. Therefore, every day we must examine our hearts with the help of the Word and the Holy Spirit. The principles and practical guidelines for emptying pride at home, in the church, and in the workplace can be summarized as follows.

1. When you discover pride, repent immediately before God.

Just as King Hezekiah of Judah honestly repented of the pride of his heart and the wrath of the Lord did not come upon the people in his days, acknowledge that you cannot overcome pride by your own strength. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your pride and lead you to repentance (2 Chron. 32:26).

2. The more successful you become, give glory to God rather than exalting your own name.

When you experience good results in your workplace or ministry, do not use them as opportunities to exalt your own ability and name. Rather than erecting a monument for yourself as Saul did, acknowledge that everything was God’s grace and return thanksgiving and glory to Him (1 Sam. 15:12).

3. Receive with gratitude the place and mission God has entrusted to you.

Do not, like Korah, regard the place God has entrusted to you as insignificant while desiring a higher position. In the church and workplace, receive your place and responsibility as God’s grace. Rather than always seeking to teach, become a person who also knows how to learn and serve (Num. 16:9).

4. Do not use your spiritual life as a basis for boasting in your own righteousness.

Guard against the attitude of the Pharisee who made his fasting and tithing the basis of his righteousness and judged others. Rather than boasting about how long you have been a Christian, your biblical knowledge, your service, or your dedication, seek God’s mercy like the tax collector (Lk. 18:13).

5. Choose the lower place of service rather than the higher place of recognition.

Rather than pursuing positions where people will recognize and exalt you, humble your heart among the lowly. At home, in the church, and in the workplace, willingly serve even in places where no one notices you (Prov. 16:19). Yet there is something we must never forget in all these practices. We cannot empty ourselves of pride through our own willpower and effort alone. Indeed, even the thought, **“I will make myself humble by my own strength,”** can become another form of pride. Therefore, even in emptying pride, we need God’s grace and the help of the Holy Spirit.

True emptying is not an act of self-imposed suffering through which we try to make ourselves low. It is acknowledging our weakness before God and entrusting ourselves to the rule of His Word and Spirit. As we keep God’s Word near and live in reverence before Him, the Holy Spirit reveals the pride within us and helps us learn the humility of Christ (Deut. 17:19–20). Therefore, every day we should pray: **“Lord, show me the pride within me and lead me to repent before the cross. Help me not to depend on my own strength, but to seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Empty me of the desire to be my own master.”** Emptying pride is the path of discipleship in which we depend upon God’s grace and, at the same time, obey that grace by humbling ourselves every day. When the Holy Spirit helps us, we can live at home, in the church, and in the workplace not by exalting ourselves, but by exalting Christ and serving others in love.

Chapter 5: Emptying “Greed”

In the previous chapter, through emptying “pride,” we examined the heart that seeks to exalt itself above God and put its own will first. Now, in Chapter 5, we will examine “greed,” which, together with pride, takes deep hold of our souls, prevents us from being satisfied with God, and causes us continually to grasp for the things of this world. We must stand honestly before the Word of God, confront the true nature of the greed that has taken root within us, and learn how to empty ourselves of it.

Dr. Hee-dae Lee, who once served as director of the cancer center at a large general hospital, explained the physiological characteristics of cancer cells by comparing them with a spiritual principle. According to medical principles, the normal cells of our bodies are supposed to grow and die repeatedly according to an established order. But when abnormal genetic mutations occur, malformed cells can emerge that refuse to die or destroy themselves and instead continue growing without limit. These are cancer cells. What makes cancer cells truly frightening is that, in order to continue expanding and growing, they take for themselves even the precious nutrients that other normal cells need. Cancer cells spread throughout the body, aggressively intercepting and consuming the nutrients that should have been supplied to other cells. When we consider this characteristic of cancer cells as a spiritual analogy, we are reminded of greed, which continually seeks to possess more and in the process destroys other things as well.

Regarding this relationship between the physiological characteristics of cancer cells and spiritual destruction, Scripture declares a very clear spiritual principle through the apostle James. James 1:15 says: “Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.” The truth we must honestly recognize is that the monster Scripture calls greed possesses an addictive nature that can never be satisfied by any amount of worldly possessions or wealth.

Greed Prevents Us from Being Satisfied with the Grace God Has Given

Through the record in Numbers, we must face the tragic condition of the Israelites in the wilderness, who failed to give thanks for the grace of manna given from above and instead became consumed by endless craving. Numbers 11:4 and 20 says: “The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the

Israelites started wailing and said, ‘If only we had meat to eat!’ ... You will eat it until it comes out of your nostrils and you loathe it—because you have rejected the LORD, who is among you, and have wailed before him, saying, ‘Why did we ever leave Egypt?’” The Israelites were influenced by the people living among them and began to crave what they craved. Greed can spread in this way through the worldly currents of society and penetrate deeply into the hearts of believers. As a result, they were no longer satisfied with the glorious manna from heaven that God provided every day. Eventually, they cried aloud like children, poured out complaints and resentment, and demanded meat from Moses, their spiritual leader. As greed filled their hearts, their judgment became seriously distorted. Eventually, they even began longing for Egypt, the land of sin where they had once lived miserably as abused slaves. They remembered as “the good old days” the time when, in Egypt, they had eaten fish, cucumbers, melons, leeks, onions, and garlic without cost. They even claimed that their life in Egypt, a place of destruction, had been far better than their present life in the wilderness (vv. 5, 18). Scripture solemnly describes their contempt for the grace of salvation and their longing for worldly abundance and fleshly desire as a sin of despising the LORD Almighty, the living God who dwelt among them. God sent quail in response to their demand and allowed them to eat meat until they became sick of it. Yet greed does not satisfy a person. It can ultimately lead a person into God’s judgment and destruction. Before the meat had even been chewed between their teeth, the Lord struck them with a plague in His wrath. Those who had despised the manna from heaven and refused to abandon their blind craving for meat were buried there. For this reason, the place marked by that dreadful judgment was called **Kibroth Hattaavah**, meaning “graves of craving” (Num. 11:34). Greed does not satisfy the human heart. In the end, it becomes an idol that devours and destroys the person who serves it.

Greed Leads Us to Take Away Even the Rights of Others

Even more frightening is the fact that greed does not remain confined to an individual heart. It can harm the rights and lives of other people. A person blinded by greed may encounter a righteous person who faithfully obeys God’s Word, yet if he cannot obtain the possession he wants, he can become bitterly angry and begin plotting evil. We must confront this reality of greed clearly in the biblical account of King Ahab. First Kings 21:3–4 says: “But Naboth replied, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.’ So Ahab went home, sullen and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.’ He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.” King Ahab of Israel coveted Naboth’s vineyard beside his palace because he wanted to turn it into a vegetable garden. Naboth, however, firmly rejected the king’s request because he wanted to obey God’s law, which prohibited him from carelessly selling his ancestral inheritance.

What is truly pitiful is Ahab's response to Naboth, who was faithfully obeying God's command. When his greed was denied, Ahab became deeply displeased and discouraged, returned to the palace, lay on his bed, turned his face away, and refused to eat. A person controlled by greed can become deeply offended and pour out poisonous resentment when a Christian who keeps the Lord's commands prevents him from gaining the worldly benefit he desires. Therefore, if anger rises within us simply because we did not receive the income or benefit we wanted, we should examine ourselves to see whether we are already being ruled by greed. The Lord gives a solemn warning concerning this dangerous condition of the human heart. Luke 12:15 says: "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions." We must examine our hearts every day and remain watchful so that we do not fall into any form of greed. If we leave the greed within us untouched instead of emptying ourselves of it, that greed can eventually become the fuse that ignites tragedy and destroys the family.

Greed Destroys the Family and the Community

Jezebel, who should have restrained Ahab's greed, instead joined him in his desire and promised that she would seize Naboth's vineyard and give it to him (1 Kgs. 21:7). She was a foolish wife who had no fear of the living God. Proverbs 14:1 says: "The wise woman builds her house, but with her own hands the foolish one tears hers down." According to this principle, a foolish person who does not fear God and plots evil simply to satisfy material desires eventually walks the path of tearing down and destroying a precious family with his or her own hands. Jezebel's greed finally developed into the cruel sin of falsely accusing the faithful and righteous Naboth in order to accomplish her purpose. First Kings 21:13–14 says that two scoundrels came and testified falsely before the people that Naboth had cursed God and the king. Naboth was then taken outside the city and stoned to death. They recruited wicked men and fabricated false testimony that Naboth, who had actually been obeying God's command, had cursed God and the king. In the end, they dragged him outside the city and stoned him to death (v. 15). Greed does not end with the simple desire to "have more." Uncontrolled greed can eventually violate the rights and reputation of others and can even develop into sin that takes another person's life. The same is true in our lives and workplaces today. If, because of greed for greater income or a more secure position, we slander or drive out a faithful colleague who follows principles, or unjustly wound another person, we must examine ourselves with fear and ask whether our hearts are already becoming stained with the greed of Ahab and Jezebel.

Greed Steals Contentment and Produces Complaint

We must also face how foolish and miserable greed can make the human soul and mind. Ecclesiastes 7:7 warns: “Extortion turns a wise person into a fool, and a bribe corrupts the heart.” Greed can cloud even the judgment of a wise person. A person controlled by greed can easily become impatient and angry when he does not obtain what he wants. Ecclesiastes 7:8–9 says: “The end of a matter is better than its beginning, and patience is better than pride. Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.” A person who forgets true emptying and is blinded by greed becomes impatient to satisfy his desires immediately rather than patiently waiting for the outcome of God’s sovereign work. Because his heart has become proud, he cannot endure faithfully to the end. Whenever things at work or at home do not go according to his wishes, he complains and quickly pours out anger. Scripture clearly warns that such impulsive anger is not the mark of wisdom but something that resides in the heart of fools. Furthermore, a person contaminated by greed and unable to be satisfied with the present becomes trapped in spiritual complaint. Ecclesiastes 7:10 says: “Do not say, ‘Why were the old days better than these?’ For it is not wise to ask such questions.” A person ruled by greed constantly laments, “Why are my circumstances now so much worse than they were before?” Instead of giving thanks for the grace God has provided today in the workplace and home, such a person lives longing only for the season in the past when things seemed better. But continually comparing the size of our possessions and pursuing past glory while failing to give thanks for the grace God has granted today is not the true wisdom of which Scripture speaks.

Greed Wearing the Mask of Religion

The ugliest and most subtle expression of greed in Christian faith occurs when a person outwardly wears the holy mask of serving God faithfully while inwardly practicing spiritual hypocrisy by worshiping money and material possessions. We must examine this disguised greed through the Pharisees in Luke 16:14–15. Scripture exposes their corrupt hearts by describing the Pharisees who heard the Lord’s teaching as people who loved money. When they heard Jesus’ teaching, they actually ridiculed Him. Their fundamental problem was that outwardly they behaved as though they strictly and piously observed the law, while inwardly they loved money and possessions. Though they loved money, they tried to present themselves as righteous before people. Love of money and religious self-righteousness had taken root together in their hearts. The same danger exists today when material success and abundance are too readily identified with God’s blessing and greed is justified in the name of faith. The outward growth or financial abundance of a church does not automatically prove God’s favor. Nor should a person with money or social status receive special spiritual authority within the community merely because of those things. The church must value faith, character, and the fruit of service more highly than a person’s wealth or status. If a church

values wealth and social influence more highly than faithfulness, the community itself can fall into the temptation of greed.

Therefore, before the Word we must examine ourselves to see whether desires for money and power are hiding behind spiritual expressions such as “God’s grace,” “answered prayer,” or “church growth.” This warning applies equally to churches and Christians today because we too are not free from the temptation into which the Pharisees fell. The fact that something follows legal procedures within a church does not necessarily mean that everything about it is right before God. Sometimes human desires for money and power may be hidden behind spiritual expressions such as “God’s grace,” “a miraculous answer to prayer,” or “the remarkable growth of the church.” The righteous God does not look only at outward success or legal procedures. The Lord examines the human heart and the motives hidden within it. Therefore, before judging others, we must stand before the mirror of this Word, discover the greed hidden in our own hearts, and empty ourselves of it. Scripture gives an even more severe warning to spiritual leaders who are blinded by wealth and use their calling as a means of personal gain. Isaiah 56:11 says: “They are dogs with mighty appetites; they never have enough. They are shepherds who lack understanding; they all turn to their own way, they seek their own gain.” An important characteristic of greed rebuked here by the Lord is that it **“never has enough.”** If pastors and church leaders, who have been entrusted with caring for and serving God’s flock, become preoccupied with increasing their own wealth and personal benefit, they depart from the mission God has entrusted to them. When even pastoral ministry and Christian service become means for personal gain, the greed of one leader can deeply wound not only that leader but the entire community. The Pharisees were the same. They made their outward appearance clean so that they might appear godly before people. But Jesus saw their hearts. In Luke 11:39 the Lord rebuked them: “Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness.” They appeared clean outwardly, but greed occupied the center of their hearts.

The Meaning of Greed Contained in “Harpagē”

The Greek word translated “greed” in Luke 11:39 is **harpagē (ἁρπαγή)**. This word does not merely describe an inward desire to possess more. It also carries the meaning of taking away or exploiting what belongs to another person and making it one’s own. Therefore, the greed for which Jesus rebuked the Pharisees was not limited to the inward thought, “I want a little more.” When greed grows, it can manifest itself in actions that violate another person’s share and take away the rights and possessions of others for one’s own benefit. If a person outwardly appears godly but uses and sacrifices other people for personal gain, that is precisely the kind of religious greed against which the Lord warned. For pastors and church

leaders, therefore, greed is even more dangerous. A person may say with his lips that he loves God while in actual life relying on money and possessions more than on God. A pastor may proclaim from the pulpit, “I love you, LORD, my strength” (Ps. 18:1), yet if in daily life he clings to money as the source of his strength, security, and future, he must honestly examine his heart before the Word.

True repentance does not end with a verbal confession. Just as John the Baptist cried, “Produce fruit in keeping with repentance” (Mt. 3:8), repentance from greed must also appear as change in one’s life. Instead of loving money while concealing that love behind religious language, repentance should appear in refusing unjust gain, using wealth honestly, and sharing with neighbors what God has entrusted to us. Luke 16:14 calls the Pharisees “**lovers of money.**” The expression comes from the Greek word **philargyroi** (φιλάργυροι), literally meaning “people who love money.” Outwardly they appeared to be godly people serving God, but inwardly they loved money more than God. This Word asks us an important question today:

Do I truly love God?

Or, while saying that I believe in God, am I actually relying more upon the security and power that money provides? To empty ourselves of greed, our eyes must return to the Word of God. Psalm 119:11 and 36–37 says: “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you. ... Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain; turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.” This passage shows us an important path for emptying greed. If our hearts are not directed toward God’s Word, our eyes easily turn toward worldly wealth and possessions. But when we keep the Word in our hearts and examine ourselves before it, the Holy Spirit shows us what we truly love and what we truly trust. Therefore, emptying greed is not simply a matter of possessing less money. It is a matter of turning our hearts and eyes back toward God. The apostle Paul also gives a solemn warning in 1 Timothy 6:10: “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” The problem is not money itself, but **the love of money**. When we begin to love money, wealth ceases to be a tool entrusted to us by God and becomes a master ruling our hearts. We may sacrifice faith and conscience in order to obtain more money and possessions and ultimately wander from the faith and pierce ourselves with many griefs. Greed whispers, “If you have just a little more, you will finally be satisfied.” But greed has no end. The more we possess, the more we want to possess. The higher we rise, the higher we want to rise. Therefore, unless we empty ourselves of greed, no amount of possessions can give us true contentment.

We Must Guard Against Greed Even in Abundance

When we encounter hardship and lack, we sometimes seek God more earnestly. But our faith is also tested in times of abundance. When our income increases and life becomes comfortable, it becomes easy to forget that everything was God's grace and begin relying upon our own ability and possessions. Psalm 73:7 describes those whose abundance exceeds the desires of their hearts. Abundance itself is not sin. Material blessing from God is also something for which we should give thanks. But if abundance causes our hearts to move away from God and awakens greed that makes us grasp for more, abundance can become a danger to our souls. Money and possessions are not the purpose of life. They are tools God has entrusted to us so that we may meet our needs, care for our families, love our neighbors, and fulfill the mission of the gospel. The problem begins when money rises from the position of a tool to the position of a master. Instead of our using money, money begins to control us. When we are ruled by greed, greater possessions do not produce greater contentment. Instead, they produce a desire for even more. Greater possessions create greater desires, and those desires drive us to pursue still greater possessions. Eventually, we become trapped in the bondage of greed. For this reason, Jesus taught that how we use wealth is extremely important. Luke 16:9 says: "Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Wealth is not a master we are called to serve. It is a tool entrusted to us by God. The important question is not how much we possess but **for whom and for what purpose we are using what God has entrusted to us**. We must not allow wealth to rule our hearts. We must use it to serve the kingdom of God and our neighbors.

We Must Empty Greed and Learn Contentment

How, then, should we live in a world filled with the temptation of wealth? As those who confess Jesus as Savior, we must empty from our hearts the greed that the world continually encourages. We must not surrender our hearts to the world's message that we must possess more in order to be happy, have more than others in order to be secure, and accumulate more in order to guarantee our future. Like Jesus, who showed us the example of emptying Himself and becoming obedient even unto death, we must daily empty ourselves of the desire to possess more and the desire to be our own masters. Before the cross, we must examine ourselves so that protecting our own interests, possessions, and reputation does not become the most important purpose of life. And the emptied heart must be filled with Christ. We must learn the faith of contentment that is satisfied not by the abundance worldly wealth provides but by Jesus Christ alone. We must remember the gift of eternal life that God freely gives us in Christ Jesus (Rom. 6:23) and the love of God from which nothing can separate us (8:38–39).

Therefore, even when circumstances at work or at home differ from our expectations, we should remember the grace God has already given and give thanks. Conversely, when we enjoy material abundance, we should not grasp it as though it belonged absolutely to us but receive it as something entrusted to us by God. Emptying greed does not mean throwing away money or avoiding possessions. It means refusing to allow money to become the master of my heart and acknowledging that God is the Lord of my life. Therefore, a person who empties himself of greed does not simply grasp wealth but uses it with gratitude, shares it with those in need, and willingly releases it for the mission God has entrusted to him. He does not seek contentment in possessing more but learns to be satisfied with the grace already received in Christ. Greed continually says, **“You need more.”** Faith confesses, **“In Christ, I already have enough.”** This is the path of **emptying greed** that we must practice every day in our homes, workplaces, and churches.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Greed”

Thus far, through the Word, we have seen how easily greed captures our hearts and causes us to depend upon wealth more than upon God. How, then, can we empty ourselves of greed in everyday life? Greed is not a sin that disappears through a single decision. Every day we must examine our hearts, use rightly the wealth God has entrusted to us, and remain watchful so that the desire to possess more does not become the master of our hearts. The principles and practical guidelines for emptying greed at home, in the church, and in the workplace can be summarized as follows.

1. Learn the contentment that is satisfied with what God has given you.

Greed continually whispers, “If you have just a little more, you will be satisfied.” But having more does not necessarily produce greater contentment. Indeed, the more we possess, the more easily we may fall into greed that wants still more. Therefore, do not allow the amount of your possessions to determine your contentment. Remember the grace God has already given you and learn true contentment in Jesus Christ. Rather than first thinking, “What I have is not enough,” first ask, “How much grace has God already given me?” Contentment is not a life in which we desire nothing. It is the discipline of faith that gives thanks for what God has allowed us to have and refuses to permit the desire for more to rule us.

2. Practice sharing and giving rather than grasping.

Greed closes the hand, but love opens it. Do not use the wealth God has entrusted to you only for your own satisfaction and pleasure. Willingly use it to care for your family, love your neighbors, and help those in need. Tithing, giving to those in need, and sharing with others can become disciplines that train us in this way. These practices should not end as religious acts of merely giving money. Through them, we confess with our lives that everything we possess belongs to God and that we are stewards entrusted with its care. We share wealth not because we hate money itself but because we refuse to allow money to become

the master of our hearts. When we open the hand that was grasping tightly, wealth ceases to be an idol that controls us and becomes a tool used for the mission God has entrusted to us.

3. Examine your desires every day before the Word.

When our hearts move away from God's Word, our eyes easily turn toward worldly wealth and success. Therefore, every day we must examine our hearts before the Word. "Why do I want more of this?" "Do I truly need this, or do I simply want to have more than someone else?" "Is this choice a wise use of what God has entrusted to me, or is it an attempt to satisfy my greed?" Ask these questions honestly before the Word. Train yourself to distinguish between needs and desires. When you want to buy something, do not purchase it immediately; wait for a while. Reduce unnecessary spending. Lower your expectations for your lifestyle a little. Use with gratitude what you already possess. These too are practical disciplines for emptying greed. The more our hearts are filled with the Word, the more the space occupied by worldly desires will gradually be emptied.

4. Choose honesty in every matter involving money.

True repentance does not end in words. It appears as change in life. Do not justify your love of money or your desires with religious expressions such as "God's grace" or "answered prayer." In the workplace, do not abandon honesty in order to gain greater profit. Do not take away another person's share or obtain profit through unjust means. Manage income and expenses honestly, and work and earn money in ways of which you need not be ashamed before God. The same is true in the church and ministry. Never use the work of God as a means of gaining personal benefit or honor. Do not treat finances and resources entrusted by God as though they were your personal possessions. Use them honestly and transparently. Repentance that empties greed appears in a life that refuses unjust gain, works honestly, and respects the rights of others.

5. Remember the grace you have already received and give thanks.

Greed and gratitude find it difficult to rule the same heart at the same time. Greed causes us to look at what we do not have. Gratitude causes us to look at the grace we have already received. Even when your financial situation does not develop according to your plans and life becomes difficult, remember the grace God has given you until now. Conversely, when your circumstances improve and your income increases, do not think that you achieved it solely through your own ability. Remember that it is God's grace. At home,

instead of comparing your circumstances with those of other families, give thanks for what God has given your family. At work, instead of complaining while looking at someone else's position or income, receive with gratitude the work and opportunities God has presently entrusted to you. As gratitude deepens, the desire for more is emptied, and we begin to discover how abundant the grace we have already received truly is.

Yet there is something we must remember in all these practices. We cannot empty greed through our own willpower and effort alone. Even the thought, **"I will overcome greed by my own strength,"** can become another form of self-righteousness. Therefore, emptying greed also requires the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit. This does not mean, however, that we need do nothing. When the Holy Spirit reveals the greed within us through the Word, we must acknowledge it and repent. We must open the hands that have been tightly closed. We must reject unjust gain. We must share what we have. We must practice gratitude and contentment in actual daily life. God's grace does not make us passive. It enables us to obey willingly. Therefore, emptying greed is not an attempt to transform ourselves through our own strength. It is a process of discipleship in which we depend upon God's grace and daily obey the leading of the Holy Spirit. When God reveals the greed within us through His Word, we must repent and turn our eyes away from worldly wealth and back toward Christ.

We can pray: **"Lord, show me the greed within me and lead me to repentance. Do not allow the desire to possess more to rule my heart, and empty me of the desire to be my own master. Help me to give thanks for the grace You have already given and to be content. Help me to use honestly the wealth You have entrusted to me and willingly share it with others. The Holy Spirit, help me to love God more than money and to depend upon the Lord more than upon possessions."** Entrusting our thoughts, emotions, and will to God in this way and obeying the leading of the Holy Spirit is the practical path of emptying greed. Emptying greed does not simply mean distancing ourselves from money or possessing less. It means returning to God the place in our hearts that money has occupied. It means acknowledging that I am not the absolute owner of my wealth but a steward who manages what God has entrusted to me. The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to empty the desire for more and fill that place with Christ. It is to be content in Christ, to use with gratitude what God has entrusted to us, to share with those in need, and willingly to release our resources for the mission of God's kingdom. Greed continually says, **"You must have more."** Faith confesses, **"In Christ, I already have enough."** This is the path of **emptying greed** that we must practice every day at home, in the church, and in the workplace.

Chapter 6:

Emptying “Hypocrisy”

In the preceding chapters, we examined how we must empty ourselves of pride, which seeks to exalt itself above God, and greed, which is not satisfied with God but continually desires to possess more. Now we turn to another deeply rooted sin: **hypocrisy**.

Hypocrisy is the desire to present to others an image of ourselves that is different from who we really are. It is harboring one thing in our hearts while outwardly behaving as though we think otherwise. It is becoming more conscious of people’s evaluation than of God and decorating our faith accordingly. Therefore, emptying hypocrisy does not begin with trying to appear to others as a better Christian. Rather, it begins with looking honestly at who we really are before God, without hiding anything. We can deceive people. To some extent, we can manage the image that others see. But no mask is of any use before God, because God knows not only what people see but also the thoughts and motives of our hearts. Therefore, the first question we must ask in order to empty hypocrisy is not: **“How do people see me?”** but: **“How does God see me right now?”** Standing honestly before this question is the beginning of emptying hypocrisy.

Do Not Use the Word as a Tool to Fulfill Your Own Desires

In the Gospels, Jesus severely rebuked the hypocrisy of the Pharisees. They knew the Word of God well and were zealous in keeping the law. The problem, however, was that knowing the Word and obeying the Word had become separated from one another. In Luke 16:18, Jesus speaks concerning divorce. Among the religious leaders of that time were those who used the teaching concerning the certificate of divorce in Deuteronomy 24 in ways that suited their own desires. Instead of receiving God’s Word in order to empty themselves of their own desires and obey Him, they used the Word as a basis for justifying what they wanted. This is one form of hypocrisy. Outwardly, we may insist, “The Bible says this,” while actually using the Word as a tool to protect our own desires and interests. Instead of conforming ourselves to the Word, we conform the Word to our own thinking.

We are not free from this danger today. It is necessary to value doctrine, tradition, and order within the church. But we must not use them as tools to protect our own position and interests or to recklessly condemn those who think differently from us. God's Word must first shine upon me. Before I direct it toward someone else, it must be directed toward my own heart. Before using the Word to identify another person's faults, I must first ask what I need to repent of before that Word. Knowing much of Scripture does not protect us automatically from hypocrisy. On the contrary, if we know much of Scripture but fail to examine ourselves in its light, even biblical knowledge can become a mask that hides our hypocrisy. Therefore, we must continually ask ourselves: **"Am I seeking to obey the Word, or am I using the Word to justify my own thinking?"**

Hypocrisy Is Like a Mask That Hides Who We Really Are

The Greek word used in the New Testament for a hypocrite, **hypokritēs (ὕποκριτής)**, was originally used for an actor who played another person's role on a stage. An actor does not present his actual identity on stage but portrays the role assigned to him. This image helps us understand hypocrisy. Hypocritical faith seeks to show people a version of ourselves that differs from who we really are. We may harbor hatred in our hearts while acting as though we are loving. We may say that we have forgiven while actually refusing to forgive. We may depend more upon money and reputation than upon God while trying to appear as people who trust God alone. We may speak piously at church while treating our family carelessly at home. We may preach forgiveness from the pulpit while harboring years of hatred in our hearts. We may speak kindly to someone face-to-face and then speak badly about that person behind his or her back. Outwardly, we may congratulate someone on success while inwardly hoping that person will fail. This is precisely the danger of hypocrisy: **Who I am before people and who I am before God gradually become two different persons.**

Jesus compared the Pharisees to whitewashed tombs. They appeared beautiful on the outside, but inside they were filled with dead people's bones and uncleanness. The Lord's concern was not that they cleaned the outside. The problem was that they cleaned the outside while leaving the inside unchanged. Faith is not the work of decorating the self that people see. It is honestly facing the true condition of our hearts before God, repenting of the sin within us, and being transformed by the grace of Christ.

Hypocrisy Deceives Not Only Others but Eventually Ourselves

Judas Iscariot shows us how deeply hypocrisy can penetrate a person. He had already determined in his heart to betray Jesus. Yet when Jesus said that one of His disciples would betray Him, Judas asked with the other disciples: **“Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”** (Mt. 26:25) He had already decided in his heart to betray Jesus, yet outwardly he behaved like a disciple who knew nothing about it. Hypocrisy may begin by deceiving other people. But when we live behind a mask for a long time, eventually we begin to deceive ourselves. We begin to mistake the image we present to others for our actual spiritual condition. If people in the church have regarded us as faithful Christians for many years, we may begin to think that their evaluation itself proves the reality of our faith. A pastor may preach well and receive recognition from many people and therefore assume that his own soul must also be healthy.

A church leader may think that because he has served the church for many years, there is little left in his life that requires repentance. But the evaluations of people cannot be the final standard for determining our spiritual condition. What matters is **who I am before God**. What I think when no one is watching, how I treat my family, how I use money, how I respond inwardly to another person’s success or failure, and whether I repent or make excuses when my faults are exposed—these things reveal who I really am. Therefore, emptying hypocrisy must not end merely with improving the image we show other people. We must go further and honestly encounter our true selves before God.

God Sees Not Only Our Actions but Also Our Motives

Jesus said in Luke 12:2: “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.” We can hide our hearts from other people. We can even conceal the desires hiding behind seemingly good actions. But we cannot hide them from God. The apostle Paul likewise says in 1 Corinthians 4:5 that the Lord “will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.” God sees not only **what** we did but also **why** we did it. We may have helped someone, but our greater desire may have been to receive recognition. We may have served the church diligently while secretly wanting to protect our position. We may have spoken what was right but done so because we wanted to defeat the other person rather than restore that person. Therefore, emptying hypocrisy is not merely correcting our outward behavior. It means examining before God the motives hidden behind our actions. At times, we need to ask ourselves: **“What is the real reason I am doing this?” “Am I doing this to please God or to receive recognition from people?” “Am I speaking to restore this person, or to prove that I am right?” “Am I doing this for the good of the community, or to protect my own position and reputation?”** Standing honestly before questions like these is an important discipline in emptying hypocrisy.

We Must See the Hypocrisy Within Ourselves Before Seeing It in Others

There is something about which we must be especially careful when reading biblical teachings on hypocrisy. We may think of the Pharisees and immediately think of someone else: “That person is just like a Pharisee.” “That pastor is hypocritical.” “That person says one thing and does another.” But Jesus’ teaching about hypocrisy was not given first of all so that we could judge others. It is a Word that must first shine upon ourselves. Jesus said in Matthew 7:5: “You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.” The hypocrite is sensitive to the speck in another person’s eye but insensitive to the plank in his own. He sees another person’s faults as large and his own as small. He demands high standards of others while granting himself all kinds of reasons and exceptions.

Therefore, the first step in emptying hypocrisy is not identifying the hypocrisy of others but acknowledging the hypocrisy within ourselves. “Lord, I judged others while failing to see the sin within myself.” “Lord, I applied Your Word to others but failed to apply it to myself.” “Lord, because I wanted people’s approval, I tried to appear more godly than I really was.” We must be able to acknowledge honestly before God who we really are. Before the Word becomes a sword with which we pierce others, it must first become a mirror in which we see ourselves.

Hypocrisy Is Demanding from Others What We Ourselves Do Not Practice

Another expression of Pharisaic hypocrisy is demanding that others live according to the Word while we ourselves fail to do so. We tell others to love while we ourselves do not love. We tell others to forgive while we ourselves refuse to forgive. We demand that others serve while we ourselves do not serve. We condemn the greed of others while refusing to empty ourselves of our own greed. This hypocrisy can easily appear within the family. Parents may tell their children to read the Bible while they themselves rarely draw near to the Word. They may teach their children to be honest while refusing to acknowledge their own faults. They may require their children to apologize while refusing to apologize themselves because they are the parents. Fathers, in particular, can easily think that admitting their mistakes will weaken their authority. They may therefore wear the mask of authoritarianism in order to hide their weaknesses and failures. But when a father has done wrong, being able to say before his wife and children, **“I’m sorry. Dad was wrong. I also fell short before the Lord,”** does not mean losing authority. Rather, children can learn the gospel through a father who knows how to repent more deeply than through a father who pretends to be perfect. What matters is not showing children parents who never fall. What matters is

showing them parents who, when they fall, acknowledge their wrong, depend upon God's grace, and rise again. The same is true in the church. Pastors and leaders do not need to behave as though they know everything and are always right. When their judgment has been wrong, they should be able to acknowledge it. When they have hurt someone, they should be able to apologize. And they should be able to acknowledge that they too are people who must continually be transformed before the Word.

Emptying Hypocrisy Does Not Mean Becoming a Perfect Person

It means emptying ourselves of the desire to **appear** perfect. Faith that exists for people to see must not become a religious performance. Another reason Jesus rebuked the Pharisees was that they were excessively focused on a faith displayed before people. Faith is not a stage on which we perform for others. How godly people think I am, how highly they regard me as a pastor, or how devoted they consider me as a church leader must not become the center of faith. There is nothing inherently wrong with being respected by others. A good reputation is something for which we can be thankful. But the moment people's evaluation becomes more important than honesty before God, hypocrisy can begin. Today we have more opportunities than ever to show ourselves to others. Not only within the church but through many forms of media, we can easily make our ministry, good works, and thoughts known to others. That in itself is not wrong. But precisely because we have these opportunities, we must examine our motives even more carefully. **"Am I giving glory to God, or am I drawing attention to myself?"** This question is not one we should use first to judge others. It is a question we must first ask ourselves. More important than the ministry people see is the relationship we have with God in the place where no one is watching.

Who We Are When No One Is Watching Is Also Who We Are Before God

To empty hypocrisy, we must value the time we spend alone with God. We need prayer in which we reveal our actual hearts to God, not prayer intended to make us appear godly to others. Rather than merely confirming that we have fulfilled the duty of reading the Bible, we must allow God to shine His Word into our hearts. God is with us even where no one else is watching. Therefore, faith in the secret place matters. If we say at church that we love God but never draw near to His Word at home, we need to examine our faith. If parents emphasize worship and Scripture to their children while neglecting their own relationship with God, their children will see the gap between their words and their lives. On the other hand, even if parents are not perfect, if their children see them loving the Word, repenting when they are wrong, and rising again by depending upon God, those children will learn faith not only through words but through life. The same is true in the workplace. We must be honest not only when people are watching but

also when no one is watching. We should not work diligently only when the supervisor is present but carry out our responsibilities faithfully because we believe the work has been entrusted to us by God. The smaller the gap becomes between who we are before people and who we are when no one is watching, the more genuine our faith becomes.

Do Not Use the Word as a Tool for Judging Others

Knowing much of the Bible and studying theology are valuable things. But biblical knowledge does not automatically make us humble. Indeed, if we apply the Word only to other people, that knowledge can make us proud. While listening to a sermon, we may sometimes think: “That person really needs to hear this message.” But the first question should be: **“Lord, what are You saying to me through this Word today?”** Discerning another person’s wrongdoing is different from condemning that person. There are times when we must call something wrong because it is wrong. There are times when correction and rebuke are necessary to protect the community. But even then, we must first examine our own hearts. Do I desire the restoration of this person, or do I simply want to defeat him? Am I speaking the truth, or am I using the truth to pour out my anger? Am I seeking to build up the community, or am I protecting my own position? Before the Word becomes a weapon for attacking others, it must become the Word that transforms me.

Emptying Hypocrisy Begins Before the Cross

How, then, can we empty ourselves of hypocrisy? Ultimately, we must come before the cross. Before the cross, we have no need to make ourselves appear righteous. We were not saved because we were more godly than others or because we were people without failures. We are all sinners who need the grace of Christ. If we truly believe this, we will have less reason to wear masks to hide our weaknesses. When we are wrong, we can acknowledge it. When we sin, we can repent. When we hurt another person, we can apologize. When the Holy Spirit reveals the hypocrisy within us through the Word, do not hide it or make excuses. Say: **“Lord, this is who I am.”** Then bring that sin to the cross. Emptying hypocrisy is not the work of making ourselves into more impressive people. It is emptying ourselves of the desire to appear righteous and clinging instead to the righteousness and grace of Christ. James 3:17 says: “But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.” What God desires is not a person whose outside has simply been beautifully decorated. He desires a person who, despite his shortcomings, honestly acknowledges who he is before God, repents, and continues to be transformed in the grace of Christ. **Emptying hypocrisy**

does not mean becoming a person without flaws. It means removing the mask that tries to make us appear flawless. And it means that who we are before people and who we are before God gradually become one and the same.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Hypocrisy”

How, then, can we continue to empty ourselves of hypocrisy in our homes, churches, and workplaces? Hypocrisy is not a sin that completely disappears through a single decision. We continue to experience the desire to be conscious of how others evaluate us and to make ourselves look good in their eyes. Therefore, we must ask for the help of the Holy Spirit and examine our hearts daily before the Word of God. The following five practices can be cultivated in our everyday lives.

1. Live before God rather than before the eyes of people.

Luke 12:2 says, “There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.” Hypocrisy easily grows when we become more conscious of people’s eyes than of God. When we become overly concerned about how others see us, we begin to present ourselves as better than we really are. Therefore, even when doing good works, carrying out ministry, or serving others, examine your heart. **“Would I still do this if no one recognized me for it?”** This question helps us examine our motives. Learn to believe that it is enough for God to know, even if no one else recognizes what you have done. Consider pleasing God more important than receiving the applause of people.

2. Examine the motives hidden behind your words and actions.

The same action can arise from different motives. We may help someone while wanting to receive recognition. We may say something that is right while wanting to defeat the other person. We may serve the church while secretly wanting to protect our own position. Therefore, we need to ask ourselves frequently: **“Why am I saying this right now?” “What is the real purpose for which I am doing this?” “Is this for God, or is it to draw attention to myself?”** We cannot perfectly understand all our own motives. For this very reason, we must ask the Holy Spirit to examine our hearts through the Word. Before judging someone else, first examine your own heart. Before applying the Word to someone else, first apply it to yourself.

3. Honestly acknowledge the gap between your words and your life.

Hypocrisy grows when we try to appear as though we are already living out a faith that we are not actually living. Therefore, do not present yourself as more spiritual than you really are. You should be able to say that you do not know when you do not know. When you have done wrong, you should be able to acknowledge that you were wrong. If there are areas of your life that have not yet been transformed, you must honestly acknowledge them before God. This is especially important in the family. What parents need to show their children is not perfection. They need to show them what it looks like to repent when they have done wrong. If a father has done wrong, he should be able to say to his wife and children: **“I’m sorry. Dad was wrong.”** The same is true of pastors and leaders. Rather than hiding their mistakes in order to protect their authority, they should be able to acknowledge when they are wrong and apologize. An apology does not destroy spiritual authority. It removes the mask of hypocrisy.

4. Treasure your relationship with God when no one is watching.

Treasure the faith you live out when you are alone with God more than the faith you display before people. Do not turn prayer into a means of appearing godly before others. When you read the Bible, do not do so merely to gain the satisfaction of having fulfilled a religious duty. Read it in order to meet God through His Word and examine your own heart. In the home, parents themselves must first live close to the Word and live a life of prayer. Do not demand a life of faith only from your children. Let them see their parents seeking God first. The same principle applies in the workplace. Do not become one kind of person when others are watching and another when they are not. God sees even when no one else does. The path of emptying hypocrisy is to reduce the distance between who I am before people and who I am before God.

5. Humbly listen to the counsel of trustworthy people.

There are times when we cannot see our own hypocrisy. Therefore, we need faithful companions who love us and are willing to tell us what we need to hear. When someone points out something wrong in us, do not immediately defend yourself. You do not need to accept every criticism unconditionally, but first examine it before God. **“Is there something God is showing me through these words?”** Value truth more than saving face. Before looking for the speck in another person’s eye, examine the plank in your own. And if you discover that you have done wrong, do not make excuses. Repent. When members of a community can lovingly admonish one another and humbly receive admonition, hypocrisy gradually loses its place to stand.

However, we must not attempt to accomplish these five practices by our own effort alone. Emptying hypocrisy also requires the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit. By our own strength, we cannot completely purify all the motives hidden deep within our hearts. In fact, the very moment we begin to think, “I am no longer hypocritical,” we may fall into another form of self-righteousness. Therefore, we must ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light of the Word into our hearts. We must acknowledge and repent of the sins revealed in that light and depend upon the grace of the cross. We can pray: **“Lord, help me to see not the image of myself that I want others to see, but the person You see. Show me the hypocrisy and self-righteousness hidden within me, and do not let me hide them or make excuses for them. Empty my heart of the desire for human recognition and praise, and help me live to please You alone. Make my words and my life one. Make me an honest person who can acknowledge my wrongs, repent, and apologize when I have done wrong. Holy Spirit, shine Your light into my heart every day and fill me with the sincere heart of Christ.”**

Emptying hypocrisy does not mean revealing all our weaknesses and failures to everyone. Nor does it mean that we must speak every thought in our minds without discernment. The heart of emptying hypocrisy is reducing the distance between the self that people see and the person we actually are before God. It means that our words and our lives increasingly become one, that who we are before people and who we are when no one is watching increasingly become one, and that when we do wrong, we do not hide behind a mask but honestly repent before God. The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to empty the heart that has been filled with the desire for human recognition, self-righteousness, and pretense, and to fill that place with the mind of Christ. Hypocrisy says: **“This is how I want people to see me.”** Faith confesses: **“I want to live truthfully before God.”**

Therefore, a person who empties hypocrisy does not struggle to appear perfect. While acknowledging his or her weakness, that person does not remain there but continues to be transformed day by day by depending upon the grace of the cross. Such a person becomes more conscious of God’s gaze than of human applause, chooses truth over saving face, and examines his own heart before pointing out the faults of others. And in the home, the church, and the workplace, that person’s words and life increasingly become one. **This is the path of “emptying hypocrisy” that we must walk every day.**

Chapter 7:

Emptying “Falsehood”

In the previous chapter, we examined “hypocrisy,” which arises from the gap between the way we appear before people and who we actually are before God. If hypocrisy is putting on a mask to hide who we really are, falsehood is hiding or altering the truth for our own benefit and, beyond that, even distorting the truth of God.

Falsehood does not end simply with saying something that is contrary to the facts. Falsehood begins in a heart that rejects the truth and accepts what is advantageous to itself as though it were true. In John 8:44, Jesus referred to the devil as “a liar and the father of lies.” At the root of falsehood is a power that causes us to believe something other than the Word of God and ultimately leads us away from God. Therefore, before trying to identify the falsehood in others, we must first ask ourselves: “Am I living truthfully before God?” “Am I hiding or altering the facts in order to protect my own interests and reputation?” “Do I accept the Word of God as it is, or do I accept only the parts I want to hear?” Emptying falsehood begins by honestly examining ourselves before these questions.

Falsehood Keeps Us from Knowing God

Jeremiah 9:3–6 shows us what Judah was like when it was filled with falsehood. The people shot lies with their tongues as though drawing a bow. They deceived one another and did not speak the truth. The more serious problem was that, in the midst of such a way of life, they refused to know God. Falsehood does not merely destroy trust between people. It also destroys our relationship with God. If we say with our lips that we believe in God while treating lies and deception as normal in our lives, then although we claim to trust God, in reality we are relying more on the ways of the world. Psalm 62:4 portrays people who bless with their mouths while inwardly cursing. Their words and their hearts are not the same. We easily take the small lies of everyday life lightly. We may alter the facts slightly in order to hide our mistakes, leave out important details in order to avoid responsibility, or shift the blame to someone else in order to protect our reputation. But when we repeatedly allow small lies, our conscience gradually becomes numb.

At first, we may feel uneasy, but after repeating them, we can eventually lie without feeling troubled at all. Therefore, emptying falsehood does not simply mean refraining from telling major lies. It means learning to love the truth before God and to choose the truth even when doing so costs us something.

False Teaching Leads People Away from God

One form of falsehood that Scripture warns against with particular severity is speaking falsely in the name of God. In the days of Jeremiah, there were false prophets who claimed to have been entrusted with the Word of God but were actually proclaiming things that God had not given them. Jeremiah 6:13–15 shows that the people were consumed by greed and their leaders practiced deceit. Yet they treated the wound of the people lightly, saying, “Peace, peace,” when there was no peace. This is the danger of false teaching. Telling people what they want to hear is not necessarily love. If a person’s relationship with God is being broken because of sin, telling that person that nothing is wrong cannot be life-giving comfort. True comfort does not cover up sin; it leads the sinner to Christ. True love does not give false peace to someone who needs to repent. Instead, it helps that person recognize his or her condition before the Word of God and return to Him.

We Must Not Speak in God’s Name When God Has Not Sent Us

When Jeremiah rebuked the false prophets, he repeatedly pointed out one particular problem: they claimed to have been sent even though God had not sent them. In Jeremiah 28:15, Jeremiah said to Hananiah: “The LORD has not sent you, yet you have persuaded this nation to trust in lies.” The same problem appears repeatedly in Jeremiah 14, 23, and 27. God had not spoken, yet they said, “God has spoken.” They proclaimed their own thoughts, dreams, and desires as though they were the Word of God. This is a sin that pastors, in particular, must fear.

A pastor has no authority to turn his own thoughts into the Word of God. Nor should he declare that his own political views, personal desires, expectations of success, or experiences are the will of God. A preacher is not someone who creates the Word but someone who has been entrusted with the Word. Therefore, a preacher must continually ask himself: “Is this really what the biblical text is saying?” “Am I confusing what God has said with what I want to say?” “Am I saying what the congregation wants to hear, or am I faithfully proclaiming the Word God has given?” The more a person uses the name of God from the pulpit, the more reverently and fearfully that person must stand before these questions.

Words That Please the Ear Are Not Always Good Words

Second Timothy 4:3 warns that a time will come when people will not endure sound teaching but, “having itching ears,” will gather around themselves many teachers to suit their own desires. Two problems appear together here. One is the problem of leaders who proclaim only what people want to hear. The other is the problem of listeners who seek only what they themselves want to hear. False teaching becomes even stronger when these two meet. The preacher wants the applause of the people, and the listeners want sermons that affirm their desires. Eventually, each side gives the other what it wants to hear. But the Word of God does not always make our ears comfortable. Sometimes it comforts us. Sometimes it rebukes us. Sometimes it exposes our sin. Sometimes it commands us to turn away from the path we have been following. And it always leads us to Jesus Christ. Therefore, the standard for true preaching is not: “Does this sound good to me?” Instead, we must ask: “Does this message come from Scripture?” “Does this message lead me to Christ?” “Does this message cause me to examine myself, repent, and obey?”

Micaiah Proclaimed the Word God Had Given Rather Than the Words People Wanted to Hear

First Kings 22 records an event that clearly shows the difference between false words and the true Word. When King Ahab was preparing to go to war against Ramoth Gilead, many prophets told the king what he wanted to hear. They said that if he went to war, he would be victorious. But Micaiah was different. People urged Micaiah to speak the same favorable words as the other prophets. But Micaiah said: “What the LORD says to me, that I will speak.” This one sentence reveals the attitude that a true servant of the Word must have. A preacher is not someone who invents the words the congregation wants to hear. He is not someone who says what a king will like. Nor is he someone who softens or changes the Word in order to protect his own popularity. He is someone who proclaims what God has said. The message Micaiah delivered was not what the king wanted to hear. As a result, Micaiah was hated and suffered. Yet he did not change the Word of God because of people’s reactions. A true servant of the Word fears the Word of God more than the applause of people.

True Preaching Leads People to Repentance and to Christ

How, then, can we discern between a true pastor and a false pastor? We cannot judge merely by whether someone preaches well, attracts many people, is famous, or delivers moving sermons. From Scripture, we can examine at least three things. First, we must ask whether the pastor proclaims the Word

entrusted to him by God. Rather than speaking his own thoughts as though they were God's Word, he must faithfully proclaim what Scripture actually says. Second, we must examine whether the message contains the substance of God's Word. The false prophets in Jeremiah's time proclaimed their own dreams and thoughts as though they were the Word of God. But the true Word does not arise from human imagination. It is rooted in the Word of God. Third, we must examine whether the preaching leads people to repentance and obedience. True preaching does not end by merely condemning people. It makes people aware of sin, leads them to the cross, and helps them hold on to the grace of Christ and move forward into a new life. When comfort is needed, there should be comfort. Crushing a wounded person even further is not true preaching. But refusing to speak of repentance where repentance is needed is not love either. A true shepherd is not someone who causes the sheep to follow himself but someone who helps the sheep follow Christ.

Believers Must Also Discern the Word They Hear

Responsibility for false teaching must not be placed only on pastors. Believers also have a responsibility to discern the Word they hear. We must not automatically accept someone's words as the Word of God simply because that person is famous. A pastor's position, academic credentials, or the size of his church does not automatically make everything he says true. When listening to a sermon, we should open the Bible and examine it. "Is this really what the Bible teaches?" "Is the meaning of the biblical text being communicated correctly?" "Is this consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ?" Respecting a pastor and treating a pastor as absolute are two different things. A true pastor should not want believers to become dependent upon him. Rather, he should help them read the Word for themselves, pray, seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and follow Christ. The ultimate object of our faith is not a human being but God.

Falsehood Can Destroy Another Person's Life

The Bible treats false testimony very seriously. The ninth of the Ten Commandments is clear: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." Lying is not merely a matter of words. It can destroy a person's reputation, family, workplace, and life. In 1 Kings 21, Jezebel arranged false witnesses in order to seize Naboth's vineyard. She had them falsely testify that Naboth had cursed God and the king, and eventually the innocent Naboth was put to death. Greed produced falsehood, and falsehood took a man's life. Therefore, when we hear something about another person, we must not rush to judgment. Scripture teaches us not to establish a serious matter on the testimony of only one person but to confirm the facts through sufficient testimony (Deut. 19:15).

The same applies in the church. Simply because we have heard something negative about someone does not mean that we should assume it is true or spread it to others. We must first verify the facts. Nor should we condemn a person after hearing only one side of the story. Those in positions of leadership must be especially careful. If they believe unverified statements and make judgments based on them, they can inflict wounds on a person that may be very difficult to undo. A person who loves the truth is not someone who quickly spreads rumors but someone who carefully verifies the facts.

Falsehood Cannot Erase the Truth

When Jesus rose from the dead, the chief priests and elders gave money to the soldiers and told them to spread a lie: “His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.” They created a lie with money in order to protect their positions and reputations. But their lie could not erase the truth of the resurrection. People may try to hide the truth. They may use money and power to distort the facts. But they cannot erase the truth that God has accomplished. This truth is also an important source of comfort for those who suffer injustice because of falsehood. Not every truth is revealed at the time we want it to be revealed. Sometimes we may be misunderstood for a long time. But believers must not try to defeat falsehood with another falsehood. We must speak the truth, fulfill the responsibilities that are ours to fulfill, and entrust the final judgment to God. The way to overcome falsehood is not with a more sophisticated lie, but with the truth.

We Must Also Guard Against Adding Anything to the Gospel

In Galatians, Paul strongly warns against false teaching that attempted to add human merit to the gospel of Christ. Salvation is not obtained through our works or merits. We receive by faith the grace of salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished on the cross. Therefore, if human merit is added to the gospel and taught as though it were a condition of salvation, the very essence of the gospel can be obscured. In 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul also says that he does not corrupt the Word of God. We must not use the Word of God for our own benefit. For a pastor, the Word is not a tool for achieving success. It is not a product for making the church larger. It is not a means of winning people’s favor. The Word belongs to God. Therefore, the person entrusted with the Word must proclaim it purely, without mixing it with his own desires.

Emptying Falsehood Means Honestly Examining Ourselves Before the Truth

When we read what Scripture says about falsehood, we must not stop after identifying false pastors and false believers. We must return again to ourselves. A pastor should ask himself: “Am I claiming that something is God’s will when God has not said it?” “Am I changing the Word for the sake of church growth or my own reputation?” “Am I avoiding a message that must be preached simply because people do not want to hear it?” Believers should also ask: “Am I seeking only the messages I want to hear?” “Do I welcome messages that comfort me while rejecting messages that rebuke me?” “Am I relying more on a preacher who tells me what I want to hear than on the Word of God?” And in our homes and workplaces, we should also ask: “Am I altering the facts to hide my mistakes?” “Am I explaining promises differently for my own benefit?” “Am I shifting the blame for my wrongdoing onto someone else?” Emptying falsehood is not a movement to expose the lies of other people. It is first bringing the falsehood within ourselves into the light of God’s Word and emptying it.

Sincere Faith Brings Even Its Doubts Honestly Before God

In 2 Timothy 1:5, Paul speaks of the “sincere faith” in Timothy. Sincere faith does not mean a faith that never wavers. Nor does it mean that only those who have no fear or doubt possess true faith. Rather, sincere faith is faith that honestly brings even its own weakness before God. If we are struggling to believe, we do not need to say, “I am not afraid at all,” simply to appear to others as though we have strong faith. If we are struggling, we can say that we are struggling. If we are afraid, we can confess that we are afraid. If doubts arise, we can bring even those doubts to God. And there, in that very place, we can once again hold on to the promises of God. Abraham’s faith was not confidence in his own ability. Romans 4:21 says that he was “fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised.” True faith is not self-confidence that says: “I can do it.” It is trust in God that says: “I cannot do it, but God is faithful.” Therefore, sincere faith is not faith that tries to appear strong. It is faith that acknowledges its own weakness and yet holds on to the faithfulness of God.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Falsehood”

How, then, can we continue to empty falsehood from our lives at home, in the church, and in the workplace? Falsehood often takes root in the heart not by suddenly beginning with a major lie, but through repeated small compromises. Therefore, we need to examine ourselves daily before the Word of God and train ourselves to choose the truth even in small matters. The following five practices can be put into practice in our daily lives.

1. Make the Word of God the Standard of Truth

My thoughts and feelings are not always right. Even something I desperately desire may be different from the will of God. Therefore, I must not place my thoughts above the Word of God but place them under the Word. Pastors, in particular, must be careful not to speak too easily as though their own thoughts were the will of God. When preaching, they must first examine what the biblical text actually says and must not force their own ideas into Scripture. Believers also should not accept something unconditionally simply because a famous person said it. They should develop the habit of examining it through Scripture. Making the Word of God, rather than human words, the standard of truth is the first step in emptying falsehood.

2. Tell the Facts as They Are, Even in Small Matters

Falsehood begins with small compromises. We may intentionally leave out information that is unfavorable to us, alter a story slightly to reduce our responsibility, or exaggerate the facts in order to make a good impression on someone. But a truthful person does not change the facts even when the truth is unfavorable to him or her. In the home, do not make excuses when you have done wrong. You should be able to say: “I was wrong.” At work, do not shift the blame to someone else in order to hide your own mistake. In business, do not reinterpret contracts and promises in a way that favors you. Choose honesty even when it costs you something.

3. Verify the Facts Before Passing Along Something About Another Person

Creating a lie yourself is not the only sin. Passing along something you have not verified as though it were true can also cause great harm to another person. If you hear something negative about someone, do not immediately pass it along to others. First ask: “Is this true?” “Have I verified it myself?” “Is it really necessary for me to pass this along?” Especially within a church community, a rumor can seriously damage a person’s faith, family, and reputation. If you love the truth, verify before you speak. If you cannot verify something, do not carelessly treat it as fact.

4. Maintain Honesty and Transparency in the Workplace and in Business

One of the most practical settings in which we must empty falsehood is the workplace, where money and profit are involved. We must not change the meaning of a contract in order to gain a little more profit, hide important facts, or take advantage of what another person does not know in order to obtain an unfair benefit. Keep what you have promised. Acknowledge what you have done wrong. Take responsibility for what is yours to bear. Sometimes honesty may seem to bring an immediate loss. But for a believer, faithfulness before God is more important than success. Do not abandon the truth in order to gain a profit. When maintaining the truth requires giving up a profit, trust God.

5. When Your Wrongdoing Is Exposed, Choose Repentance Rather Than Excuses

Falsehood produces another lie in order to conceal wrongdoing. At first, we may lie to hide a small mistake, but then another lie becomes necessary to protect the first lie. Therefore, when your wrongdoing is exposed, do not add another lie in an attempt to protect yourself. Acknowledge it. Apologize. If necessary, make it right. And repent before God. Acknowledging your wrongdoing is not shameful. Rather, knowing that you have done wrong and yet continuing to hide it and protect yourself through lies draws the soul into deeper bondage. Being able to repent is grace.

However, we must not think that these five practices alone can remove all falsehood from our hearts. We need the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit. Falsehood does not stop with deceiving other people; it can deceive even ourselves. We may mistake our own desires for the will of God, and we may believe our own thoughts to be the truth. Therefore, every day we must ask the Holy Spirit to shine the light of the Word into our hearts. We can pray: “Lord, show me the falsehood within me. Do not let me hide or alter the truth in order to protect my own interests or save face. Do not let me seek only the messages

I want to hear, but help me stand honestly before Your Word. Keep me from claiming that my own thoughts are Your will, and as one entrusted with Your Word, help me proclaim Your Word faithfully. In my home, church, and workplace, help me choose the truth even when it costs me something. When I do wrong, help me acknowledge it and repent rather than make excuses. Empty my heart of falsehood and fill it with the truth of Christ.”

Emptying falsehood does not merely mean being careful with our words. Emptying falsehood means abandoning a life in which we create the truth we want and instead placing ourselves under the truth of God. It means not altering the facts for our own benefit, not changing the Word in order to gain people’s applause, and not sacrificing another person in order to hide our own wrongdoing. A pastor must not turn his own words into the Word of God. Believers must not place human words above the Word of God. In the home, we must choose honesty over excuses. In the workplace, we must choose truth over profit. In the church, we must verify facts rather than follow rumors. And when we have done wrong, rather than protecting ourselves through falsehood, we must repent before the cross. The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to empty the place in our hearts that falsehood has occupied and fill that place with Jesus Christ, who is the Truth. Jesus said: “I am the way and the truth and the life.”

Therefore, the ultimate purpose of emptying falsehood is not simply to become “a person who does not lie.” It is to become a person who loves Christ, who is the Truth, and lives truthfully in His Word. Falsehood changes the truth in order to protect itself, but faith entrusts itself to God and chooses the truth. Falsehood fears people’s reactions, but sincere faith considers God’s gaze more important. Falsehood hides its wrongdoing, but the gospel leads us to acknowledge our sin and hold on to the grace of the cross. Therefore, every day we must ask ourselves: “Am I speaking the truth right now?” “Am I receiving the Word of God as it is?” “Do I love the truth more than my own interests?” And whenever we discover falsehood within ourselves, we must not hide it but bring it to the cross. Emptying falsehood one by one and filling that place with the truth of Christ—**this is the path of “emptying falsehood” that we must walk every day in our homes, churches, and workplaces.**

Chapter 8:

Emptying “Hatred”

In the previous chapter, we examined how we must empty ourselves of “falsehood,” which hides or alters the truth for our own benefit. Now, in Chapter 8, we will examine another sin that deeply destroys our hearts and relationships: “hatred.” As we go through life, we are wounded. Sometimes we are betrayed by those close to us. Sometimes we experience injustice or feel that we have not been loved. At times, someone’s words or actions stir deep anger within us.

Being wounded is not itself a sin. Feeling pain and anger when we have been treated unjustly can be a natural response. The problem is how we deal with that wound and anger. If we continue holding on to the wound, hating the other person, wishing for that person’s downfall, and nurturing the desire to repay them for what they have done to us, hatred will eventually begin to rule our hearts. First John 3:15 says, “Whoever hates his brother is a murderer.” Even if we have not physically killed anyone, if in our hearts we continually condemn and curse another person and desire that person’s misfortune, God does not take such a heart lightly. Therefore, emptying hatred does not mean forcing ourselves to eliminate our emotions. It means bringing our wounds and anger before God and emptying them so that they do not become the masters of our hearts.

Cain and Abel: The Tragedy of a Man Who Failed to Empty His Hatred

One of the earliest biblical accounts showing the terrible consequences of hatred is the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis 4. Cain and Abel each brought an offering to God. God accepted Abel and his offering, but He did not accept Cain and his offering. Cain became extremely angry, and his face fell. God knew Cain’s heart. He warned him that sin was crouching at the door, that sin desired him, but that he must rule over it. Cain, however, did not receive God’s warning. Instead of examining his own heart, he looked at Abel. Instead of dealing with his own problem before God, he directed his anger toward his younger brother. Eventually, the hatred that had grown in his heart led to murder. Here we discover an important characteristic of hatred. Hatred does not suddenly become fully formed in a single day. At first, it may be

a small hurt or disappointment. When that hurt accumulates over time, it can become resentment. When resentment is continually harbored, it becomes anger; and when anger is not emptied, it can harden into hatred. Eventually, hatred begins to control our words and actions. Therefore, hatred must be dealt with while it is still small. When hurt and anger arise in our hearts, we should not neglect them by saying, “It is nothing.” We must examine them before God. We may not always be able to prevent a seed of hatred from entering our hearts, but we must not allow that seed to take root and grow.

Hatred Grows into the Desire for Revenge

In Genesis 27, after Jacob received the blessing of his father Isaac, Esau resolved in his heart to kill his younger brother. His wound became hatred, and his hatred developed into a desire for revenge. When we are wounded, similar thoughts may arise within us: **“I want to pay that person back in the same way.” “I hope that person suffers as much as I have suffered.” “Someday I want to make that person pay for what was done.”** Such thoughts can arise. But at that moment, we must remember an important truth: I am not the final judge. I can call wrongdoing what it is. When necessary, a person may need to be held accountable. If a crime or violence has occurred, appropriate protection and legal procedures may be necessary. Forgiveness does not mean abandoning justice. However, I must not hold on to the authority to become that person’s final judge and personally take revenge. Romans 12:19 tells us to leave vengeance to God. Emptying hatred does not mean pretending that the wrongdoing never happened. It means emptying the desire to become the judge who must personally repay the wrong and entrusting the matter to God’s justice.

Comparison and Jealousy Can Grow into Hatred

In the life of King Saul, we can also see how hatred grows. When David returned after defeating Goliath, the people sang praises of David that exalted him above Saul. Saul took those words to heart, and the way he looked at David changed. Comparison became jealousy, and jealousy eventually developed into hatred. Finally, Saul tried to kill David. We may feel uncomfortable when someone else receives more recognition than we do. When another person’s children seem to be doing better than ours, when another pastor’s church is growing more than ours, when a coworker is promoted before us, or when someone other than us receives praise, comparison and jealousy may arise in our hearts. If those emotions are left untouched, we may eventually begin to dislike the person himself. We may come to hate someone not because that person has done anything wrong, but simply because we do not like seeing that person prosper. Therefore, when we discover hatred toward another person, we should ask: **“Do I hate this person because**

he or she has truly done something wrong?” “Or do I hate this person because I am comparing myself and becoming jealous?” We must examine ourselves honestly before these questions.

Hatred Does Not Remain Only in the Heart

In Matthew 15:19, Jesus said that evil thoughts, murder, adultery, false testimony, and slander come out of the heart. Sin grows in the heart before it appears in our actions. Therefore, when anger rises, it is important not to speak or act immediately. Proverbs 16:32 says that one who is slow to anger is better than a warrior, and one who rules his spirit is better than one who captures a city. When our emotions become intense, we need to stop for a moment. We do not have to reach a conclusion immediately. We do not have to send that text message or email right away. When we are angry, we do not have to pour out everything we want to say to our spouse or children. We should wait until our anger subsides and first examine our hearts before God. **“Why am I this angry?” “What do I really want?” “Do I want this person to be restored, or do I want to return the hurt that I received?”** Simply examining our hearts in this way can help prevent anger from growing into hatred. Stopping when anger rises is not weakness. It is the strength to govern oneself.

Hatred Can Destroy a Family

One of the places where hatred leaves the deepest wounds is the family. Because family members are closest to one another, they can love one another most deeply, but they can also wound one another most deeply. The account of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 shows how devastating wounds and hatred can grow out of self-centered desire. What Amnon felt toward Tamar was not true love. It was lust seeking to satisfy his own desire. After violating Tamar by force, he came to hate her intensely. True love seeks the good of the other person. Self-centered desire, however, turns the other person into an object for satisfying one's own needs. Amnon's sin did not end there. His actions created a deep wound in David's family and eventually led to Absalom's revenge. One person's sin and hatred produced further hatred and revenge. Hatred does not remain isolated. Hatred that is not emptied within a family can be passed on to a spouse and sometimes even to the children.

Do Not Pass the Wounds Between Husband and Wife on to Your Children

In Genesis 29, Leah experienced the pain of not being loved by her husband Jacob. Even in the names she gave her children, we can glimpse her longing to be loved by her husband. A deep wound can

develop in our hearts because we did not receive the love and affirmation we desired from our spouse. But we must not try to fill that wound through our children. If, in the midst of marital conflict, we try to make our children take our side, continually tell them about our spouse's faults, or demand excessive emotional comfort from them because we did not receive it from our spouse, the children can be drawn into the parents' conflict. Children do not exist to fill their parents' loneliness. As much as possible, problems between husband and wife should be dealt with by the couple before God. Do not pass your resentment toward your spouse on to your children. Do not give your children reasons to hate their other parent. We must make sure that the wounds we received do not become wounds for the next generation. Emptying hatred is not only for the sake of our own hearts; it is also an act of protecting the next generation.

Joseph Was Hated, but He Did Not Live by Hatred

In Genesis 37, Joseph's brothers saw that their father loved Joseph more than he loved them, and they hated him. Comparison produced jealousy, and jealousy grew into hatred. Eventually, the brothers threw Joseph into a pit and sold him to merchants traveling to Egypt. Joseph was abandoned by his own family. He had more than enough reason to hate. Yet what is remarkable is that Joseph did not allow the evil his brothers had done to him to become the controlling center of his life. Genesis 39:21 tells us that even in prison, the Lord was with Joseph. People abandoned Joseph, but God did not abandon him. This faith is important. Being hated by people does not mean that we have been abandoned by God. Someone misunderstanding me does not mean that God misunderstands me. Someone doing evil to me does not mean that person has the final word over my life. Years later, Joseph met the brothers who had sold him. At that point, he had the power to take revenge. But he did not. In Genesis 50:20, he said to them: **"You intended evil against me, but God turned it for good."** Joseph did not say that the evil his brothers committed was not evil. He clearly said, "You intended evil against me." But at the same time, he looked to the sovereignty of God, who was greater than their evil. This is a very important faith for emptying hatred. Forgiveness does not mean calling evil good. It means believing in God, who is greater than evil.

When You Are Hated, Do Not Answer Hatred with Hatred

Jesus said that His disciples may be hated by the world. In John 15, the Lord said that because the world hated Him, His disciples would also be hated. Therefore, the fact that someone hates me does not necessarily mean that I am walking on the wrong path. What matters, however, is what I choose when I am hated. If another person hates me and I begin to hate that person in return, I am ultimately receiving into my own heart the hatred that person has thrown at me. Hebrews 12:3 tells us to consider Jesus, who

endured such opposition from sinners against Himself. If, when we are hated, we look only at the other person, our hearts can gradually harden. But when we look to Jesus, who endured for us on the cross, we can choose another way. It is the way of not repaying evil with evil, insult with insult, or hatred with hatred.

Forgiveness Means Not Allowing Hatred to Rule My Heart

Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who sinned against him. Jesus told him to forgive not merely seven times, but seventy times seven. This does not mean that we should calculate the number of times we forgive. It means that we must learn to live a life of continual forgiveness. But we must not misunderstand forgiveness. Forgiveness does not mean saying that what the other person did was not wrong. It does not mean acting as though we were never wounded. It does not mean concealing a crime. It does not mean that trust must be restored immediately. Nor does it mean that every relationship must necessarily return to exactly the way it was before. When necessary, healthy boundaries must be established. If there is repeated violence or serious harm, it may be necessary to secure safety and seek appropriate help. We also need to distinguish forgiveness from reconciliation. I can begin forgiveness before God, but full reconciliation in a relationship may require genuine repentance and change from the other person. Therefore, forgiveness does not justify the other person's sin. It means entrusting the final judgment of that person to God and refusing to allow hatred and revenge to rule my heart.

The Greatest Example of Forgiveness Is the Cross

The deepest place where hatred is emptied is ultimately the cross. Jesus did not curse those who crucified Him. Instead, He prayed: **"Father, forgive them."** The cross shows us what kind of love we ourselves have received. We were not saved because we first loved God. Nor did Christ die because we were worthy of God's love. While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Therefore, the strength to forgive others ultimately comes from realizing how greatly we ourselves have been forgiven. If we think only, **"Does that person deserve to be forgiven?"** forgiveness becomes difficult. But before the cross, the question changes: **"How much have I myself been forgiven by God?"** When we remember that grace, we can gradually empty the hatred we have been clutching. Because I am one who has been forgiven, I learn how to forgive others.

When Hatred Is Emptied, Love Begins to Flow Again

Proverbs 10:12 says: **“Hatred stirs up strife, but love covers all offenses.”** Covering offenses does not mean hiding sin or condoning wrongdoing. It means that we do not hold on to another person’s weaknesses and failures and use them as tools to exalt ourselves. Love does not store up past wrongs and bring them out again as weapons every time there is a conflict. Love remembers the grace God has shown us and seeks to extend grace to others. Therefore, emptying hatred must begin with those closest to us. Examine the old hurts you have stored up against your spouse. Bring the wounds you carry toward your parents before God. Examine the competitiveness and resentment you hold toward your brothers and sisters. Bring the wounds you received in church and your disappointment with people before the Lord. Tell God about your anger toward the person who has made your workplace difficult. Do not hide your hatred. But do not continue living while holding on to it either. You must empty it before God, one thing at a time. And you must fill that emptied place with the love of Christ.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Hatred”

How, then, can we actually empty hatred in our homes, churches, and workplaces? Hatred may not disappear completely through a single decision. The older the wound, the more it may return to our thoughts, and something we believed we had already forgiven may hurt us again. When that happens, we do not need to think that we have failed. We can bring it to God again. Emptying hatred is not so much a one-time emotional decision as it is an ongoing process of entrusting our wounds and anger to God and choosing love each time they rise again.

1. When You Discover a Seed of Hatred, Deal with It Immediately Before God

Do not take small hurts lightly. If you keep thinking about someone and your anger toward that person continues to grow, bring that emotion before God. **“Lord, I hate that person.” “I am still angry whenever I think about what happened.” “I even have thoughts of wanting something bad to happen to that person.”** Honestly acknowledge the condition of your heart before God. Pretending that hatred is not there is not emptying it. You must first acknowledge that hatred exists before you can empty it.

2. When Your Anger Is Intense, Do Not Speak or Act Immediately

When you are angry, you must be careful with your words and actions. Do not immediately send a text message or email. Do not pour out every thought that comes to mind on your spouse. Do not unleash your anger on your children. At work, do not make important decisions while you are angry. Stop for a moment and pray. If necessary, step away and give yourself time for your heart to settle. Then speak the truth in love. Suppressing anger and refusing to be ruled by anger are not the same thing. Do not deny your emotions, but do not allow your emotions to determine your words and actions.

3. Entrust Your Desire for Revenge to God

Empty the thought that you personally must repay the other person for what they have done. Holding someone appropriately accountable is different from taking revenge. If justice is necessary, deal with the matter through legitimate means. But do not make destroying the other person the goal of your

life. Pray: **“God, I will not become the judge. I entrust this matter to Your justice.”** An important moment in emptying hatred comes when I return to God the judge’s seat that I had been holding on to for myself.

4. Do Not Pass Family Wounds on to Other Family Members

Do not release the wounds you received from your spouse onto your children. Do not make your children take your side. Do not compare one child with another and show favoritism. Examine your own heart so that you do not repeat toward your spouse the wounds you received from your parents. Every family needs someone who will stop the flow of hatred. Do not say: **“My parents lived this way too, so there is nothing I can do.”** In Christ, we can make a different choice. Refusing to pass the wounds I received on to the next person and stopping the flow of hatred in my own generation is also an important practice of emptying.

5. Pray for the Person Who Hurt You

Jesus told us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. At first, that prayer may not come naturally from our hearts. Pray anyway. You may pray honestly: **“Lord, I still do not have the desire to bless this person. But please rule my heart.”** Praying for someone does not mean that you must immediately become close to that person again. But you can practice releasing the heart that continually curses that person and entrusting the person to God. A prayer that begins in tears may one day become a prayer of compassion. Yet even these five practices cannot be accomplished by our strength alone. Because hatred is connected to deep wounds, it may not immediately disappear simply because we decide, “From now on, I will not hate.”

We need the help of the Holy Spirit. When the Holy Spirit shines His light on our hearts through the Word, we must not hide our hatred but acknowledge it. And we must remember again the forgiveness we received at the cross. We can pray: **“Lord, show me the hatred within me. Do not let me hide from You the anger, resentment, and desire for revenge that rise within me when I think about the person who wounded me. Help me empty the desire to become the judge and entrust all judgment to You. Do not let me pass the wounds I received on to my spouse, my children, or other people, and do not let me repay hatred with hatred. Help me deeply understand the love of the Lord who forgave me at the cross, and fill my heart, emptied of hatred, with the love of Christ.”**

Emptying hatred does not mean living as though we were never wounded. Nor does it mean saying that wrongdoing was not wrong. Emptying hatred means refusing to give the person who wounded me the position of master over my heart. It means refusing to allow my heart to remain imprisoned for the rest of my life by anger and resentment because of another person's wrongdoing. It means emptying the desire to become the judge and entrusting the matter to God's justice. And it means filling the emptied place with Christ's love and forgiveness. We must empty Cain's hatred. We must empty Esau's desire for revenge. We must empty Saul's jealousy and hatred. Like Joseph, we must look to the hand of God, which is greater than human evil. And above all, we must look to Jesus, who on the cross forgave even those who hated Him. Hatred says, **"I must pay them back."** Faith confesses, **"I will entrust it to God."** Hatred makes us live holding on to our wounds, **but love makes us live holding on to the cross.**

Therefore, every day we must ask ourselves: **"Whom am I still hating?" "What wound am I unable to release and keep replaying in my mind?" "Is there someone whom I want to judge and personally make pay?" "Am I passing the wounds I received on to my spouse or my children?"** Bring that name and that wound before God. And empty them one by one. The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to fill the place emptied of hatred with the love of Christ. Then our homes, churches, and workplaces can become not channels through which hatred flows, but channels through which the love of Christ flows. **This is the path of "emptying hatred" that we must walk every day.**

Chapter 9:

Emptying “Evil Thoughts”

In the previous chapter, we examined how we must empty the hatred that has taken root in our hearts and fill that place with the love and forgiveness of Christ. Now we want to go one step deeper. We want to look at the “thoughts” within our hearts—the thoughts that arise before our words and actions begin, thoughts that may not be readily visible to other people but that God sees.

We have countless thoughts every day. From the moment we open our eyes in the morning until we go to bed at night, thoughts of judging and comparing others, feelings of hurt and hatred, greed and anxiety, pride and envy, and the desire to be recognized continually pass through our hearts. But here we need to make an important distinction. There is a difference between a thought suddenly coming to mind and accepting that thought into our hearts and continuing to hold on to it. Regardless of our will, an undesirable thought may suddenly come to mind. A thought of hating someone may briefly pass through our minds, or feelings of jealousy toward another person may arise. What matters is not condemning ourselves merely because such a thought has appeared, but how we deal with that thought. If we seize a passing thought, repeatedly dwell on it, nurture it in our hearts, enjoy it, and begin to justify it, that thought will increasingly dominate our hearts. And thoughts that grow in the heart eventually influence our words and actions. Therefore, emptying evil thoughts does not mean becoming a person who has no thoughts at all. It means that when a thought that does not please God enters our minds, we do not embrace and nurture it in our hearts, but discern it before the Word of God and bring it into submission to Christ.

Evil Thoughts Begin in the Heart

When Jesus spoke about what defiles a person, He pointed to the depths of the human heart. In Matthew 15:19, the Lord said, “For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, and slander.” In Mark 7:21–23 as well, Jesus said that various forms of evil come from within a person—that is, from the heart. We tend to think of sin primarily in terms of actions. Did I lie? Did I steal something that belonged to someone else? Did I hurt another person? Did I commit a

sexually immoral act? Of course, our actions matter. But Jesus looked deeper than our actions. The Lord looks at the heart that produced those actions. James 1:15 tells us that after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and when sin is fully grown, it gives birth to death. Sin does not suddenly appear as an action one day. If we continue to harbor a thought that has entered our hearts, it can grow into desire; and if we continue to follow that desire, it can eventually appear in our actions. Therefore, emptying evil thoughts means not merely correcting actions that have already appeared, but examining before God even the direction of the heart that produces those actions.

We Cannot Hide Even Our Thoughts from God

One reason evil thoughts are dangerous is that they are not easily visible to other people. We can hate someone in our hearts while smiling at that person. We can be jealous while saying congratulations. We can hope that someone will fail while outwardly acting as though we care about that person. People cannot know everything in our hearts. But we cannot hide it from God. In Matthew 9:4, when the scribes were judging Jesus within their hearts, the Lord knew their thoughts and said, “Why do you entertain evil thoughts in your hearts?” They had not yet spoken those thoughts aloud. Yet Jesus already knew what they were thinking. This raises some very important questions for us: “What do I think about when no one else knows?” “Am I repeatedly entertaining and enjoying thoughts in my heart that I could never tell other people about?” “How closely does the person I appear to be on the outside correspond to the heart that God sees?” True holiness does not end with appearing to be a good person before others. It means bringing before God even those places in our hearts that no one else can see.

Evil Thoughts Can Also Appear in Religious Forms

Evil thoughts do not always appear as obvious forms of sin. Sometimes they can even look like religious zeal. “I have greater faith than that person.” “I know the Bible better than that person.” “That person’s faith is wrong.” “I am right, and that person is wrong.” These may appear to be spiritual judgments, but pride, condemnation, and a sense of superiority may be hiding beneath them. Jesus saw even into the hearts of those who appeared outwardly religious and devout. In Matthew 22:18, Jesus knew the evil intentions of those who were trying to test Him. Therefore, we must not confuse zeal for God with self-righteousness. Knowing much about the Word of God must never become a reason to look down on others. Having lived the Christian life for many years does not give us the right to judge another person’s faith carelessly. The more we know the Word, the more we should become people who first place ourselves before the Word rather than people who judge others.

We Must Empty the “Calculations” Within Our Hearts

Among evil thoughts, there is one kind that is very familiar to us: calculating the value of people within our hearts. Luke 9:46 records that an argument arose among the disciples about which of them would be the greatest. The Greek word used here, *dialogismos* (διαλογισμός), is related to thought, reasoning, and judgments made within the heart. Before the argument ever came out of the disciples' mouths, calculations had already begun within their hearts. “Who is more important?” “Who receives more recognition?” “Why is that person ahead of me?” We, too, sometimes make calculations in our hearts when we interact with people. “I have done this much for that person. What has that person done for me?” “Why should I be the first one to yield?” “How will being close to that person benefit me?” “If I help this person, what will I get in return?” When such thoughts dominate our hearts, we begin to see people not as persons to be loved but as objects whose profit and loss must be calculated. If someone treats me well, I like that person. If someone is useful to me, I draw close to that person. If someone recognizes me, I love that person. But if someone fails to meet my expectations, I close the door of my heart. Jesus, however, did not tell us to calculate people. He told us to love them. Emptying evil thoughts, therefore, is not merely removing a few bad thoughts. It also means emptying the heart that seeks to calculate and evaluate people according to how much they benefit me.

Love Does Not Keep a Ledger of Wrongs in the Heart

First Corinthians 13:5 says of love that it “keeps no record of wrongs.” The Greek word *logizetai* (λογίζεται), translated here in the sense of “keeping a record” or “reckoning,” carries the meaning of calculating, counting, or keeping account. Thus, this verse contains the idea of not continually recording and calculating another person's wrongs in the ledger of our hearts. People remember wounds for a long time. “That person did that to me back then.” “Do you know how much I suffered because of that?” “This time I am definitely going to pay that person back.” In this way, we can record past wrongs in the ledger of our hearts and then pull them out again whenever conflict arises. But love does not do that. This does not mean that we must force ourselves to forget our wounds. It does not mean pretending that a wrong never happened. Nor does it mean covering up a problem that needs to be resolved. It means that we do not use our wounds as a ledger for continually condemning and attacking the other person. Proverbs 17:9 says that whoever covers an offense seeks love. Love does not erase memory; it refuses to use memory as a weapon of revenge.

Do Not Rank People in Your Heart

Calculating people in our hearts can lead to discrimination. James 2:1–4 rebukes the practice of giving a good seat to a wealthy person in the church while pushing a poor person into an inferior place. Why does this happen? It happens because instead of seeing people as those created in the image of God, we evaluate them according to how useful they are to us. An invisible ranking system can develop within our own hearts: “This person has a lot of money.” “This person has influence.” “Being close to this person will benefit me.” “That person cannot do anything for me.” But God does not show favoritism based on outward appearance. Therefore, even in the church, we must empty the heart that treats people differently according to their wealth, occupation, education, social position, or influence. The same is true in the workplace. If we are kind only to people in higher positions while treating those beneath us carelessly or disrespectfully, we need to examine our hearts. The same is true in the family. We must ask ourselves whether we value the child who performs well more highly while comparing a child who struggles with other children. A person’s value is not determined by how useful that person is to me. When we empty the heart that calculates people, we finally begin to see them as people created in the image of God.

We Must Guard Against the Heart That Tries to Calculate Even God

The habit of calculating people can eventually enter our relationship with God as well. “I prayed this much. Why has God not given me what I asked for?” “I have served this much. Why do I still have difficulties in my life?” “I have given this much to God. Shouldn’t God give me this much blessing in return?” When such thoughts dominate our hearts, even faith becomes a transaction. Simon in Acts 8 tried to obtain the power of God with money. Rather than receiving God’s grace as a gift, he thought of it as something he could possess and use. First Timothy 6 also warns against the attitude of regarding godliness as a means of financial gain. We, too, must ask ourselves: “Do I love God, or am I trying to use God to obtain what I want?” “Am I thankful for God’s grace itself, or am I thankful only when God gives me what I want?” When we begin calculating grace, gratitude disappears. When we calculate love, service becomes a transaction. When we calculate faith, we can even turn God into a means of fulfilling our own desires. Therefore, before God, we must learn trust rather than calculation.

Thoughts We Harbor Can Grow into Actions

The Bible gives us many examples of thoughts and desires eventually becoming actual actions. In Joshua 7, Achan saw the spoils. He coveted them. And eventually he took them and hid them. At first, it was a desire within his heart. But because he did not deal with that desire, it became an action. The same was true of Judas Iscariot. John 13:2 records that the devil had put into Judas’s heart the thought of betraying

Jesus. Later, that intention to betray Jesus became an actual action. This is why we must not take our thoughts lightly. Second Corinthians 10:5 tells us to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.” This does not mean that every thought is sinful from the very moment it appears. What matters is whether we will seize that thought and follow it or bring it into submission to Christ. Thoughts may come to us, but whether we give those thoughts a place in our hearts is something we must discern before the Word of God.

When Evil Thoughts Are Left Unchecked, Our Discernment Becomes Blurred

If we continually harbor evil thoughts, our sensitivity to sin can gradually become dull. Something that initially troubled our conscience may later begin to feel perfectly normal. At first, we may recognize that judging another person is wrong, but after repeatedly doing so, we may justify ourselves by saying, “I was only telling the truth.” Something we initially recognized as greed may eventually be repackaged as “simply wanting to succeed.” A feeling that began as jealousy may be explained away by saying, “The problem is with that person.” Sin deceives our thoughts in this way. That is why Proverbs 4:23 says, “Above all else, guard your heart.” Believers must not take their thoughts lightly. “What have I been continually thinking about lately?” “Thoughts about whom are dominating my heart?” “Are these thoughts drawing me closer to God, or are they pulling me toward hatred, pride, and greed?” We need to ask ourselves these questions often.

Open the Secret Room of Your Heart to God

There is a secret room within our hearts where no one else can enter. Our families may not know what is there. Our spouses may not know. The members of our churches may not know. There, we freely imagine, judge, and desire. That is why the true spiritual battle takes place where human eyes cannot see. We may appear godly before others while condemning someone within our hearts. We may bless a person with our lips while inwardly hoping that person will fail. But God sees even into that secret room. Therefore, we must open its door to God. Do not hide. Do not make excuses. Do not rationalize. Pray as David prayed: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Ps. 139:23–24). This is not a prayer intended to condemn ourselves. It is a prayer asking God to help us honestly examine our hearts in His light.

Fill the Place Emptied of Evil Thoughts with the Word

It is not enough merely to empty evil thoughts. The goal is not to leave our hearts empty. Romans 12:2 tells us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Philippians 4:8 exhorts us to think about whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and worthy of praise. The Bible does not simply tell us, “Do not think bad thoughts.” It also teaches us what we should think about. Therefore, when hatred rises within you, think about forgiveness. When jealousy rises, give thanks for the grace God has given to that person. When pride rises, remember that everything you have received is grace. When you want to condemn someone, remember that you, too, are a person who needs God’s mercy. When greed rises, count the grace you have already received. Above all, think about Jesus Christ. The best way to empty evil thoughts is not to struggle to think about nothing at all, but to allow the Word of God to renew our thoughts. We must allow the mind of Christ to govern our thoughts.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Evil Thoughts”

How, then, can we empty evil thoughts in our everyday lives? Because thoughts are invisible, it is easy to leave them unattended. Yet training ourselves to govern our thoughts is an important starting point for transforming our words and actions in the home, the church, and the workplace. We can put the following five practices into action in our lives.

1. When an Evil Thought Arises, Practice “Stop–Discern–Pray–Replace.”

When an evil thought arises, do not automatically follow it. First, stop. Ask yourself, “What kind of thought is entering my heart right now?” Recognize the thought. Then discern it. “Does this thought agree with the Word of God?” “Is this thought leading toward love, truth, and holiness, or toward hatred, pride, and greed?” Then pray: “Lord, do not let me harbor and nurture this thought in my heart. Bring my thoughts into submission to Christ.” Finally, replace it. Do not merely try to force the evil thought out of your mind. Replace it with a thought that agrees with the Word. Choose forgiveness in place of hatred, blessing in place of envy, humility in place of pride, gratitude and generosity in place of greed, and mercy in place of condemnation. Emptying evil thoughts does not mean forcibly eliminating thoughts. It means discerning them before the Word of God and replacing them with thoughts that conform to the will of Christ.

2. In the Family, Do Not Record Past Wrongs in the Ledger of Your Heart.

Within the family, we know one another’s weaknesses better than anyone else does. Therefore, when conflict arises, it is easy to bring up past wrongs. “You did the same thing before.” “You were exactly like this several years ago.” “I still remember what happened then.” Problems that need to be resolved should be discussed honestly. Nor do we have to force ourselves to forget our wounds. But do not bring up something you have already forgiven every time you argue and use it as a weapon to attack the other person. Do not continually record your spouse’s wrongs in the ledger of your heart. Do not define who your child is today by the mistakes that child made in the past. And do not compare the weaknesses of one family member with another family member. Love does not keep an account of wrongs. Emptying our

thoughts in the family does not mean forgetting every wrong committed by our family members. It means emptying the heart that clings to those wrongs in order to condemn them.

3. In the Church and Community, Do Not Rank People in Your Heart.

Do not judge a person's value according to wealth, occupation, education, or influence. Do not be kind only to people who can benefit you. Do not judge a person's entire character and faith as evil merely because that person disagrees with you. Do not prejudge people merely because you have heard rumors about them. Do not readily join conversations that focus on other people's weaknesses. Especially in the church, we must guard against the heart that regards one person as spiritually superior and another as inferior on the basis of their faith. We are all people who need the grace of God. The gospel does not divide people into ranks. It teaches us to see one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

4. In the Workplace, Put Honesty and Love Before Profit and Loss.

Calculation is necessary in the workplace. In business, we must calculate costs and profits and make responsible decisions. Therefore, not every kind of calculation is evil. The problem is the heart that is willing to abandon honesty, justice, and love in order to gain profit. Do not hide important facts in a contract. Do not exploit a weakness the other party does not know about in order to gain an unfair advantage. Do not spread false statements in order to bring down a competitor. Do not take credit for the accomplishments of a coworker. When making an important decision, do not ask only, "How much will this benefit me?" Also ask, "Is this honest before God?" The believer's workplace is also a place where we live before God.

5. At the End of Each Day, Examine the Thoughts of Your Heart Before God.

Before going to bed, take even a brief moment to look back over your heart during the day. "Whom did I judge today?" "Toward whom did I harbor hurt feelings?" "Was I jealous of someone else's success?" "Did I treat people according to how useful they were to me?" "Was I tempted to compromise honesty for my own benefit?" "Have I been holding on to thoughts that do not please God in places where no one else can see?" Then pray the prayer of Psalm 139: "Search me, O God, and know my heart ... and lead me in the everlasting way." If you discover something wrong, repent. If there is someone you need to forgive, speak that person's name to God. If there is something that needs to be corrected, put it into action the next day. The habit of examining the thoughts of each day before God helps us place our thoughts under the

Word rather than allowing ourselves to be carried along by them. Yet we must not attempt to carry out all these practices by our willpower and effort alone. We are not people who can perfectly control our own thoughts.

We need the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must illuminate our hearts through the Word, enable us to discern which thoughts are pleasing to God, and renew our minds. Therefore, we can pray: “Lord, search my heart and my thoughts. Show me the evil thoughts within my heart that are invisible to other people but known to You. Do not let me hide or rationalize the thoughts by which I judge and calculate other people, hate and envy them, and seek only my own benefit. “When evil thoughts arise, help me not to seize and nurture them, but to discern them before Your Word and bring every thought into submission to Christ. “Help me put the Word of God before my own thoughts and seek the will of God above my own desires. “Fill my heart, emptied of evil thoughts, with Your Word and Your Spirit, and form the mind of Christ within me.” Emptying evil thoughts does not mean becoming a person who thinks no thoughts at all. Nor does it mean eliminating our capacity to think for ourselves. Emptying evil thoughts means refusing to allow my thoughts to become the master of my life and bringing every thought into submission to Christ. It means putting God’s Word before my own thoughts, seeking God’s will above my own desires, and following the mind of Christ rather than my own judgment. The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to fill the place emptied of evil thoughts with the Word of God, to live under the governing presence of the Holy Spirit, and to possess the mind of Christ.

Therefore, today again, we must examine our hearts. We must look at what thoughts are entering, which thoughts we are holding on to, and which thoughts are growing within our hearts. And when we discover thoughts that do not please God, we must not hide them. We must empty them before God. Fill that empty place with the Word. Fill it with the love of Christ. Entrust it to the governing presence of the Holy Spirit. When our thoughts change, our words change. When our words change, our actions change. And as our actions change, our lives also begin to change little by little. Evil thoughts insist, “My thoughts are right.” But faith confesses, “Even my thoughts must be examined before the Word of God.” Emptying evil thoughts and bringing every thought into submission to Christ—this is the path of “emptying evil thoughts” that we must walk every day.

Chapter 10:

Emptying “Sexual Immorality”

“Whoever commits adultery lacks understanding; the one who does so destroys his own soul. He will suffer wounds and dishonor, and his shame will not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32–33).

In the previous chapter, we examined the evil thoughts that take root in our hearts. Jesus looked not only at outward actions but also at the heart where those actions begin. Yet among the evil thoughts that settle in the heart, there is one that requires particular vigilance: a sexually immoral heart and lust.

Sexual sin does not suddenly appear as an action one day. When we continue to harbor in our hearts what we have seen with our eyes, allow our hearts to be drawn toward someone in whom we should not take such an interest, and repeatedly nurture wrongful desires, those desires can eventually lead to action. This is what happened with David. In 2 Samuel 11, David was walking on the roof of the royal palace when he saw a woman bathing. The woman was very beautiful. But David did not stop there. He sent someone to find out who she was. And even after learning that she was Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, he had her brought to him and committed adultery with her. David’s sin was not completed in a single moment. He saw. He became interested. He inquired about her. And finally, he acted upon his desire. Therefore, emptying sexual immorality does not simply mean refraining from the final act of adultery. To empty sexual immorality means emptying from our hearts the tendency to view another person as an object for satisfying our desires, and guarding our eyes, hearts, and bodies within the order of love established by God.

Jesus Looked at the Heart, Not Merely the Action

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Mt. 5:27–28). Jesus took the issue of adultery beyond the level of outward behavior and brought it into the realm of the heart. The fact that a person has not physically committed adultery does not necessarily mean that the heart is pure. Here, it is important to distinguish between simply recognizing

another person's beauty and looking at that person as an object of lust. The mere fact that we have looked at another person is not itself sin. Nor should sexual desire itself be regarded as inherently evil apart from the fact that God created human beings as male and female. The problem arises when we separate the sexuality God has given us from His will and order and use it as a means of satisfying our own desires. Sin begins to grow when we view another person not as a whole person but as an object for our desires, deliberately harbor lust toward that person, repeatedly enjoy it in our minds, and seek to cross the boundaries God has established. Therefore, Jesus' words are not simply telling us to be careful about our outward actions. They are telling us to examine even our eyes and our hearts before God.

Sexual Immorality Destroys Both Ourselves and Others

Proverbs 6 warns that the person who commits adultery ultimately destroys himself. Sexual sin is never merely a private matter. It can deeply wound a spouse. It can leave wounds in children. It can shake a family. It can also destroy trust within a church and a community. And once we begin hiding sin, other sins easily follow. We begin to lie. We hide our phones and messages. We conceal where we have been and what we have done. We may act as though nothing is wrong in front of others while living a separate, secret life. In this way, sexual immorality brings falsehood and hypocrisy along with it. That is why we must not take the beginning lightly. "What is wrong with looking just once?" "What does it matter if I only think about it in my heart?" "We are just close friends." "Nothing has happened yet." If we continue reassuring ourselves in this way, we may eventually find ourselves in a place we never imagined we would reach. One of the wisest ways to overcome sin is not to go all the way to the final moment and then try to resist, but to turn away from the path of sin at the very beginning.

We Must Guard Our Eyes and Our Hearts

First John 2:16 warns about "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." Our eyes influence our hearts. Therefore, what we look at matters. But sexual immorality does not always begin with the eyes. It may begin with loneliness. It may begin with the desire to be recognized and affirmed. It may begin when, amid dissatisfaction with one's spouse or conflict within the marriage, a person begins emotionally leaning on someone else. Lust may be nurtured through repeatedly viewing certain material on the internet, videos, or social media. Our hearts may also begin to move toward someone at work or at church as we develop an emotional intimacy that goes beyond what is appropriate. Therefore, we should not ask only: "What am I looking at?" We must also ask: "Toward whom is my heart turning right now?" "From whom am I seeking the intimacy that I should be seeking from my spouse?" "Whose

attention and affirmation are drawing my heart too strongly?” “What do I repeatedly look at and think about when I am alone?” We must examine ourselves honestly before these questions.

Do Not Trust Yourself Too Much in the Face of Temptation

Proverbs 7 portrays a person falling into sexual temptation. He goes near a dangerous place. He willingly enters a situation that he should avoid. Eventually, he listens to the words of temptation and follows them. Here we learn an important principle. Overcoming temptation does not mean walking into the middle of temptation and proving how strong our willpower is. Wisdom means avoiding what should be avoided. Do not look at what you should not look at. If something needs to be deleted, delete it. Do not visit places online that you should not visit. Do not continue unnecessary private communication. If a relationship is stirring your heart in the wrong direction, establish appropriate boundaries. If you repeatedly fall into sin during certain times or in certain places when you are alone, change that environment. “I am fine.” “I am a pastor, so I am fine.” “I have been a Christian for many years, so I can handle this much.” “We are only close friends.” This kind of self-confidence can actually be dangerous. It is wisdom to acknowledge our weakness. The person who fights sin is not the one who remains close to sin and boasts about his own strength, but the one who avoids the place of sin and draws near to God.

See People as Persons of Dignity, Not as Objects of Desire

One of the deepest problems of sexual immorality lies in the way we look at other people. God created human beings in His image. Therefore, another person’s body is not an object that I may freely look at, imagine, and use however I please. We should respect people of the opposite sex whom we meet at work. We should respect people of the opposite sex whom we meet at church. We should also remember that the people we see online are human beings created in the image of God. When we begin to view another person as an object of desire, that person’s personhood and dignity are pushed aside, and our own desire moves to the center. This is not love. Love seeks the good of the other person, but lust seeks to satisfy itself through the other person. Love respects the other person, but lust seeks to use the other person. Love honors boundaries, but lust seeks to cross them. Therefore, emptying sexual immorality is not merely suppressing sexual desire. It is restoring the way we see people so that we once again see them as persons.

Marriage Given by God Is a Beautiful Gift

The Bible does not teach that sexuality itself is dirty. God created male and female, and within the covenant of marriage He intended a husband and wife to love one another and become one flesh. Therefore, marital love and sexual intimacy within marriage are beautiful gifts from God. The problem arises when we take the gift God has given and separate it from God's will and order, using it for our own desires. Husbands and wives must not treat each other as tools for satisfying desire. They should love, respect, and care for one another. Even in sexual intimacy, love, responsibility, and mutual consideration are more important than one-sided demands. Marital intimacy must take place in love, not in possessiveness. The sexuality God has given is beautiful. But lust outside the boundaries God has established distorts that beautiful gift.

Do Not Compare Your Spouse with Someone Else

Proverbs 5:18 says, "Rejoice in the wife of your youth." A married person should treasure the spouse God has given and learn contentment and faithfulness within the covenant of marriage. But once comparison begins, contentment begins to weaken. "That person is more attractive than my spouse." "That person understands me better than my spouse." "That person listens to me better." "When I am with that person, I feel more appreciated." If we continue harboring such thoughts, our spouse's weaknesses will appear increasingly large, while the other person's strengths will appear increasingly attractive. And at some point, the heart may leave one's spouse before the body does. Therefore, marital faithfulness does not mean merely refraining from physical adultery. It means living faithfully toward one's spouse in heart, body, and relationship. Look again at your spouse's strengths. Express gratitude. Listen to one another. Cultivate intimacy. Speak honestly about each other's needs. If there are wounds, do not ignore them. Talk about them. Marriage is not a relationship that becomes healthy automatically. Love must be cared for.

Difficulties in Marriage Cannot Become a Reason for Adultery

Conflict can arise between husband and wife. Emotional distance can develop. There may be sexual difficulties. Their needs may differ. These issues should not be taken lightly. A husband and wife should speak honestly with each other, seek wise help when necessary, and care for their relationship. But one thing is clear. The fact that a marriage is difficult does not justify adultery. "My spouse did not understand me." "My spouse did not love me." "Our marriage has not been good for a long time." These difficulties should be taken seriously, but they cannot become reasons for placing responsibility for one's adultery on another person. Responsibility for sin lies in one's own choice. Therefore, when problems arise, instead of moving one's heart toward someone else, one should first speak honestly with one's spouse

and examine one's own heart before God. Being faithful to one's spouse does not simply mean refraining from having a relationship with someone else. It means loving and respecting the spouse God has given you and living faithfully to that covenant with your heart, body, and life.

In the Matter of Sexual Immorality, Examine Yourself Before Examining Others

Sexual sin is also a subject that can easily lead us to condemn others. We can be extremely sensitive to another person's sin while remaining insensitive to the lust within our own hearts. In John 8, people brought to Jesus a woman who had been caught in adultery. They focused on her sin, but Jesus said to them, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." This does not mean that adultery is not sin. Rather, it means that before condemning another person's sin, we must remember that we ourselves are sinners standing before God. Therefore, we must first ask ourselves: "Are my eyes pure?" "Is there lust that I repeatedly harbor in my heart?" "Am I depending emotionally, in an excessive way, on someone who is not my spouse?" "What am I looking at when no one is watching?" "Am I criticizing someone else's sin while hiding the sin in my own heart?" Before picking up a stone against someone else, we must bring our own hearts before God.

When You Become Aware of Sin, Do Not Hide It; Return to God

When someone falls into sexual sin, the problem becomes deeper if the person begins hiding the sin. Falsehood follows. Hypocrisy follows. Excuses for avoiding responsibility follow. "The other person approached me first." "I was lonely because of my spouse." "I had no choice." "It happened only once." When we rationalize our sin in this way, we move farther and farther away from repentance. David initially tried to hide his sin as well. But when his sin was exposed through the prophet Nathan, he finally confessed, "I have sinned against the LORD." A person who is emptying sexual immorality is not someone who is never tempted. It is someone who, upon recognizing sin, does not hide but returns to God. We must acknowledge our sin. We must stop making excuses. We must accept the responsibility that needs to be accepted. If there is a relationship that needs to be ended, it must be ended. If help is needed, we must receive help. Repentance does not end with merely saying, "I was wrong." It must be accompanied by actual change—a turning away from the direction of sin.

Look to God's Grace, Which Is Greater Than Sin

However, when dealing with sexual sin, there must be more than warning. The gospel also contains restoration. In the book of Hosea, God revealed His love for unfaithful Israel through Hosea's family. Israel abandoned God and followed other gods. Yet God did not simply abandon them; He called them to return. This does not mean that adultery is a minor sin. Rather, alongside the seriousness of sin, it reveals the grace of God that is greater than the sinner. Therefore, even someone who has fallen into sexual sin must not remain in sin thinking, "My life is over now." That person must return to God. Repent. Accept the necessary responsibility. And begin again to live a faithful life. However, we must not treat forgiveness and relational restoration as though they were the same thing. If adultery has deeply wounded a spouse, one cannot simply say, "God has forgiven me, so everything is finished now." The pain of the wounded spouse must be respected. Sincere repentance and responsibility are necessary. Rebuilding trust may take time. In some cases, pastoral and professional help may also be necessary. And in situations involving repeated deception or other serious harm, the safety and dignity of the spouse must also be given serious consideration. God's grace does not make sin insignificant. Rather, grace gives us the strength to acknowledge sin honestly and turn from it responsibly.

We Must Also Examine the Deeper Issue of Love Beyond Physical Adultery

The Bible sometimes compares abandoning God and following idols to adultery. This shows how deeply God describes His relationship with His people as a covenant relationship of love. Therefore, as we examine sexual immorality, we must also ask a deeper question: "What does my heart love most?" It may be money. It may be success. It may be honor. It may be our children. It may be our family. It may even be the success of our church or ministry. All of these can be good gifts from God. But when we love a gift God has given more than God Himself, the gift can become an idol. Even our spouse cannot be placed above God. Neither can our children. Neither can our family. Neither can the church. Therefore, at the deepest level of emptying sexual immorality lies the question of where our love is ultimately directed. We must empty ourselves of wrongly directed love and turn our love back toward God.

Principles and Practical Guidelines f or Emptying “Sexual Immorality”

How, then, can we practically empty sexual immorality in our homes, churches, and workplaces? Emptying sexual immorality does not end with simply resolving, “I will not commit adultery.” It is the process of offering our eyes, hearts, relationships, and bodies to God; wisely dealing with the places where temptation can grow; and filling the space emptied of wrongful desires with the love and faithfulness of Christ.

1. Guard What Enters Your Eyes and Heart

Examine what you are looking at. Pay attention to what videos and images you repeatedly view, which people continually draw your gaze, what you seek when you are alone, and what kinds of fantasies you repeatedly entertain in your mind. If certain content or environments clearly tempt you, distance yourself from them decisively. If necessary, make access to them difficult. Taking practical steps to avoid sin is not a sign of weak faith. It is the wisdom of recognizing your own weakness.

2. Guard the Boundaries of Your Relationships

Sexual immorality can begin in an emotional relationship before it becomes a physical relationship. Examine whether you are sharing excessively personal emotions with someone who is not your spouse. If messages or meetings are beginning to occur that you feel you must hide from your spouse, that may already be a warning sign. Do not reassure yourself merely by saying, “Nothing happened.” You must look at where your heart is going. Especially in relationships involving pastoral ministry, counseling, the workplace, and ministry service, we must respect the other person while maintaining healthy boundaries. If a relationship can be maintained only by keeping it secret, that relationship needs to be reexamined before God.

3. Treasure Your Spouse and Care for Marital Intimacy

A married person should look again at the spouse God has given rather than comparing that spouse with someone else. Express gratitude. Talk with one another. Spend time together. Listen to your spouse's needs. Respect one another's bodies and emotions. If there is a problem, do not ignore it. Speak about it honestly. If necessary, seek help. Marital faithfulness is not the passive condition of merely avoiding adultery. It is an active life of continually loving and respecting one's spouse and caring for the marriage covenant.

4. Do Not Hide or Rationalize Sin

If you realize that wrongful desire or an inappropriate relationship has begun, bring it to God quickly. Do not think, "I have not acted on it yet, so it is fine." Do not be confident that "I can stop whenever I want." And if you have already sinned, do not shift responsibility onto someone else. Acknowledge your own choice and repent before God. What needs to be ended must be ended. What needs to be corrected must be corrected. What requires responsibility must be taken responsibility for. True repentance means turning away from hiding sin and coming into the light.

5. Fill the Emptied Place with the Love and Faithfulness of Christ

The purpose of emptying sexual immorality is not to become a person who has no desire at all. It is to restore the proper direction of our love. The eyes that once viewed another person as an object of desire must become eyes that look upon that person with respect. The heart that compared one's spouse with others must become a grateful heart. The heart that sought only self-satisfaction must become love that seeks the good of the other person. The heart that loved the world must become a heart that loves God. And even when we are alone, we must live in the presence of Christ. Stay close to the Word. Pray. Offer your body and heart to God. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit. Do not leave the place emptied of lust unattended. Fill it with the love of Christ. Yet none of these practices can be accomplished by our willpower alone. "I will never think that way again." "I will never fall into that sin." Such resolutions alone are not enough. In fact, trusting our own strength too much can be dangerous. We need God's grace and the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must guard our eyes and hearts, make us aware of wrongful desires, and lead us to choose the way of escape when we face temptation. And when we fall, He must lead us not to hide but to return to the cross. Therefore, we can pray: "Lord, examine my eyes and my heart. You know what I look at and what I think about when no one else is watching. Do not allow me to view another person as an object for satisfying my desires, but help me to see that person as someone of dignity, created in the image of God. Help me empty myself of wrongful desires and relationships, and give me the wisdom

and courage to avoid places of temptation. Help me to love and respect the spouse You have given me and to remain faithful to the covenant of marriage. When I become aware of sin, do not let me hide or make excuses, but lead me to return to You immediately. Show me anything in my heart that I love more than You, and help me empty it out. Fill my heart, emptied of lust, with the love and faithfulness of Christ.”

Emptying sexual immorality does not mean abandoning love. It means emptying wrongful desires and restoring the true order of love that God has given us. Emptying lust does not mean abandoning joy either. It means finding in Christ a joy that is greater and deeper than momentary desire. Being faithful to one’s spouse does not merely mean refraining from adultery. It means treasuring and guarding the covenant of marriage with one’s heart, body, and life. And at an even deeper level, it means directing our love back toward God. Therefore, today we must once again ask ourselves: “What am I looking at?” “Toward whom is my heart directed?” “Is my heart being drawn away by someone who is not my spouse?” “How am I living when no one is watching?” “Is there anything in my heart that I love more than God?” “Whom do I believe my body, heart, and relationships belong to?” Before these questions, offer your eyes and your heart to God. Empty what needs to be emptied. End what needs to be ended. Return to the place to which you need to return. And fill the empty place with the love of Christ. Sexual immorality says, “Satisfy my desires.” But faith confesses, “My body and my heart belong to the Lord.” Emptying sexual immorality is not the elimination of desire. It is emptying wrongful desire and turning our love back toward God. This is the path of “emptying sexual immorality” that we must walk every day.

Chapter 11:

Emptying “Grumbling”

In the previous chapter, we looked at the life of emptying ourselves of sexual immorality and wrongful desires and turning our love back toward God. Now, in Chapter 11, we will look at another problem that easily settles into our hearts and onto our lips. It is a grumbling heart.

As we go through life, there are many moments when we grumble. “Why did this happen to me?” “Why does that person treat me this way?” “Why is my family going through such a difficult time?” “Why is the church like this?” “Why did God allow this?” Even when we do not speak these words aloud, we may repeat them countless times in our hearts. But in the Bible, grumbling is not merely a matter of uttering a few complaints. Grumbling can change the direction of our gaze, cause us to forget God’s grace, and even change the way we look at people and circumstances. Therefore, emptying ourselves of grumbling does not simply mean refraining from complaining. It means examining before God and emptying ourselves of the distrust, dissatisfaction, and desire to shift responsibility onto others that lie at the root of grumbling, and then filling that place with faith and gratitude.

At the Root of Grumbling Is a Heart That Does Not Trust God

When we look at the Israelites’ life in the wilderness, we repeatedly see them grumbling. They grumbled when there was no water. They grumbled when there was not enough food. They grumbled even when they stood before the land of Canaan. Deuteronomy 1 reveals what lay behind their grumbling. The Israelites grumbled in their tents: “Because the LORD hated us, he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us” (Deut. 1:27). What an astonishing statement. God had not brought them out of Egypt because He hated them. He had saved them because He loved them. But unbelief distorted their thinking. They interpreted God’s love as hatred. They interpreted God’s salvation as death. They interpreted God’s guidance as abandonment. So Moses clearly identified their problem: “In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God” (Deut. 1:32). At the deepest root of their grumbling was a heart that did not trust God. They did not trust God’s goodness. They did not trust God’s promises. They did not trust that God was going ahead of them. As a result, the difficulties before their eyes looked greater

than God's promises. The same is true of us. When grumbling rises within us, it is not enough simply to close our mouths and say, "I shouldn't complain." We must first ask ourselves: "Am I trusting God right now?" "Do I believe in God's goodness?" "Am I thinking that God has abandoned me?" "Do I believe that God is still at work even in circumstances I do not understand?" Ultimately, emptying ourselves of grumbling means learning to trust God again.

Distrust Can Lead to Disobedience, and Disobedience to Dissatisfaction

Deuteronomy 1:26 says of the Israelites: "But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God." God told them to go up into Canaan. But they did not believe. Because they did not believe, they did not obey. And while refusing to obey, they grumbled about the circumstances in which they found themselves. Here we can see a pattern. Unbelief gives birth to disobedience, disobedience can lead to dissatisfaction, and dissatisfaction can express itself as grumbling. Of course, we cannot say that every instance of grumbling always develops in exactly this order. Our hearts may genuinely hurt because we have suffered injustice or been treated unfairly. Yet through the example of Israel in Scripture, we can at least ask ourselves: "Is the reason I am grumbling really only because of my circumstances?" "Is it because things did not go the way I wanted?" "Is it because I am holding more tightly to my will than to God's will?" "Is it because I do not trust that God knows better than I do?" We must not try merely to correct grumbling lips. We must examine its roots before God.

Grumbling Makes the "Egypt" of the Past Look Beautiful

In Numbers 20, the Israelites grumbled against Moses because of the hardships of the wilderness. At first, they complained about their present difficulties. Then, little by little, they began looking backward. Finally, they said: "Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to this terrible place?" (Num. 20:5). Egypt had not been a good place for them. It was the place where they had lived as slaves. It was the place where they had suffered hard labor and oppression. It was the place from which God had delivered them after hearing their cries. But when life in the wilderness became difficult, Egypt began to look good. Grumbling can even alter our memories. Present pain looks enormous, while past pain begins to look small. The same thing can happen in our lives today. If our present marriage is difficult, we may think life was better when we were single. If our present job is difficult, we may think our previous job was much better. If we are dissatisfied with our present church, we may remember our former church as though it had no problems at all. When the life of faith becomes difficult, we may even begin to think that life before believing in Jesus was freer and better. But faith does not return to the Egypt of the past. Faith remembers where God

delivered us from. And faith looks toward the path on which God will lead us in the future. Grumbling looks toward Egypt, but faith looks toward God's promise.

Grumbling Makes Us Forget God's Grace

The Israelites crossed the Red Sea. They saw with their own eyes as God defeated the Egyptian army. They praised God. But not long afterward, when they had no water, they began grumbling again. Exodus 15:24 says: "So the people grumbled against Moses, saying, 'What are we to drink?'" In Exodus 16, they grumbled because of food. In chapter 17, they grumbled again because of water. They had experienced God's grace, but whenever a new difficulty came, they forgot His previous grace. We are the same. God may have answered countless prayers, yet when one problem arises today, we can forget all His grace. We may have received so much, yet because of one thing we lack, we can think as though we have received nothing. Grumbling magnifies what we do not have and minimizes the grace we have already received. Gratitude does the opposite. It helps us remember the grace we have already received. Therefore, when grumbling rises within us, we should ask: "What grace of God am I forgetting right now?" "How has God led me until now?" "What has He already given me?" Gratitude does not deny the reality of our problems. It acknowledges that even in the presence of problems, God is still my God.

Grumbling Can Cause Us to Shift Responsibility to Others

In Genesis 3, when God questioned Adam after he sinned, Adam answered: "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it" (Gen. 3:12). Adam shifted responsibility to the woman. And if we look more deeply, when he said, "The woman you put here with me," we can even see him shifting responsibility toward God. Eve also answered: "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." Of course, we should not reduce Genesis 3 merely to a story about grumbling between a husband and wife. Yet we can clearly see the tendency of sinful human beings to blame someone else rather than acknowledge their own responsibility. We easily do the same. "I did it because my spouse did that." "I became this way because of my parents." "The church made my life difficult." "That person started it first." "Given my circumstances, I had no choice." The other person may indeed have done something wrong. Their responsibility must be addressed clearly. But another person's wrongdoing does not take away responsibility for the sin I committed. A repentant person first examines himself or herself. "Lord, what did I do wrong?" "What do I need to repent of?" "What do I need to correct?" Emptying ourselves of grumbling does not mean blaming ourselves for every problem. It means refusing to escape our own responsibility by blaming someone else.

Grumbling Can Keep Us from Hearing God's Voice

Psalm 106:25 says of the Israelites: "They grumbled in their tents and did not obey the LORD." Grumbling and failing to listen to the voice of the LORD appear together. When grumbling takes hold of us, our own thoughts become too loud. "Why is this all I have?" "Why am I the only one suffering?" "Why is that person like that?" "Why isn't God doing anything?" When our hearts are filled with such thoughts, we have no room left to listen to God's Word. Our problems look greater than God's promises. What we lack looks greater than God's grace. What we want becomes more important than what God has done. Therefore, when grumbling rises within us, we need to stop before God. "Lord, what am I grumbling about right now?" "What am I failing to believe?" "What am I dissatisfied with?" "What are You saying to me right now?" Instead of repeating the voice of grumbling, we need to listen again to God's Word.

When We Bring Our Grumbling to God, It Can Become Prayer

Here we need to make a very important distinction. Emptying ourselves of grumbling does not mean that we must not tell God about our pain and our questions. The Psalms contain many prayers in which people honestly pour out their pain and frustration before God. They ask, "Why?" They weep. They speak of injustice. They do not hide their suffering. Faith does not mean pretending that nothing is wrong. It does not mean pretending to smile when we are sad. It does not mean saying, "I have no problems," when life is difficult. The difference lies in where we take our hearts. If we continually spread our grievances among people, they can become gossip and division. If we repeatedly nurture them in our hearts, they can harden into hatred and grumbling. But when we bring them to God, they can become prayer: "Lord, I am having such a hard time right now." "I do not understand this." "My heart hurts because of that person." "I am angry too." "I do not know why this happened." Speak honestly to God. But do not stop there. Examine your heart before His Word. Seek God's will. Come to God with your grumbling, but do not return carrying that grumbling unchanged in your heart.

Not Every Expression of a Problem Should Be Called "Grumbling"

There is another very important truth we must remember when dealing with grumbling. Not every complaint or raising of a problem is sinful grumbling. In Acts 6, a real problem arose within the early church. The widows among the Hellenistic Jews were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Hellenistic Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews. The apostles did not respond by saying, "You are complaining because you lack faith, so be quiet." They examined whether there was a real problem.

Then they corrected the ministry structure. They appointed seven men full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to oversee the distribution, while the apostles devoted themselves more fully to prayer and the ministry of the Word. As a result, the Word of God spread, and the number of disciples increased greatly. The complaint could have become a spark that destroyed the community, but when the leaders examined and corrected the real problem within it, it instead became an opportunity to build a healthier church. Therefore, we must look in both directions. The person raising a complaint must examine his or her heart before God, and the person hearing the complaint must also examine his or her own shortcomings before God. The speaker must not dress every dissatisfaction in the clothing of righteousness. But the listener must not silence every concern by labeling it “grumbling.” “Is there a real problem here that needs to be corrected?” “Am I calling this grumbling simply because I do not want to hear it?” “What is God showing us through this problem?” We need to be able to ask such questions.

In the Family, Listen to the Heart Behind the Grumbling

The family is also one of the places where resentment and grumbling accumulate most easily. A husband may think: “My wife does not respect me.” A wife may think: “My husband does not love me.” Parents may resent their children, and children may resent their parents. The problem is that when grumbling is repeated, we begin hearing only one another’s wounds rather than one another’s words. When a spouse expresses dissatisfaction, we may immediately want to argue back: “You’re exactly the same.” “You did it first.” “I did nothing wrong.” But sometimes we need to listen first. “Why has your heart become so burdened?” “What have I been missing?” “What have I done wrong?” “What do we need to correct before God?” This does not mean that everything our spouse says is right. But we need to listen for whether there is real pain behind those words. And if we have done something wrong, we need to apologize. A husband must be able to apologize to his wife. Parents must be able to apologize to their children. The goal is not to win against words of complaint. The goal is to restore the relationship. At the same time, we must not expect our spouse or family to meet every need we have. Ultimate satisfaction comes from God. Love your family, but do not demand that your family fill the place that only God can fill.

Leaders Should Listen First Rather Than Defend Themselves Against Complaints

Complaints can also be heard within the church. When leaders hear them, their hearts may hurt. “I have served so hard.” “Why does no one recognize what I have done?” “Why are those people not grateful?” Such thoughts may arise. But if a leader receives every concern as a personal attack, he or she

may fail to hear something that needs to be heard. When the apostles in Acts 6 heard the complaint, they first examined the problem. That does not mean every criticism is correct. Sometimes people may say things that are factually wrong. There may also be unfair criticism. Nevertheless, a leader should first ask before God: “Lord, is there something I need to see through these words?” “Is there something we need to correct?” “Is there someone I have overlooked?” And if the leader has been hurt by unfair words, that hurt should be taken to God rather than spread among other members of the church. We must be careful not to allow a leader’s wound to become the wound of the entire community. It is not wise to accept every complaint without discernment, but neither is it wise to shut down every complaint automatically. We must discern before the Word, correct what needs to be corrected, and entrust to God what needs to be entrusted to Him.

We Must Cultivate the Habit of Gratitude Instead of Grumbling

Philippians 2:14 says: “Do everything without grumbling or arguing.” Grumbling becomes a habit when repeated. At first, it may be a complaint about one thing, but eventually we can become people who complain about everything. Even when something good happens, we see first what is lacking. We see people’s weaknesses before their strengths. We look for something to complain about before something for which to give thanks. Therefore, if we are to empty ourselves of grumbling, we must intentionally train ourselves in gratitude. When you wake up in the morning, give thanks: “Thank You for giving me life again today.” Give thanks in your family: “Thank You for giving me a family with whom I can share life.” Give thanks in the church: “Though we are not perfect, thank You for giving me a community with whom I can worship.” Give thanks at work: “Thank You for giving me the opportunity and strength to work today.” Even in difficulty, confess: “Lord, I do not understand right now, but I believe that You are with me even in this situation.” Gratitude does not beautify reality falsely. Nor does it deny pain. Gratitude is not a confession we make because everything has turned out the way we wanted. It is a confession of faith that holds on to the truth that God is good even when things do not go the way we want.

Become a Worshiper Who Acknowledges God’s Sovereignty Instead of Grumbling

Job experienced overwhelming suffering in a single day. He lost his possessions. He lost his children. His grief was real. Job 1:20 says that he tore his robe and shaved his head. He did not pretend that he was not hurting. Yet in the midst of his pain, he fell before God and worshiped. This is important. Faith does not mean the absence of sorrow. It does not mean the absence of questions. It does not mean understanding every circumstance. Faith means not letting go of God even in circumstances we do not

understand. We too can pray: “Lord, I do not understand right now. But I trust You.” “Even when things do not go the way I want, God is good.” “Even when I do not know every reason, I believe that You know.” “I will not remain in grumbling; I will worship God.” A true worshiper is not someone whose every circumstance has unfolded according to his or her will. A true worshiper is someone who holds on to God’s sovereignty and goodness even when circumstances do not unfold according to his or her will.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Grumbling”

How, then, can we empty ourselves of grumbling in everyday life? Emptying ourselves of grumbling is not completed by a single decision. Whenever grumbling rises within us, we need the discipline of examining our hearts, bringing them to God, emptying ourselves of distrust and dissatisfaction, and filling that place with faith and gratitude.

1. When Grumbling Rises, Examine Your Own Heart First

When something happens that makes us want to grumble, we easily begin by looking for what someone else did wrong. Instead, first ask: “What am I grumbling about right now?” “Is it because something I wanted did not happen?” “Is it because of fear?” “Is it because of comparison?” “Is it because I have been hurt?” “Is it because I am failing to trust God?” Even if another person has done something wrong, first examine your own heart before God. If you have done something wrong, acknowledge it. If there is something to repent of, repent. A moment of grumbling can become not merely a time to search for someone else’s fault, but a time to examine your own heart before God.

2. Bring Your Grumbling to God Before Spreading It to People

When our hearts are hurting, it is natural to want to talk to someone. Sometimes we need to seek help and counsel from someone trustworthy. But we must not repeatedly spread our grievances among many people in order to gather people to our side. Rather than solving the problem, that can spread distrust and division through the community. Bring it to God first. Speak honestly to Him. You may cry. You may tell Him how frustrated you are. But also examine your own heart before His Word. And when necessary, have a conversation aimed at resolving the problem rather than gossiping about it. Do not spread your grumbling among people. Bring it to God and turn it into prayer.

3. Do Not Romanticize the “Egypt” of the Past; Remember the Grace You Have Received Until Now

When the present is difficult, the past may look better. But do not allow grumbling to distort your past. Remember where God delivered you from. Remember the grace with which He has led you until now. Remember the prayers He answered. Remember the times He held you up when life was difficult. And pray: “Lord, empty me of the desire to return to the Egypt of the past. Help me to look to You, the God who is with me even now, and to trust the path on which You will lead me.” Grumbling clings to the past, but faith clings to God’s promise.

4. When Raising a Problem, Seek Restoration Rather Than Blame

When something is genuinely wrong, there are times when it must be addressed. This is true in the family, in the church, and in the workplace. Emptying ourselves of grumbling does not mean that we must silently endure injustice or remain silent about everything. But when we raise a problem, we need to examine our purpose. “Am I trying to attack this person, or am I trying to solve the problem?” “Am I trying to gather people to my side, or am I trying to speak honestly with the person involved?” “Do I want to tear the other person down, or do I want the relationship and community to become healthy?” The person listening to the concern should also ask before becoming defensive: “Is there something in these words that I need to hear?” The speaker should examine his or her own heart, and the listener should examine the actual problem. When both happen together, a voice of complaint can become an opportunity for repentance and change.

5. Fill the Place of Grumbling with Gratitude and Faith

It is not enough merely to empty ourselves of grumbling. What fills that place matters. Empty distrust and fill it with faith. Empty dissatisfaction and fill it with contentment. Empty blame and fill it with love. Empty fear and fill it with prayer. Empty grumbling and fill it with gratitude and praise. At the end of each day, ask yourself: “What did I grumble about today?” “Whom did I blame?” “What was at the root of that grumbling?” “Did I bring it to God?” “What do I need to repent of?” “What can I thank God for today?” As we repeatedly ask these questions before God, our hearts will gradually change. But we cannot empty ourselves of grumbling by our own willpower alone. When pain is deep, when the sense of injustice is great, and when circumstances do not change even after a long period of waiting, our hearts are easily shaken. That is why we need the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must shine His light into our hearts and show us the distrust and dissatisfaction at the root of our grumbling. He must remind us of the grace of God we have forgotten. He must enable us to hear God’s Word again and sustain us so that we can trust God even in circumstances we cannot understand. Therefore, we can pray: “Lord, show me the

grumbling in my heart. Do not let me blame people and circumstances while failing to see the distrust and dissatisfaction within my own heart. Help me honestly acknowledge and repent of what I have done wrong, while also keeping me from taking responsibility for the wrongs of others as though they were mine. Instead of spreading my pain and disappointment among people, help me bring them first to You. Help me remember the grace I have forgotten, and do not let me long for the Egypt of the past. Even in circumstances I do not understand right now, help me trust Your goodness, and fill my heart, emptied of grumbling, with faith, gratitude, and praise.”

Emptying ourselves of grumbling does not mean living as though there were no problems. It does not mean hiding our pain. It does not mean remaining silent no matter how unjustly we are treated. Emptying grumbling means bringing our pain and dissatisfaction honestly to God while refusing to allow that pain to harden into distrust and accusation toward God and people. It means correcting what I need to correct, speaking in love about what needs to be said to another person, and entrusting to God what needs to be entrusted to Him. Grumbling says: “Why are things not going the way I want?” But faith confesses: “Even though I do not understand right now, I will trust God.” Grumbling makes us look at what we lack. Gratitude helps us remember the grace we have already received. Grumbling makes us look back toward the Egypt of the past. Faith looks toward the path on which God will lead us. Grumbling looks first for someone else’s responsibility. Repentance first examines ourselves before God. Therefore, when grumbling rises in your heart today, do not hide it, and do not spread it among people. Bring it to God. Examine your heart before His Word. Repent of what needs to be repented of. Correct what needs to be corrected. Remember what you have to be thankful for. And trust God again. Grumbling asks: “Why are things not going the way I want?” Faith asks: “How can I trust God even in this situation?” Emptying ourselves of grumbling and filling that place with faith, gratitude, and praise toward God—this is the path of “emptying grumbling” that we must walk every day.

Chapter 12:

Emptying “Jealousy”

In the previous chapter, we looked at emptying ourselves of resentment. Resentment keeps us from seeing what God has already given us and causes us instead to focus on what we have not received and on what other people have. But when our eyes remain fixed on other people for too long, another sin can easily take root in our hearts. That sin is jealousy.

Jealousy is the heart that looks at what others have and complains about what I do not have, and that feels uncomfortable when others receive recognition, love, and praise. At first, it may seem like simple comparison. “Why is that person doing better than I am?” “Why does that person receive more recognition than I do?” “Why does that person have something that I do not?” “Why does it seem that God has given that person more than He has given me?” But when we continue to nurture these comparisons in our hearts, at some point another person’s success begins to feel like my failure. Another person’s joy becomes my sorrow. When someone else is praised, I feel as though I am being ignored. And eventually, I may even come to hate someone who has done nothing wrong. I, too, have not been free from this kind of jealousy. There was a time when, in my heart, I hated a brother in the faith who had done nothing wrong. He had not particularly harmed me in any way. Yet I felt uncomfortable when I saw him receiving more recognition and praise than I did. Looking back, the problem was not with him. The problem was in my heart. I wanted to be recognized. I wanted to be elevated. I wanted to appear better than others. So when someone else was elevated, it felt as though I was being lowered. At the center of that heart was pride.

Jealousy ultimately begins with comparison, grows into pride, and bears the fruit of hatred. Therefore, if we are to empty ourselves of jealousy, before trying to change another person, we must first examine our own hearts before God. “Why am I unable to rejoice in that person’s success?” “Why do I feel uncomfortable when that person is praised?” “Why do I think that I deserve more recognition?” We must be honest before these questions.

Jealousy Makes Us See People Differently

Saul is one of the clearest examples of how frightening jealousy can become. When David returned after defeating Goliath, the women of Israel sang: “Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands” (1 Sam. 18:7). When Saul heard this, he became very displeased because he thought the people were esteeming David more highly than him. Then Scripture records: “And from that time on Saul kept a close eye on David” (v. 9). Until then, David had been loyal to Saul. He played the harp for Saul. He fought for Israel. He risked his life to fight Goliath. But once jealousy entered Saul’s heart, David began to look different to him. A loyal servant began to look like a competitor. A man whom God was using began to look like someone trying to take his position away from him. Jealousy did not change David. It changed Saul’s eyes. Jealousy does not change the facts, but it changes the eyes through which we see those facts. That is why jealousy is dangerous. We may not hate someone because that person has done something wrong. We may actually hate that person because he or she is doing well. We may feel uncomfortable because another person is loved. We may begin to dislike someone because that person is recognized. When we see another person doing well, we may feel as though we ourselves have been brought lower. At such times, the problem may not be that person. The problem may be in our own hearts.

Jealousy Turns People into Competitors in Our Hearts

When jealousy enters our hearts, even a brother can become a competitor. A fellow worker in ministry can become a competitor. A friend can become a competitor. Even a family member can become a competitor. Cain killed his younger brother Abel. It was not because Abel had harmed Cain. First John 3:12 explains why Cain killed his brother: “His own actions were evil and his brother’s were righteous.” Abel’s righteousness made Cain uncomfortable. Comparison grew into jealousy. Jealousy grew into hatred. And hatred eventually manifested itself in murder. We may never go to such an extreme. But in our hearts, we may push another person away. We may secretly hope that person fails. When we hear something negative about that person, a part of us may secretly feel pleased. When we discover that person’s weakness, we may feel relieved. “So that person isn’t so great after all.” If such a heart exists within us, we must examine it before God. Love does not rejoice in another person’s failure. Love does not pull another person down in order to lift oneself up. Therefore, emptying ourselves of jealousy is more than simply refraining from envying someone else. It means emptying before God even the heart that sees another person as a competitor, feels uncomfortable with that person’s joy, and secretly hopes for that person’s failure.

Jealousy Makes Us Forget the Mission God Has Entrusted to Us

Saul's tragedy did not end with his hatred of David. Because of jealousy, he forgot the mission that had been entrusted to him. Saul was the king of Israel. He was supposed to care for the people God had entrusted to him and protect the nation. But as he became consumed with jealousy toward David, his attention became focused more on David than on the Philistines. He mobilized soldiers to capture David. He spent his time and strength pursuing David. By focusing on another person, he lost sight of the work that had been entrusted to him. The same thing can happen to us. We can become so preoccupied with another pastor's ministry that we forget the church God has entrusted to us. We can become so focused on another person's business and success that we fail to be faithful in the work entrusted to us. We can compare our children with the children of other families and fail to see the beauty of the children God has entrusted to us. We can envy another person's gifts and fail to use the gifts God has given us. Jealousy causes us to look too much at other people's lives. And in doing so, we can miss the life that we ourselves are called to live. Therefore, we must change the question. Instead of asking, "Why is that person doing so well?" we should ask, "What has God entrusted to me today?" It is all right if another person seems to be doing greater things than I am. It is all right if another person receives more praise than I do. It is all right if another person's gifts seem more impressive than mine. God has entrusted something to that person, and God has entrusted something to me. Do not compare. Be faithful. Do not compete. Fulfill your mission .

We Must Examine Our Desire for Human Recognition

Deep within Saul's jealousy was also a desire to be recognized by people. Even when Samuel rebuked him for his sin, Saul asked: "Honor me now, please, before the elders of my people and before Israel" (1 Sam. 15:30). The desire to be loved and recognized by others is not always sinful in itself. Everyone has a desire to be loved and appreciated. The problem arises when human recognition becomes more important than God. If I can be happy only when I am praised, if I feel uncomfortable when someone else is praised, if I am satisfied only when my name becomes known, and if I am hurt when someone else receives more recognition than I do, then I must examine that heart before God. Jesus showed us a completely different way: "In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). Jesus emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. He did not lower others in order to elevate Himself. Therefore, Paul exhorts us: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves" (v. 3). Here we find the way to empty ourselves of jealousy. We must empty ourselves of the desire to be elevated and embrace the humility of Christ. Instead of asking, "How much do people recognize me?" we should ask, "How faithfully am I living before God?" Even when people do not know, God knows. Even when people do not see, God sees. Even when people do not praise us, God knows our faithfulness.

Like Asaph, Turn Your Eyes from People to God

Another person who honestly reveals the problem of jealousy is Asaph. In Psalm 73, Asaph confesses: “For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Ps. 73:3). Asaph’s heart was shaken when he saw wicked people prospering. It seemed that those who disregarded God were doing better than he was, even though he was trying to live by faith in God. As a result, he nearly stumbled. But then a decisive change took place: “Till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny” (v. 17). Asaph’s circumstances did not change first. His perspective changed. His eyes, which had been fixed on people, turned back to God. And finally he confessed: “Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you” (v. 25). This is an important way to empty ourselves of jealousy. When jealousy rises within you, do not look more closely at the other person. Look at God. Do not keep comparing who has more. Look at what God has given you. Do not calculate who receives more praise. Look at the work God has entrusted to you. Do not compare who has the larger ministry. Be faithful to the mission God has entrusted to you today. Emptying ourselves of jealousy means turning our eyes, which have been fixed on other people, back to God.

Rejoice Together in the Grace God Has Given to Others

Jealousy turns another person’s joy into my sorrow. Love does the opposite. Love rejoices together with another person’s joy. When someone else is praised, congratulate that person. When someone achieves a good result, rejoice together. When another person’s child does well, bless that child and family. When another church grows and another pastor is used greatly by God, thank God. When a coworker receives a promotion, congratulate that person. When a friend’s business prospers, rejoice together. At first, your heart may not follow. Your lips may offer congratulations while your heart still feels uncomfortable. When that happens, bring even that heart to God. “God, show me the heart within me that cannot sincerely rejoice in the grace You have given this person. Empty me of this comparing heart. Help me rejoice together in the grace You have given this person.” Then pray for that person: “Lord, please use this person even more greatly.” “Please bless this family.” “May Your kingdom be expanded even more through this person’s ministry.” When we begin to bless the person we are jealous of, our own hearts gradually begin to change. Jealousy asks, “Why did You give that to this person?” But love confesses, “Thank You for giving grace to this person too.”

Empty Jealousy and Learn Gratitude

It is difficult for gratitude to take root in a jealous heart. That is because jealousy is always looking at what I do not have. “Why don’t I have that?” “Why do good things happen only to that person?” “Why has that person received more than I have?” When our hearts are filled with these thoughts, we cannot see the grace God has already given us. Therefore, if we are to empty ourselves of jealousy, we must learn gratitude. Give thanks for the family God has given you. Give thanks for the church He has entrusted to you. Give thanks for the gifts He has given you. Give thanks for the opportunity to work. Give thanks for the people walking alongside you. Give thanks for the grace that has guided you until now. Above all, give thanks for the grace by which God has saved you in Jesus Christ and made you His child. Jealousy magnifies what is missing. Gratitude enables us to see what we have received. Jealousy magnifies our lack. Gratitude magnifies grace. Giving thanks does not suddenly cause us to possess what we do not have. But it opens our eyes to see the grace that has already been given to us.

Do Not Become Jealous Because Someone Else Is Jealous of You

Sometimes the issue is not that I am jealous of someone else. Someone else may be jealous of me. Joseph’s brothers were jealous of Joseph. Because of their father’s love for Joseph and because of Joseph’s dreams, hatred arose in their hearts, and eventually they sold Joseph into Egypt. What they did was clearly evil. But human evil could not overturn God’s plan. Years later Joseph said to his brothers: “God sent me ahead of you to preserve life” (Gen. 45:5). Joseph did not call his brothers’ evil good. But he saw God’s providence as greater than his brothers’ evil. This teaches us an important lesson. Someone may be jealous of me. Someone may misunderstand me. Someone may feel uncomfortable when things go well for me. Someone may try to pull me down. But that does not mean that I also need to hate that person or compete with that person. God’s providence is greater than human jealousy. Do not abandon your mission because of another person’s jealousy. Remain faithful in the place God has entrusted to you. Look to God’s guidance rather than to people’s reactions.

We Must Distinguish Between the Jealousy We Need to Empty and the Holy Zeal We Need to Embrace

The Bible does not speak only of sinful jealousy that must be emptied. In Numbers 25, God says that Phinehas demonstrated zeal for God’s holiness. What matters here is what lies at the center of the heart. Saul’s jealousy was for himself. It was jealousy aimed at protecting his own position and honor. But Phinehas’s zeal did not arise from a desire to exalt his own name. It came from valuing God’s holiness. Therefore, we must ask ourselves: “Is the reason I am angry right now truly because of God’s glory?” “Or

is it because my pride has been wounded?” “Am I grieved because God’s will is being violated?” “Or am I hurt because I am not receiving recognition?” “Does this zeal come from love?” “Or does it come from fear and possessiveness?” This question is also important in marriage. Husbands and wives should cherish and faithfully guard the covenant of marriage that God has given them. But we cannot call excessive control, surveillance, and possessiveness “holy jealousy” simply because we say we love our spouse. Love protects the relationship, but it does not turn the other person into a possession. What we must empty is the jealousy that tries to pull another person down in order to protect our own glory and position. What we must embrace is zeal that flows from loving God and valuing His will and holiness.

Empty Jealousy and Live in Love

The purpose of emptying jealousy is not simply to become a person who is no longer jealous of others. It is to become a person who loves. Love seeks the good of others. Love rejoices when others do well. Love does not interpret another person’s success as my failure. Love recognizes that God has given different gifts and different missions to each person. Therefore, when jealousy rises within us, we should pray: “Lord, show me why I feel uncomfortable with this person.” “Empty me of the comparison and pride within me.” “Empty me of the desire to be recognized by people.” “Help me rejoice together in the grace You have given this person.” “Help me remain faithful to the mission You have entrusted to me.” And then actually choose love. Congratulate. Encourage. Bless. Pray. Rejoice together in another person’s joy. Even if your heart does not immediately follow, begin to act in love in obedience to the Word. In that process, the Holy Spirit will also transform our hearts.

Principles and Practical Guidelines for Emptying “Jealousy”

How, then, can we empty ourselves of jealousy in our everyday lives? Jealousy begins by comparing ourselves with others and can easily grow into pride and hatred. Therefore, to empty ourselves of jealousy, we must turn our eyes, which have become fixed on other people, back to God, replace comparison with gratitude, and remain faithful to the mission God has entrusted to us.

1. When Jealousy Arises, Identify Whom or What You Are Comparing Yourself With

Jealousy begins with comparison. Therefore, when you begin to feel uncomfortable, first ask yourself: “Whom am I comparing myself with right now?” “What am I comparing?” Is it wealth? Appearance? Children? Work? The size of a ministry? The size of a church? People’s praise? Someone else’s gifts? Once you identify what you are comparing, do not continue nurturing those thoughts. Turn your eyes to God. What God has given that person has been entrusted to that person. What God has given me has been entrusted to me. Comparison causes us to live someone else’s life. Mission enables us to live the life God has entrusted to us.

2. Intentionally Bless the Grace God Has Given to Others

Do not continue to regard the person you are jealous of as a competitor in your heart. Pray for that person. Bless that person and desire that things go well for him or her. When something good happens, offer your congratulations. When God uses that person, give thanks. In the family, do not compare brothers and sisters. Parents must be careful not to compare one child with another. Children likewise should not turn the grace given to their siblings into a reason for competition. In the church, do not turn the fruit of other churches and other pastors into objects of competition. In the workplace, do not interpret a coworker’s success as your failure. Rejoicing together in the grace God has given another person is a practical discipline for emptying ourselves of jealousy.

3. Seek Faithfulness Before God Instead of Recognition from People

If you continually think, “How much do people recognize me?” you will become increasingly sensitive to the praise other people receive. Therefore, change the question: “Am I faithful before God?” Remain faithful even when no one recognizes you. Serve even when your name is not known. Rejoice together even when someone else is praised. Even when it feels as though someone else is receiving recognition for something you did, first examine your heart before God. Of course, in situations where proper evaluation and fairness are necessary, you may speak the facts truthfully. But you must not allow people’s praise to become the master of your heart. A person who is emptying jealousy considers God’s gaze more important than human applause.

4. Give Thanks Every Day for the Grace God Has Already Given You

When jealousy arises, instead of thinking about what you have not received, count what you have already received. You may even write down specific things for which you are thankful today. Remember your family, health, church, workplace, friends, gifts, ministry, salvation, God’s Word, and the grace of being able to pray. Gratitude does not mean saying that I have more than someone else. It means acknowledging that the grace God has given me is precious and sufficient. When jealousy says, “Why don’t I have this?” gratitude confesses, “God has also given me abundant grace.”

5. Focus on the Mission God Has Entrusted to You Rather Than on Other People

One of the best questions to ask when jealousy arises is: “What has God entrusted to me right now?” Do not spend all your time looking at another person’s ministry. Do not allow your heart to be consumed with evaluating another person’s life. Love the family God has entrusted to you. Serve the church He has entrusted to you. Work honestly in the workplace He has entrusted to you. Use the gifts He has given you. Be faithful in the obedience required of you today. Saul lost sight of his own mission because he kept looking at David. Asaph nearly stumbled because he kept looking at the prosperity of the wicked. But when he turned his eyes back to God, he found the way again. Turn your eyes from people to God, and turn your heart from comparison to mission. Yet emptying ourselves of jealousy cannot be accomplished by willpower alone. “I will never compare myself with others again.” “Whenever someone else succeeds, I will always be happy for them.” Simply making such resolutions does not immediately remove the deep jealousy within our hearts.

We need the grace of God and the help of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit must show us the comparison and pride hidden within our hearts. He must make us aware of the discomfort we feel when

others do well. He must empty us of the desire for human praise and open our eyes to see the grace God has given us. And He must form the love of Christ within us so that we can sincerely rejoice in the joy of others. Therefore, we can pray: “Lord, show me the jealousy, comparison, and pride within me. Empty me of the heart that feels uncomfortable when others do well and that feels as though I have been brought lower when others are praised. Empty me of the desire for human recognition and praise, and let me be satisfied in knowing that You know me and love me. Help me rejoice in and bless the grace You have given to others, and help me give thanks for the grace You have given me. Keep me from looking at people and competing with them, and help me remain faithful to the mission You have entrusted to me. Fill my heart, emptied of jealousy, with the humility, gratitude, and love of Christ.” Emptying ourselves of jealousy does not mean becoming people who take no interest in others. Nor does it mean ignoring the success of others. Emptying ourselves of jealousy means refusing to interpret another person’s success as my failure. It means rejoicing together in the grace God has given to others, giving thanks for the grace God has given me, and living faithfully according to the mission God has entrusted to me. It is all right if someone else rises higher than I do. It is all right if someone else receives more praise than I do. It is all right if someone else seems to be doing greater things than I am. Because God knows me. Because God loves me. Because God has given grace to me as well. And because God has entrusted a mission to me as well.

Therefore, do not turn another person’s joy into your sorrow. Do not turn another person’s success into your failure. Do not interpret the grace God has given another person as God’s rejection of you. Like Asaph, turn your eyes from people to God. Like Joseph, trust in God’s providence, which is greater than human evil. Above all, like Jesus Christ, empty yourself of the desire to exalt yourself and serve humbly. Jealousy asks: “Why does that person have what I do not have?” But faith confesses: “I will rejoice in the grace God has given that person, and I will give thanks for the grace He has given me.” Emptying ourselves of jealousy means turning our eyes, which have been fixed on other people, back to God. It means emptying ourselves of comparison, pride, and hatred, and allowing the humility, gratitude, and love of Christ to grow in the space that has been emptied. This is the path of **emptying “jealousy”** that we must walk every day.

Part III:
Filling the Emptied Place with Christ

Chapter 13:

Being Filled with Christ

The theme we have continually reflected on throughout this book has been “emptying.” We must empty ourselves of pride. We must empty ourselves of greed. We must empty ourselves of hypocrisy. We must empty ourselves of falsehood. We must empty ourselves of hatred. We must empty ourselves of evil thoughts. We must empty ourselves of sexual immorality. We must empty ourselves of resentment. We must empty ourselves of envy. But now, at the end, there is a question we absolutely must ask: “Why must we empty ourselves?” And there is another question: “What must we fill the emptied space with?” The answer is clear. The purpose of emptying is not to become empty people, but to become people filled with Christ. It is not enough merely to empty ourselves of the sin, greed, and self-centeredness within us.

Emptying itself is not the purpose of the Christian faith. The Christian life is not about becoming an empty person with no desires, no thoughts, and no emotions. It is about emptying ourselves of the life in which we live as our own masters and allowing Jesus Christ to become the Lord of our lives. It is emptying ourselves of the desire to exalt ourselves and living with the humility of Christ. It is emptying ourselves of the desire to grasp things for ourselves and living with the love of Christ. It is emptying ourselves of hatred, falsehood, resentment, and envy and living with the mind of Christ. Therefore, the final question of emptying must always be not, “What has disappeared from within me?” but, “Who is ruling within me now?” Christian emptying ultimately leads toward a life in which Christ lives within us.

It Is a Life in Which It Is No Longer I Who Live, but Christ Who Lives in Me

The apostle Paul describes the Christian life this way in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.” This verse clearly shows us where the “emptying” discussed throughout this book should lead. To empty oneself does not mean eliminating one’s existence. Nor does it mean eliminating one’s thoughts, emotions, individuality, or personality. It does not mean abandoning the gifts and responsibilities God has given us. Emptying means emptying ourselves of the self-centered desire to be the master of our own lives and allowing Christ to become the Lord of our lives.

Therefore, Paul does not say, “I have disappeared,” but confesses, “Christ lives in me.” The center of life has now changed. A person who once asked only, “What do I want?” begins to ask, “Lord, what do You want?” A person who once insisted that his own thoughts were right begins to ask, “What does the Word of God say?” A person who once thought only of his own interests begins to ask, “How would Christ love this person?” A person who once delighted in having his own name recognized begins to ask, “How can Christ be revealed through this?” This is the change that should appear after emptying. The purpose of emptying is not for me to disappear, but for the center of my life to move from myself to Christ.

We Must Be Filled with the Mind of Christ

Philippians 2:5 says: “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus.” This verse was also the starting point of this book. Jesus Christ, though He was in very nature God, did not insist on His rights in order to exalt Himself. Rather, He emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant and becoming like human beings. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death—even death on a cross. Therefore, being filled with Christ does not simply mean possessing a great deal of knowledge about Jesus. It means having the mind of Jesus. It means learning the humility of Christ. It means learning the love of Christ. It means learning the obedience of Christ. It means learning the forgiveness of Christ. It means learning the servanthood of Christ. And it means allowing that mind to be manifested in our homes, churches, and workplaces. We may study the Bible for many years. We may possess extensive theological knowledge. We may hold important positions in the church. We may even become pastors and teach the Word. But if that knowledge does not lead us to the mind of Christ, we must examine ourselves again. We can know much of the Word and still be proud. We can do much ministry and still seek human recognition. We can serve in the church and still make life difficult for our families at home. Therefore, what matters is not simply how much we know. What matters is how much the mind of Christ is being manifested in our lives.

The Emptied Space Must Be Filled with the Character of Christ

In the preceding chapters, we examined one by one the things within us that must be emptied. There is no need to explain all of them at length again. What matters now is what appears in the space that has been emptied. If we have emptied ourselves of pride, humility should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of greed, contentment and generosity should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of hypocrisy, a life of honesty before God should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of falsehood, truth should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of hatred, love and forgiveness should appear. If we have emptied ourselves

of evil thoughts, good and pure thoughts should grow. If we have emptied ourselves of sexual immorality, holiness and faithfulness should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of resentment, faith and gratitude should appear. If we have emptied ourselves of envy, love that rejoices in the grace God has given to others should appear. But we must not think of these things as separate from one another. Humility, truthfulness, love, holiness, and gratitude are all manifestations of the character of Christ within us. Therefore, we should not merely ask, “Am I free from pride?” We should ask, “Is the humility of Christ being manifested in me?” We should not stop with, “Did I avoid lying?” We should ask, “Is the truthfulness of Christ being manifested in my life?” We should not stop with, “Do I hate anyone?” We should ask, “Am I loving people with the love of Christ?” Emptying is not a passive faith. Nor is it a faith that stops at merely refraining from sin. Emptying means making room for the life and character of Christ to be increasingly manifested within us.

We Must Be Filled with the Word of Christ

Then how can we be filled with Christ? First, the Word of Christ must dwell richly within us. Paul says in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly.” Our hearts are filled with countless words: the words of people, the values of the world, countless thoughts entering through the internet and social media, our own fears and desires, and wounds and memories from the past. But when the Word of Christ begins to dwell richly within us, our thoughts and judgments begin to change. The Word sheds light on our thoughts. It reveals wrong desires. It exposes hidden pride. It makes us aware of hatred and envy. And at the same time, it teaches us what kind of heart we should live with. Therefore, we must not stop at simply reading the Word. We must hold the Word in our hearts. We must meditate on it. And we must obey it. “What is God saying to me through this Word today?” “What must I empty from myself?” “What must I obey?” “How can I live out this Word today in my home, church, and workplace?” We must place ourselves before the Word in this way. Jesus said: “Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart” (Mt. 11:29). A person filled with Christ is a person who continually learns from Jesus.

The Character of Christ Must Be Manifested Through the Help of the Holy Spirit

However, simply knowing the Word and making resolutions does not enable us to become like Christ by our own strength. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18 says: “Be filled with the Spirit.” And Galatians 5:22–23 describes the fruit of the Spirit as: “Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” These fruits are not religious appearances that we force ourselves to produce. They are the fruit of life that appears when the Holy Spirit works within us.

Therefore, we must not rely only on our own strength. When hatred rises within us, we should not stop at resolving, “I need to love.” We should pray, “Holy Spirit, please help me love this person.” When resentment rises within us, we should not simply grit our teeth and say, “I must not complain.” We should ask, “Holy Spirit, help me remember God’s grace and give thanks.” When envy rises within us, we should not stop at rebuking ourselves, saying, “I must not be envious.” We should pray, “Holy Spirit, give me a heart that can rejoice in the grace You have given to that person.” A life filled with Christ is not a life spent trying by our own willpower to look like Christ. It is a life in which we abide in the Word, depend on the Holy Spirit, and offer ourselves to God so that the character of Christ may bear fruit within us.

A Person Filled with Christ Serves

In Chapter 3 of this book, we examined the life of emptying oneself and serving one’s neighbor as a servant. Now we return once again to that place, because a life filled with Christ is ultimately revealed in relationships. Jesus washed His disciples’ feet. He personally wrapped a towel around Himself and descended to the place of a servant. The mind of Christ was not a mind that exalted itself, but a mind that served. Therefore, a person filled with Christ asks: Instead of, “Who will recognize me?” — “Whom can I serve today?” Instead of, “What will I receive?” — “What can I share?” Instead of, “Why does no one serve me?” — “Whose feet can I wash first?” We must begin at home. Treat the family members closest to you with the mind of Christ. Rather than husbands and wives insisting only on their own positions, listen first. When you are wrong, apologize. Do not teach your children faith only with words. Let them see parents who repent, forgive, and serve. The same is true in the church. Instead of seeking a position, look for a place to serve. Do not do only the things for which people will recognize you. Do what needs to be done even when no one notices. Manifest the mind of Christ in the workplace as well. Do not think only of your own interests; consider the interests of others. Work honestly. Do not take advantage of the weak. Rejoice in the success of others. Emptying manifests itself in service. In a person filled with Christ, the servanthood of Christ appears as the fruit of life.

Being Filled with Christ Is a Daily, Continuing Life

We cannot empty ourselves of all pride through a single decision. Nor does greed never return simply because we repented once. Emptying ourselves of hatred today does not mean that we will never be hurt again tomorrow. Not complaining today does not mean that gratitude will automatically arise tomorrow. Therefore, emptying is not a one-time event but a daily, continuing process of discipleship. Every day we must examine our hearts before God. “What is occupying my heart the most today?” “What

am I holding on to right now?” “Is there an area in which I am trying to be the master?” “Have pride, greed, hatred, or resentment entered again?” Whenever we discover these things, we must bring them before God. We must repent. We must empty ourselves again. And we must be filled with Christ again. We cannot live today solely on yesterday’s grace. Today again, we must stand before the Word. Today again, we must depend on the Holy Spirit. Today again, we must have the mind of Christ. Today again, we must love. Today again, we must forgive. Today again, we must serve. Christian emptying is not something completed once and for all. It is a life of following Christ day by day.

“He Must Increase, but I Must Decrease”

Looking at Jesus, John the Baptist confessed: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:30). These words contain the heart of someone who does not want himself to be at the center but desires Christ to be revealed. This is also the direction of emptying. It is for the name of Christ to be revealed rather than my name. It is rejoicing that God’s will is accomplished rather than my will. It is rejoicing that Christ is exalted rather than that I am recognized. Therefore, emptying is not defeat. Nor does it make my existence worthless. Rather, it restores the person God created me to the proper place. When I step down from the place of master and receive Christ as Lord, I can finally live as the person God desires me to be. The more I try to hold on to myself, the more fearful I become. The more I try to exalt my own name, the more I compete with others. The more I try to accomplish my own will, the more I resent things when they do not go my way. But when I entrust myself to Christ, I become free. It is all right if someone else rises higher than I do. It is all right if people do not recognize me. Even if everything does not happen according to my plans, I can trust God. Because I am not the lord of my life. Christ is. Ultimately, emptying is not losing Christ; it is gaining Christ.

Empty Yourself and Be Filled with Christ

Now we must ask ourselves again: “What must I empty?” But do not stop there. Ask the more important question: “What am I filled with right now?” Is my heart filled with worry? Is it filled with the desire for human recognition? Is it filled with desires for money and success? Is it filled with wounds and hatred? Is it filled with comparison and envy? Or is it filled with the Word and love of Christ? Our goal is not to become empty people. Our goal is to become people filled with Christ. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within you. Be filled with the Holy Spirit. Have the mind of Christ. Love people with the love of Christ. Forgive with the forgiveness of Christ. Serve with the humility of Christ. And let Christ be revealed through our lives. Reveal Christ in your home. Reveal Christ in the church. Reveal Christ in

your workplace. When people meet us, let them see the love of Christ rather than our boasting. Let them see Christ in our words. Let them see Christ in our choices. Let them see Christ in our service. Let our entire lives make this confession: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.”

Principles and Practical Guidelines for “Being Filled with Christ”

The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person, but to be filled with Christ. Therefore, the Christian life must not remain focused only on the question, “What will I not do?” We must ask, “How will I allow Christ to live in me today?”

1. Examine Daily Who Is the Lord of Your Life

The first question of a life filled with Christ is this: “Who is the Lord of my life right now?” When making an important decision, do not stop with, “What do I want?” Ask: “What does the Lord want?” At home, in church, and at work, do not allow your own thoughts and emotions to become the final standard. As you begin your day, pray: “Lord, do not let me try to become the master of my own life today. Help me follow Your Word rather than my thoughts, and seek Your will rather than my own.”

2. Abide in Christ Through the Word and Prayer

The Word of Christ must dwell richly within us. Read the Word. Meditate on it. Pray. And obey. After reading the Word, ask: “What is God showing me through this Word today?” “What must I empty?” “What must I obey?” “To whom must I live out this Word today?” The Word must not merely be material for accumulating knowledge. It must be the Word of God that governs our thoughts and our lives.

3. Seek the Help of the Holy Spirit Every Day

We cannot produce the character of Christ by our own strength. When you need love, ask the Holy Spirit for love. When you need patience, ask the Holy Spirit for help. When resentment rises, ask for gratitude. When envy rises, ask for a heart that rejoices with others. When hatred rises, ask for strength to forgive. When you are tempted, ask for a way of escape and the strength of self-control. A life filled with Christ is not a life that boasts in its own strength, but a life that depends on the Holy Spirit

4. Treat Those Closest to You with the Mind of Christ

Whether the mind of Christ is truly within us is revealed in how we treat those closest to us. Begin at home. Listen to your spouse. If you have done wrong, apologize. If you became angry with your children, do not hide behind parental authority; acknowledge your wrongdoing. In the church, do not use people; serve them. At work, choose honesty over profit. Respect those who are weaker than you. Do not quickly judge those who think differently from you. The mind of Christ must not merely be confessed with words; it must be manifested in relationships.

5. Practice Small Acts of Service Every Day

As you begin your day, ask: “Whom can I serve today?” It does not have to be something grand. Listening to a family member, contacting someone who is struggling, helping someone in need, joyfully doing work no one notices, congratulating someone else on their success, and praying for someone you find difficult to forgive are all acts of service. A person filled with Christ desires the love of Christ to flow through them more than they desire to leave behind their own name.

6. At the End of Each Day, Examine What Filled Your Life

At the end of the day, spend a moment before God. “What occupied my heart the most today?” “Were there moments today when I tried to live as the master?” “Was the mind of Christ manifested in my words and actions?” “Whom did I love and serve today?” “Have pride, greed, hatred, resentment, or envy entered again?” “What grace did God give me today?” If you see sin, do not hide it. Repent. If you see grace, give thanks. And look again to Christ. But there is something we must remember before all these practices. Being filled with Christ is not an attempt to make ourselves better people through our own effort. Everything begins with the grace of God. God is the One who first loved us. Christ is the One who saved us. The Holy Spirit is the One who works within us. Therefore, we do not boast in our own strength. We seek grace. We depend on the Holy Spirit. And every day we offer ourselves to Christ. We can pray: “Lord, today again, empty me of the desire to occupy the place of master, and fill me with Christ. Help me follow Your Word rather than my thoughts, and seek Your will rather than my own. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within me, and fill me with the Holy Spirit. Let the humility, love, truthfulness, and holiness of Christ be manifested in my life. In my home, church, and workplace, let me reveal Christ rather than myself, and let me rejoice more in Christ being exalted than in my own exaltation. Let me live a life in which it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. In the name of Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.”

The purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person. It is to become a person filled with Christ. Emptying is not hating myself. It is emptying myself of the desire to be the master and receiving Christ as Lord. Emptying is not a life of doing nothing. It is a life of loving and serving with the mind of Christ. Therefore, empty yourself every day. Be filled with the Word every day. Depend on the Holy Spirit every day. Have the mind of Christ every day. And serve people with the love of Christ. A life in which my desire to be the master is emptied and Christ is increasingly and clearly revealed as the Lord of my life. A life in which it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. This is the path of “emptying” that we are called to walk.

Conclusion

Now, as we bring this book to a close, I would like to return to the questions we asked at the beginning: “What must I empty out?” And, “What must I fill the emptied space with?” These two questions have run throughout this entire book.

We first examined the difference between “letting go” and “emptying.” If letting go means releasing what I am holding in my hands, the emptying spoken of in this book goes deeper. It means emptying from the center of my heart the desire to be the master. It means emptying the desire to live with my thoughts, my desires, my will, my pride, and my name at the center, and surrendering that place to Christ. Therefore, emptying is not simply a life of giving something up. It is a life of emptying the desire to be the master and receiving Christ as the Lord of my life.

Jesus Christ First Emptied Himself

The reason we can speak of emptying is that Jesus Christ first walked the path of self-emptying. Philippians 2:7 says that Jesus “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.” Jesus’ self-emptying did not mean that He gave up His divinity. Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself, took the form of a servant, and came among us. And He obeyed the will of the Father to the point of death on the cross. In Christ’s emptying there was humility. There was obedience. There was love. There was service. And there was the cross. Therefore, the emptying we speak of is not merely self-discipline or an exercise in emptying the mind. It is the path of discipleship in which we look to Jesus Christ, who emptied Himself for us, embrace His mind, and follow Him. We were not the first to empty ourselves. Christ first gave Himself for us. We were not the first to love. Christ first loved us. Therefore, our emptying must also begin with the grace of Christ.

Emptying Is Not for Condemning Ourselves

In this book, we have examined various forms of sin within us. Before the Word, we examined one by one pride, greed, hypocrisy, falsehood, hatred, evil thoughts, sexual immorality, resentment, and envy.

At times, these words may have pierced our hearts painfully. “There is this kind of pride in me too.” “I have been relying on money more than on God.” “The person I show to others has been different from who I really am.” “There is still someone I hate and have not forgiven.” “Why have I lived with so much resentment and comparison?” But the purpose of examining these sins was not to drive us to despair or condemn us. It was to look honestly at ourselves in the mirror of Scripture. It was to bring before God what we had been hiding. And it was to acknowledge that we cannot change ourselves by our own strength and to look again to the cross. Emptying does not begin with the resolution, “Now I must become a better person.” Rather, it begins with the confession, “Lord, I cannot do this in my own strength.” I cannot completely remove the pride within me by my own strength. I cannot cleanse my greed by willpower alone. I cannot erase long-standing hatred and wounds simply by making a decision. The same is true of resentment and envy. That is why we need grace. We need the cross. We need the help of the Holy Spirit. Emptying is not the work of cleansing ourselves by our own strength. It is the act of honestly surrendering ourselves before the grace of God.

The Purpose of Emptying Is to Be Filled with Christ

But we must not stop after emptying. As we conclude this book, there is one truth we must hold onto most clearly: the purpose of emptying is not to become an empty person, but to become a person filled with Christ. Our goal is not merely to become people who sin less. Nor does it end with becoming people who are not proud. The goal of faith is not merely to become a person without greed, a person who does not become angry, or a person who does not envy. In that emptied place, the character of Christ must appear. Where pride has been emptied, the humility of Christ must appear. Where greed has been emptied, contentment and generosity must appear. Where hypocrisy and falsehood have been emptied, sincerity and truthfulness must appear. Where hatred has been emptied, love and forgiveness must appear. Where evil thoughts and sexual immorality have been emptied, purity and holiness must appear. Where resentment and envy have been emptied, faith, gratitude, and love must appear. But if all of this is expressed in one sentence, it ultimately comes down to one thing: Christ is revealed in us. The apostle Paul confessed in Galatians 2:20: “I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” This is the direction in which our emptying must lead. It does not mean that I cease to exist. It means that the center of my life changes. My life changes from one in which I live as the master to one in which Christ is the Lord. It is a life that seeks God’s will rather than my own, rejoices to see the name of Jesus revealed rather than my own name, and looks to the interests of others with the mind of Christ rather than seeking only my own interests.

A Life Filled with Christ Is Revealed Through Service

Emptying is not something that takes place only within the heart. Fruit appears in the life of a person filled with Christ. One of those fruits is service. Jesus emptied Himself and took the form of a servant. And He washed His disciples' feet. Therefore, a person filled with the mind of Christ serves others rather than seeking to display oneself. Instead of asking, "Why does no one recognize me?" that person asks, "Whom can I serve today?" Instead of thinking, "What can I receive?" that person thinks, "What can I share?" That service must begin in the place closest to us. Reveal Christ in your home. Listen to your spouse. Apologize when you are wrong. Do not teach faith to your children only with words; show them parents who repent, forgive, and serve. Reveal Christ in the church as well. Instead of seeking a position, look for a place to serve. Do what is needed even when no one recognizes you. Reveal Christ in the workplace. Work honestly. Do not seek only your own interests. Do not take advantage of the weak; respect them. Rejoice with others in their success. Emptying is revealed through service. A heart filled with Christ ultimately flows into a life of love and service.

Emptying Is a Path We Walk Every Day

But we cannot empty everything through a single decision. Emptying pride today does not mean we will never become proud again tomorrow. Repenting of greed today does not mean desire will never arise again. Forgiving someone today does not mean the wound will never come to mind again. Giving thanks today does not mean we will never complain tomorrow. Therefore, emptying is not something completed by a single decision. It is the path of discipleship in which we follow Christ every day. Every day, we must examine our hearts before the Word: "Lord, what must I empty out of myself today?" And at the same time, we must ask: "Lord, what must I fill that place with?" When pride rises again, empty it. When greed takes hold of your heart again, empty it. When hatred rises again, bring it before God. When resentment arises, remember the grace of God. When envy arises, turn your gaze from people to God. And fill that empty place with Christ again. Fill it with the Word. Come before God in prayer. Seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Embrace the mind of Christ. And love, forgive, and serve. This is the path of faith that must be repeated in our lives every day.

We Stand Again Before Two Questions

Now, as you close this book, stand once again before the two questions we asked at the beginning: "What must I empty out?" What pride am I still holding onto? What am I relying on more than God? Am

I wearing any mask in order to be seen by others in a certain way? Am I hiding or distorting the truth? Is there still someone I hate and cannot forgive? Are there evil thoughts that I repeatedly nurture in my heart? Has my heart been captivated by wrongful desires? Are there areas in which I am resentful and failing to trust God? Am I comparing myself with others and envying them? Then ask the second question: “What am I filled with?” Is my heart filled with the Word of Christ? Is the humility of Christ being revealed in me? Is the love of Christ being revealed in me? Are the truthfulness and holiness of Christ being revealed in me? Are gratitude and faith growing within me? Am I serving people with the mind of Christ? Above all, who is the Lord of my life right now? As you stand before these questions, do not think about someone else. Do not think about your spouse. Do not think about your children. Do not think about another member of the church. First, place yourself before God. And pray: “Lord, examine my heart again today. Show me the desire within me to be the master. Help me empty what must be emptied and bring it honestly before You without hiding it. Rather than trying to change myself by my own strength, help me hold onto the grace of the cross and seek the help of the Holy Spirit. And fill my emptied heart with Christ. Let the Word of Christ dwell richly within me, and let the humility, love, truthfulness, and holiness of Christ be revealed in my life. In my home, in the church, in the workplace, and before the people I meet, help me reveal Christ rather than myself. Let me rejoice more in Christ being revealed than in myself being exalted. Let me live a life in which it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. In the name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.”

Emptying is not about erasing myself. It is about emptying the desire to be the master. Emptying is not simply giving things up. It is surrendering the center of my life to Christ. Emptying is not about becoming an empty person. It is about becoming a person increasingly filled with Christ. And a life filled with Christ is revealed through love and service. Therefore, empty yourself again today. And fill yourself with Christ. Let the name of Christ be revealed rather than your own name. Seek God’s will rather than your own. Instead of seeking only your own interests, serve your neighbor with the mind of Christ. Let yourself decrease so that Christ may be revealed more and more. And live each day with this confession: “It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.” Empty yourself, and be filled with Christ. This is the path of “emptying” that we must walk every day as disciples of Jesus Christ.