

Excerpt from
Bring My Sheep Back!

By Thomas W. Bear

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Preface

Introduction

Writing a book about the process of restoring a brother caught in sin is difficult. One reason is the complexity of the subject. Another is the fact that it tends to be a heated topic. Because of the nature of the restoration process itself, people will likely be apprehensive about applying the principles in this book in their life and church. If asked, many Christians will say that attempts to restore a brother caught in sin usually don't work. Many can relate a personal experience resulting from an attempt made by a church they attended that turned ugly. Then there are the pastors who have a godly desire to shepherd the flock under their care. Part of the shepherd's responsibility is to protect the flock. The very thought of implementing the restoration process is downright scary to many pastors. In light of these things, why would anyone want to write a book about the process of restoration? Because I believe God calls all Christians to care for one another, I wrote this book in order to serve those who wish to lovingly restore other Christians who are caught in sin.

Vertical verses horizontal focus

Most of the books that deal with the subject of restoration approach it from the standpoint of conflict resolution between Christians. I believe that if we approach the subject from that angle, we are doing so from a man-centered point of view. Conflict brings pain and suffering so we naturally look for ways to bring relief to others or ourselves. We are driven to avoid pain and suffering. The focus can become more about us than Christ and how He would have us deal with the problem. Subconsciously, we ask ourselves, "How can we fix the problem so everything can be okay again?" We want some relief for ourselves or others whom we love so we are driven mainly to solve the conflict. I believe that the correct approach keeps Christ's interests first and our interests last. In light of the cross, suffering at the hands of other believers or unbelievers is not that big of a deal. While suffering unjustly is very painful and a big deal to the one suffering, it does not compare to the pain Christ suffered or the glory that will be revealed in us when Jesus returns (Romans 8:18). Therefore, putting our comfort aside, we seek Christ's interests and those include the restoration of any brother caught in sin, regardless of the suffering that has been caused by the one caught in sin.

The relationship of restoration to conflict resolution

For the sake of discussion, let us consider the terms "conflict" and "restoration." Though each of these terms is different, they are both related to the subject of sin and therefore are related to each other. If there were no such thing as sin, there would be no need for either of these terms. If there were no sin, there would never be conflicts between people. If there were no sin, no Christian would ever be caught in it. If there were no sin, there would be no need for reconciliation or restoration because there would be no fracture in relationships between people. For the sake of this discussion, ***restoration involves the freeing of an individual Christian from an ongoing sinful behavior or attitude.*** The term "restoration," as used in this book, is restricted in its scope. Using two biblical analogies, restoration has to do with freeing a brother caught in sin so that he "resumes the race," or "reenters the battle." Understandably, sin has consequences that can have a lasting affect. For example, the sin of adultery will affect a marriage long after forgiveness takes place. The term "restoration" in this book does not address the consequences of sin that can have a long lasting affect on the life of the one who was caught in sin. It merely addresses the freeing from sin that enables the brother to resume the race set before him.

This book focuses on the process of delivering individual Christians from on-going sinful behavior or attitudes. You may still be wondering, "What about conflict in relationships between people?" This book sets forth the principle that ***eliminating conflicts between believers requires the deliverance of individual Christians from ongoing sinful behavior or attitudes.*** In other words, by delivering people from the bondage of sin, conflicts can be eliminated.

Again, it is the freeing of those caught in sin that is at the center of our focus, not the resolution of conflicts. Though conflicts tend to go away when people are freed from sin, the elimination of conflict is not our greatest priority; this should not be the driving motivation for our effort. More is said about this in the chapter "*Weighing the importance of resolving conflicts between Christians.*"

David said of God, “*He restores my soul*” (*Psalms 23:3*). At the outset, let me emphatically state that it is God who is the restorer of our souls. Though we are commanded to repent, He is the one who grants repentance (II Timothy 2:25). Christians have been made new creatures in Christ, and being raised from spiritual death unto life, Christians desire to live for God and enjoy Him. Yet, the flesh wars against the Spirit within them to entice them to sin (Galatians 5:17). Because they have been raised to new life in Christ, they are no longer obligated to follow fleshly desires and are motivated to battle against them (see Romans 6). Nevertheless, each Christian has fallen to temptation on many occasions.

Normally, the Christian, sensing the horror and misery of sin, repents quickly because he desires to fix his gaze upon Christ’s beauty. But sometimes, there can be hours and even days in which the Christian is deceived by sin and trapped by it. In most cases, God brings about repentance and restoration directly without using any human agency. The sheer misery of the experience is normally all that is needed to bring it about.

Sometimes, God, always driven by love, arranges for affliction or trials in order to bring it about. Sometimes, God uses human agency as the means to bring it about. A brother could be caught in a secret sin and hear a sermon that God uses to work repentance. Hearing a testimony of God’s wonderful work in another Christian’s life could cause hunger and yearning for God. One of the greatest advantages of being closely knit to other believers in a local church is the fellowship of other believers. Ideally, if a brother is co-laboring with other brothers and enjoying fellowship in Christ, the relationship is so greatly valued between them that any break in it is noticed immediately. A brother enjoying this type of fellowship knows instinctively when his brother is discouraged so he looks for ways to encourage him. His concern for him drives him to make sure he is not being abused by Satan. If his brother is caught in sin, he can usually sense it and immediately seeks to show him that he cares and offers encouragement and help. Ideally, this is the nature of the ministry of restoration. In this healthy environment of fellowship, prolonged periods of bondage to sinful behavior or attitudes are less likely to occur. But it is possible, especially when fellowship is lacking, that a brother may end up caught in sin for a longer period of time. No matter how long a brother has been caught in sin, the ministry of restoration is our responsibility and privilege because we care about our brothers and sisters in Christ. This book explains the various biblical principles involved in the process of restoration.

The Bible contains much instruction for Christian living that appears to be idealistic. As a result, we tend to brush it aside and form our own ideas that seem more practical. A good example of this is found in Jesus’ teaching about divorce (Matthew 19:3-8). The Pharisees tried to test Jesus by asking Him if it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife. Jesus responded with teaching that might seem idealistic saying that man should not separate what God has joined together. The Pharisees cited how Moses instructed that a man could give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away. Then Jesus makes a very interesting statement that illustrates how people tend to brush God’s idealistic teachings aside. He said, “*Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard.*” I bring this up not to address the subject of divorce but to demonstrate that it is our nature to rationalize God’s truth when it seems too far out of reach to put into practice.

As we contemplate the biblical instruction for restoring a brother God’s way, it is wise to realize that people have not changed. As long as we live in the flesh, we will continue to have this tendency to rationalize God’s instructions. As we consider what the Bible teaches about restoring a brother, understand that from a human viewpoint, it seems idealistic. In fact, it is impossible to do it in our own power because the only power we possess on our own apart from Christ is the power of the flesh. God’s ideal method of restoring a brother requires His supernatural power to be unleashed within us and in the one caught in sin.

As in everything relating to biblical Christianity, God’s way of restoring a brother cannot be accomplished without His intervention. God’s way always seeks true restoration through changed hearts that stand back afterwards to bow down and worship Him for who He is, the Almighty, Living God who desires to make His glory known. His way is not about couples “working on their relationship” or individuals seeking help from professional health care workers. Rather, it is about God honoring His promises and unleashing His power as His people humble themselves and call upon Him to act in accordance with His promises.

Any so-called success at restoring a brother or resolving conflict man's way elevates man in some measure. But when God's way is employed and hearts are changed, all who are close enough to observe are fully aware that God indeed moved and He gets all of the glory. This is what honors Him, and any other approach obscures His glory and dishonors Him. Remember, "*God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble*" (James 4:6). The proud man leans on his own understanding and resources. The humble admit they are helpless and call upon God to act in their behalf. We simply must not rely on the power of man in these matters.

"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives" (Jeremiah 17:5-6).

There are no short cuts to restoring a brother caught in sin. It requires faith on the part of Christians. It requires us to believe that God will bring forth changed hearts by His power. It requires us to look to Him. As this book progresses, an attempt will be made to show that God's way forces us to abandon our resources and problem solving techniques. Restoring a brother God's way requires us to "*Trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not to our own understanding*" (Proverbs 3:5).

While I believe this book conveys the biblical instruction about the restoration process, it represents one man's perspective. I have tried to support my teaching with Scripture throughout, hoping to convince honest students of the Bible about the principles it contains. As you read this book, just consider it a potential tool to help in the process of restoration but rely upon the Bible as God's authoritative guide for the process. Remember also that the process of restoration requires a great amount of wisdom for all who are involved. God has promised to give wisdom to those who ask in faith (James 1:2-4) so plead with Him continually for help and understanding.

Whether wisdom is gleaned from the Bible directly or books like this one, a wise pastor will give attention to teaching his congregation about this important subject. A congregation that understands these principles beforehand will be better equipped to deal with situations that involve restoration. It may be advisable for pastors to develop a document that helps the members understand their responsibility to care for other members. The pastor at my church created such a document that he entitled "Covenant of Care." With his permission, I have included it in Appendix D hoping that it might serve as an example that can be used or revised and then used in other congregations.

As you seek to ascertain a biblical perspective about the process of restoration, make an honest effort to approach the subject guided by a loving disposition. If you attempt to understand the biblical teaching about restoration without it, you will likely come to some false conclusions that will distort your understanding. If you approach this subject with a critical disposition, you will likely see this process as a form of "church punishment." If so, your understanding of the restoration process will be distorted and you will fail to be a "wise reprovener" (Proverbs 25:12). You will not be able to offer much help to a brother in need of restoration.

The book will examine several principles of the restoration process along with the biblical foundation for each one. In some cases, known objections to certain principles are noted and addressed as footnotes. If any one of these principles is new to you or falls outside your current thinking, carefully consider it in light of the Scripture cited. Then, either validate or discard each principle in accordance with what you think the Bible teaches. If you choose to discard any of these principles as unbiblical, I ask that you do so only if you have valid scriptural reason to do it.

What is the chief purpose of the restoration process?

Whenever a brother is delivered from bondage to a sinful attitude or behavior, many blessings result. For example, the brother who is restored is able to begin enjoying his relationship with God and people without hindrance caused by the sin to which he was bound. Those people associated with him suddenly enjoy fellowship with him that was hindered while he was bound. As a result, the grace of God begins flowing, not only to the one who has been restored, but also through him to those around him like his family and co-laborers in the work of the Kingdom. More important than these blessings to God's people is the glory that God brings to Himself through the deliverance of the one caught in sin. God said, *"Be holy for I am holy"* (I Peter 1:15). He desires that His body be pure, with lives that reflect His righteousness and holiness to all who observe. God is rightly jealous of His Name and desires that His people who are identified with His Name reflect His glory.

God is jealous for His Name

One of the Ten Commandments reads, *"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain."* We observe from Jesus' explanation of the commandments that they can also be expressed in a positive format. For example, *"You shall have no other gods before me"* may be expressed, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart"* (Matthew 22:37). Likewise, the command, *"Do not take the name of God in vain"* could also be stated, **You shall reverence God's Holy Name every moment of your life in everything you think, say and do.** If a person revered God's name like this, he would fulfill the righteousness expressed in the command, *"Do not take the name of God in vain."*

When Moses asked God what His name was, He said, "I AM" because His covenant with Israel included His commitment to identify His Name with them. They would be YHWH's people. The people of the surrounding nations would come to know who YHWH was and what He was like through the nation of Israel and God's dealings with them. For example, God raised up Pharaoh against Israel in order to show Himself as the Almighty God able to deliver. *"But I have raised you up for this very purpose, that I might show you my power and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth"* (Exodus 9:16).

God also told Israel that after He brought them into the Promised Land, He would choose a special place to "put His Name." *"But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go"* (Deuteronomy 12:5). As He did with Israel, God has chosen to make Himself known through His people who are known as Christians. He identifies Himself with them by Name. As a result, everything we think, say and do reflects on Him and His name. In Moses' day, He told the priests that they *"must not shave their heads or shave off the edges of their beards or cut their bodies. They must be holy to their God and must not profane the name of their God"* (Leviticus 21:5-6). In the New Testament times, Paul instructed Christian slaves to honor their masters so that God's Name would not be slandered (I Timothy 6:1). He said also that everyone who confesses "the Name" must turn away from wickedness (II Timothy 2:19) and live lives that will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive (Titus 2:10).

Scripture calls us ambassadors of Christ. We represent Him to the world. If we think, say or do things that are sinful, we present a bad image of Him to the world and this reflects poorly on His Name because we have been identified with that Name. Our behavior and attitudes reflect the condition of our hearts. This is why God is so concerned about what we love. *"Do not worship any other god, for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God"* (Exodus 34:14). Here He says His Name is Jealous, which depicts something about His desire for our love. If we love someone or something more than Him, His name is profaned because the image of Him is tarnished in our lives. He is made out to be less lovely than the things on which we focus our attention. The word "profane" means to make something common. Clearly God wants His Name to be the opposite of common. It is to be treated as holy, the opposite of common. When His Name is remembered, He wants it to be clearly associated with things that produce awe in the heart of the person thinking about that Name. Every sin we commit causes His Name to be maligned and His image tarnished in our eyes, the eyes of other people and the heavenly host. Our lives should look radically different than those of the people living in our culture. If a man professes to be a Christian and is caught in sin, the image of God reflected by his life is maligned and God is made out to be mundane.

From these things we conclude that the single greatest purpose for the process of restoration is that the name of Jesus is made attractive by the attitudes and behavior of His people. Therefore, driven by love and clothed with true humility, we seek the restoration of any brother caught in sin so that Jesus will be praised and exalted in the life of the brother once he is restored.

When should we go after a brother to restore him?

We must be concerned about any brother who appears to be caught in sin. We should pray for him and try to encourage him. After restoration takes place, there is no more need for him to repent. But if he remains caught in a sinful behavior or attitude, with no sign of repentance, we must take further action.

Let's say that a spouse commits adultery and then immediately repents and that repentance is evident by their sorrow, confession and complete change of behavior. In other words, it is genuine repentance. The moment that person repented, he was restored. There is no more need for restoration from that sin.¹ There is no longer a need to go to that person on a mission to "restore" him as prescribed by Galatians 6:1.

Now let's assume that a spouse commits adultery and covers it up. Perhaps he even continues his extramarital affair. This ongoing sinful behavior and state of heart requires deliverance because those who practice such a sin will not inherit the kingdom of God according to Galatians 5:19-21. The spouse must come to repentance for the sake of his own soul, let alone his marriage. Until he does, he will remain in bondage and Jesus' Name will be maligned. The process of restoration always has to do with the freeing of a Christian that is "caught in sin." It has no application to a person that has truly repented of sin and is no longer in bondage to it. It is only necessary when a person has not repented of that sin. The Bible provides a good example that helps illustrate this.

In II Samuel 11:1 – 12:24, we read the account of King David's sin with Bathsheba. We know that David committed flagrant adultery and even murdered Bathsheba's husband, Uriah, to cover up his sin. Yet, David, the writer of many of the Psalms, knew God and was called a man after God's own heart (I Samuel 13:14). We conclude that a single act of adultery, and even murder, does not necessarily disqualify a person from the Kingdom of God. Crossing a certain line of gross sinful behavior does not necessarily disqualify us for heaven.

From the story of King David's life, we learn that it is possible for a believer to experience a period in his life in which he is "caught in sin." How long was David caught in sin? In other words, how long after the act of adultery and murder did David repent? The Bible does not tell us the number of days or months but it is clear that for some period of time, David remained caught in sin. He remained caught in sin until the Lord sent Nathan the prophet to confront him about his sin. Nathan told David a story about a poor man with a single ewe lamb and another man who was rich. Instead of slaughtering a sheep from his own flock, the rich man took the poor man's only lamb to feed a traveler that visited him. David became furious about the injustice and said that the rich man deserved to die. Nathan said, "You are the man!" Nathan then told David of God's judgment for his crime against Uriah, Bathsheba's husband. It appears from David's response in II Samuel 12:13 that David repented upon hearing from God. Until Nathan confronted him, David remained caught in sin.

In Psalm 51, David records a heart-felt confession to God. We feel his grief over his sin as he pleads with God to create in him a clean heart and restore to him the joy of his salvation. This response is one of a repentant, contrite heart. From this story we see that it is possible for one of God's people to be caught in sin in such a way that they do not see the sin rightly. We see a tendency to cover up our sin and go on living as if we can go unnoticed by man and God. When caught in sin, God's people simply cannot experience intimacy with God that Jesus made possible through his death in their behalf. In David's case, he did not continue in outward sinful behavior involving adultery and murder. But he did remain trapped in sin until the day he repented of it.

From the example of David, we learn that restoration of a straying brother is not complete until the brother sees his sin as God sees it and repents. This lesson is in harmony with Jesus' instruction, "*If your brother sins, go and show him his fault*" (Matthew 18:15 NASB). In the next chapter, we will examine the nature of true repentance in greater detail.

Someone may ask, "What type of sinful behavior requires us to seek the restoration of a brother caught in it?" Paul provides a list of sins that, if practiced as a lifestyle without repentance, disqualify a person from the kingdom of God.

“The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19-21).

Paul clearly states that if a person remains caught in any of these sins without deliverance, that person shall not inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, if a man lives with any of these sins, surrendered to it as its victim until he dies, that man will go to hell. We are told to run the race set out for us with endurance (Hebrews 12:1). Jesus said that only those who endure to the end will be saved (Matthew 24:13). This verse applies not only to our standing in the face of intense persecution, it also applies to our standing against sin in general. If we fail to seek the restoration of any brother that remains caught in one of the sins mentioned in the Galatians 5:19-21 passage, we are essentially saying that we don't care if he goes to hell. This is why Paul goes on to say just a few sentences after this list, *“If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently” (Galatians 6:1)*. Therefore, out of love, we must seek his restoration so that he does not end up in hell. If he is a brother, we can have confidence that he will eventually repent. Because of the serious implications, let us examine these sins one at a time to better understand them.

Immorality: *sexual relations/activity that is condemned by God*

Impurity: *uncleanness; letting one's heart and mind engage in sexual lust and imaginations*

Sensuality: *licentiousness; wantonness, to let the desire for sensual pleasure occupy the heart without restraint*

Idolatry: *image worship and desiring things other than God more than God himself; self-rule.*

Sorcery: *the use of drugs or spells; to engage in spiritual activities that are associated with the kingdom of darkness*

Enmities: *continual hostile mindset towards another person or other people in general*

Strife: *to quarrel with other people*

Jealousy: *zeal to possess the sole affection of someone that you think is your possession*

Outbursts of anger: *angry temper; indignation; rage; wrath*

Disputes: *rivalry; selfish ambition; selfishness*

Dissentions: *standing apart*

Factions: *stubbornly holding to one's opinion without biblical support for doing so; heresies*

Envy: *zeal to possess something or someone that belongs to another already*

Drunkenness: *being intoxicated to the point that one is controlled by the substance*

Carousing: *to revel; to 'party;' looking to enjoy the world's pleasures with a lustful heart*

From the immediate context, we know that those who “live this way” will not inherit the kingdom of God. Unbelievers live this way. They have no power within themselves to free themselves from sins like these because they only have the power of the flesh. Such a person is what the Bible calls “a natural” man. In the broader context, Paul contrasts the natural way of living to the way believers live. Just before this list of sins, Paul explains how believers are different than unbelievers because the Holy Spirit has made them alive. Though the flesh remains, the believer is able to live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. He is no longer bound to do as the flesh desires.

“I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law” (Galatians 5:16-18).

Then, immediately after the listing of sins characteristic in lives of unbelievers (v. 19-21), Paul tells us what the believer’s life should contain.

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22 – 25).

Put simply, the life of a Christian should normally be characterized by these fruits of the Holy Spirit. If, on the contrary, his life is characterized by one or more of the sins of the flesh, he is living like an unbeliever. He is caught in sin. Jesus came to give “abundant life” (John 10:10). Abundant life is not a natural life; it is more appropriately labeled “supernatural.” It is lived by the power of the Holy Spirit who is evidenced by the fruit of the Spirit.

To further elaborate, let us examine a few common practices of unbelievers that are manifestations of the sins of the flesh. In other words, let us look at a few other sins that, if in the life as an ongoing practice, could indicate the need for restoration.

Gossip

Though not mentioned by name in Galatians 5:19-21, we can conclude that it is one of the sins that require restoration. Let us examine the nature of gossip to see how it relates to the sins of the flesh.

Habitual gossip indicates a continual hostile mindset towards other people, or “*enmities*” as Galatians 5:20 puts it in the NASB. Since it does not regard the interest of the one being talked about, it reflects a selfishness described by the sin “*disputes*” also found in Galatians 5:20 of the NASB. Often, gossip is conceived out of *envy* for the one being discussed. There is a desire to be held in higher esteem than the one being talked about. Gossip may be an outward manifestation of other sins listed in Galatians 5:19-21 but it is a form of *idolatry* at the very least. To gossip is to take the seat of God in judgment over another person. The one who gossips makes himself out to be God in that he condemns his brother. Only God has the right to justify or condemn. Those who habitually gossip are caught in a sin that requires repentance.

Abuse of those under our authority

Now let’s assume that a husband habitually exercises “lordship” over his wife, treating her as inferior and demanding submission to him. Such a husband is obviously ignorant of biblical teaching about how husbands are to relate to their wives. Therefore, we have a responsibility to give him biblical instruction so that he abandons his attitudes and resulting behavior. But let’s assume that he is taught what the Bible has to say and continues his abusive lordship over his wife. If, after receiving biblical instruction, he continues to **demand** his own ways so much that *hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, and selfish ambition* characterize his life and relationship with his wife, he is caught in sin that requires repentance because those who “practice” any of these sins will not inherit the kingdom of God according to Galatians 5:20. This husband needs to be “restored.” He must come to repentance for the sake of his own soul, let alone his marriage.

From these things we conclude that it is not merely extreme sinful behavior that requires our attention in matters involving our brothers. Any behavior or attitude that has entrapped us or our brother requires repentance and restoration. If prayer and encouragement fail, loving reproof is necessary to turn our brother back so that he is able once again to bask in God’s glory.

How do we KNOW if a brother has been “restored?”

What does it mean to be “free” from the bondage of a sin? How do we know if a brother has been “restored?” A brother is not restored until true repentance has taken place from the sin to which he was once bound. To know

when a brother is restored, we must have a biblical understanding of repentance. From the following passage, we learn that true repentance is not mere feelings of regret. Nor is it self-reformation. It is nothing less than the supernatural work of God in us causing us to see our sins as He sees them and moving us to desire His ways above ours.

“Even if I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it. Though I did regret it--I see that my letter hurt you, but only for a little while-- yet now I am happy, not because you were made sorry, but because your sorrow led you to repentance. For you became sorrowful as God intended and so were not harmed in any way by us. Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done” (II Corinthians 7:8-11).

Paul speaks of a godly sorrow that brings repentance that leads to salvation and a worldly sorrow that leads to death. Once confronted with his sin, it is possible that a man shows visible signs of sorrow and regret over his sin. He may even acknowledge his sin to others and express sorrow and regret over it. Yet, genuine repentance may not have occurred. In our efforts to restore our brother, our goal is genuine repentance that is produced by godly sorrow. A detailed examination of repentance may be found in Appendix A.

How can we tell if genuine repentance has taken place? Below are some evidences we should see in the life of the brother who truly repents.

- Gratefulness to the one who confronted him about his sin

When initially confronted with his sin, a man may resent the reprover. But once genuine repentance has taken place, he sees everything differently. He realizes that the one who confronted him is his true friend and is thankful.²

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you. Reprove a wise man and he will love you” (Proverbs 9:8).

If a man remains bitter over the efforts others take to show him his sin, he exhibits characteristics of an unbeliever or scoffer. But after a man truly repents, he values the efforts that others took to restore him. It was Nathan who rebuked David over his sin with Bathsheba and Uriah. After that, David valued Nathan's friendship all the more. He remained David's close adviser until his death. Listen to David's valuation of the ministry of reproof:

“Let the righteous smite me in kindness and reprove me; It is oil upon the head; Do not let my head refuse it” (Psalm 141:5).

If, after a man is confronted about his sin, he seems resentful and ungrateful, he has not seen his sin. In some way, he does not agree with the charge against him. Perhaps he feels unjustly treated and singled out. If he was truly caught in bondage to some sin and refuses to hear rebuke, he not only disagrees with the one trying to help, but he is in disagreement with God. Genuine repentance has not taken place yet.

- Genuine confession to God and man about his sin and guilt

A person can express regret and sorrow over his sin and acknowledge it and yet fail to confess his sin. Most people will acknowledge they are sinners but they do so in such a way that they seem to justify their sin. For example, they might say, “Of course I have sinned. Nobody's perfect.” By saying this, they merely acknowledge that they sin but they do not take the blame for it. They minimize their sin. When a man truly confesses, he never minimizes his sin. Rather, he detests it and takes full blame for it.

The word "confess" essentially means to agree with God about our sin. His Word convicts us of sin. It means that the accused sees the sin and guilt the way God sees it. He now detests the sin as horrible. To see sin and guilt as God sees it, there must be a genuine grieving over it, never a minimizing of it.

- A desire to make things right

Paul said that godly sorrow produces true repentance and a fruit of it is a desire that justice be done (II Corinthians 7:11). If a person repents of stealing, he will want to make restitution. If there is anything he can do to make things right with anyone he offended, he will seek to do it. He will seek forgiveness and go to others to confess his sin. He will no longer try to hide it. He desires to live a life free of pretense and is sick and tired of the bondage that hindered his enjoyment of God.

“See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness, what eagerness to clear yourselves, what indignation, what alarm, what longing, what concern, what readiness to see justice done” (II Corinthians 7:8-11).

- Intense desire to be free from the sin

If a person is not grieved over a sin in his life to the point that he is desperately seeking deliverance from it, he does not see his sin rightly. Does the person persistently (at least daily) ask God to help him stop or avoid the sin? Or is it not seen as something important enough to pray about daily? If not, he does not see his sin and guilt as God sees it. He remains caught in it. Sometimes, believers may not experience immediate deliverance from some highly addictive sinful behavior, but if genuine repentance has taken place, a believer will begin to battle against it. He will be desperate about it because the sin grieves him greatly (II Corinthians 7:11). Whenever he falls, he will get back up and begin battling again. His hatred for the sin will not allow him to simply give up to its dominion over him.

- Heightened state of alert about the dangers of the sin

After sin takes advantage of a believer and he is restored, he then has a heightened watchfulness concerning the dangers of the sin. He has indignation and alarm over his sin and his participation in it (II Corinthians 7:11). He recognizes the eternal consequences at stake and takes steps to isolate himself from situations that would increase the likelihood of temptations. *“The prudent see danger and take refuge” (Proverbs 27:12)*. The man who exhibits godly sorrow learns from the experience; he becomes wiser for it. He gains a better understanding of his own vulnerability and understands better than ever that warning, *“Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall” (I Corinthians 10:12)*.

- The absence of genuine repentance and restoration

When God regenerates a man, he is translated out of the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of His dear Son (Colossians 1:13). He is a new creature who is no longer a slave to sin. (II Corinthians 5:17, Romans 6:6). Rather than live for himself, he now desires to live for God and enjoy Him without hindrance. Because of this, when a Christian sins, it is just a matter of time until he repents. Yet, it is possible, though not typical, for a Christian to become “caught in sin.” At this point, he is like a sheep that somehow ends up lying on its back with no way to right itself. God is able to right him directly and He sometimes uses human means in the process. But while he is “caught in sin,” he is not walking in the Spirit. On the contrary, he is living very much like an unbeliever, even if during this time he continues attending church regularly. If a man is never freed from the sin, it suggests that perhaps he never was regenerated by God. In other words, perhaps he never was a Christian in the first place. Though we are to remain hopeful that he is a Christian and anticipate that he will repent, there is no reason for him or anyone else to have assurance that he is a Christian. If a person is one of God’s children, God will bring chastening into his life.

“If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons” (Hebrews 12:8).

The motive for this chastening is always love and never condemnation or anger, because there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ (Romans 8:1). The chastening process may include human involvement in the ministry of reproving and rebuking. It may involve afflictions and trials designed to turn the heart back to Him. But if a person remains in bondage to a sin indefinitely, he should question whether he knows the Lord. He must not minimize his problem by measuring himself against other people who profess to know Christ. He should not

think that because the problem is so wide-spread, somehow the danger of hell is not present. Jesus said, “*Wide is the path that leads to destruction and many are on that path*” (Matthew 7:13-14). Many who claim to be Christians will find out some day that they do not know Christ (Matthew 7:23). We must not just chalk up our sinful behavior tendencies to “human weakness.” If our life is solely characterized by “human weakness” without victory over sinful behavior, then there is reason to wonder if the Holy Spirit lives within us.

To summarize, while it is possible for Christians to commit grossly sinful acts, such acts will not characterize their life. Their lives will be visibly different than those of unbelievers, as if they are dancing to the beat of a different drummer. We can always expect a true Christian to eventually repent and be freed of the sin to which he was bound (unless God chooses to take him home first).

Remaining sections:

Restoration is our chief aim, not conflict resolution.

All efforts to restore a brother must be founded in love.

We must truly forgive before we can restore.

The approach is determined by whether sin is private or public.

The end of the process is restoration, not condemnation.

Love always assumes a person is innocent until proven guilty.

We must avoid gossip at all cost.

Who should do the work of restoration?

How should we apply the principles of biblical restoration?

Remember to avoid unbiblical practices.

What should we do if a minor is caught in sin?

How should we deal with sins that involve the authorities?

Appendix A: Repentance That Accompanies Salvation and restoration

Appendix B: God's Providence Over the Sins of Others

Appendix C: What a Christian must do if caught in the enemy's trap.

Appendix D "Covenant of Care" Example

Books Written by Tom Bear

Church (according to the Bible): Most pastors wish that the members of their churches would grow and flourish more. The church members often sense that God has purposes for them but they don't know what He wants them to do. They often end up playing the role of an unfulfilled spectator. Church examines the early New Testament Church and its teachings for answers to this universal problem. It demonstrates how certain unbiblical attitudes and traditions exist which cultivate this unhealthy spectator mindset. Church challenges leaders and "laypeople" to identify and discard these unbiblical attitudes and practices that stifle spiritual health. This book asserts that if the pattern of the early New Testament Church is followed today, Christians will mature at a greater pace and experience fulfillment as active participants in the advancement of Christ's Kingdom. (160 pages)

E-Book available from Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006FL00EO>. Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://bringmysheepback.com/biblical-church>.

Bringing Back the Gospel: In the 21st century, many evangelism techniques are being used that have no biblical foundation. *Bringing Back the Gospel*, examines the Bible to determine what Christians should and should not do in order to fulfill the Great Commission. Christians all over the world consider this book an excellent instructional resource that is firmly grounded in the Bible. (154 pages) E-Book available from Amazon.com at

<http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006FXUME0>. Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://bringmysheepback.com/bringing-back-the-gospel>.

Bring My Sheep Back presents a candid framework for the process of restoring Christians that stray. Most of the books that deal with this subject approach it from the standpoint of solving conflicts between Christians. *Bring My Sheep Back* is founded on Jesus' teaching to put the interests of the straying Christian ahead of our own desire for immediate relief of pain caused by the one caught in sin. Personal observations along with much attention to biblical instruction produce a very useful and thorough resource for church leaders and lay people who desire to restore Christians trapped by sin. This book warns against dependence on man-made approaches to solving relational problems. Whether it involves private sin or public scandal, or even cases that involve the governing authorities, biblical principles are taught as foundational to the process of restoration. (130 pages)
E-Book available from Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006FXEDMM>. Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://BringMySheepBack.com>.

Birth Control: A Spiritual Shackle- Did you know that before the twentieth century, the Protestant Church boldly spoke out against the practice of birth control? They were opposed to any act of man that interfered with the natural order of procreation. Men such as John Calvin, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Arthur Pink and Augustine were vehemently opposed to birth control. Today, Birth control is not just tolerated, it is embraced by the Protestant Church. Why has the Protestant Church changed its position? Is it possible that Christians living before the twentieth century were all mistaken? Why did they take a stand against birth control? Is it possible that the church of the nineteenth century was better equipped to discern right from wrong? Using six biblical arguments, this book demonstrates that birth control is a worldly practice that opposes God's will for His people, violates the marriage covenant and is an attack on the very character of God. (64 pages)
E-Book available from Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006J749NM>. Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://bringmysheepback.com/other-books>.

Christian Marriage: This book provides biblical principles that if applied, will result in harmony in the marriage and glory to God. Some will undoubtedly say that many problems in marriage are far too complex for such a short book to address. It is the premise of this book, however, that the source of all problems in Christian marriages are the result of failure to live as God has taught us to live in His Word. If a Christian couple lives in accordance with God's principles described in *Christian Marriage*, true harmony is guaranteed. (50 pages)
E-Book available from Amazon.com at <http://www.amazon.com/dp/B006J9EIFO>. Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://bringmysheepback.com/other-books>.

Old Testament Historical Narrative Bible Curriculum- This course is designed to stimulate the student to read through the Old Testament historical narrative so that he becomes familiar with the history of God's work to bring about redemption through Jesus Christ. By reading just one Bible chapter each day, the entire Old Testament historical narrative can be covered in less than six months. Questions are provided to help students read with the purpose of understanding the content and help the teacher measure the comprehension of the student. The answered questions also provide a basis for weekly or biweekly family or group discussion. As the student becomes more familiar with the Old Testament narrative, he will begin to understand how each part of the Old and New Testaments fit together into a harmonious message of redemption.
Paperback available from Bring My Sheep Back Books at <http://bringmysheepback.com/other-books>.