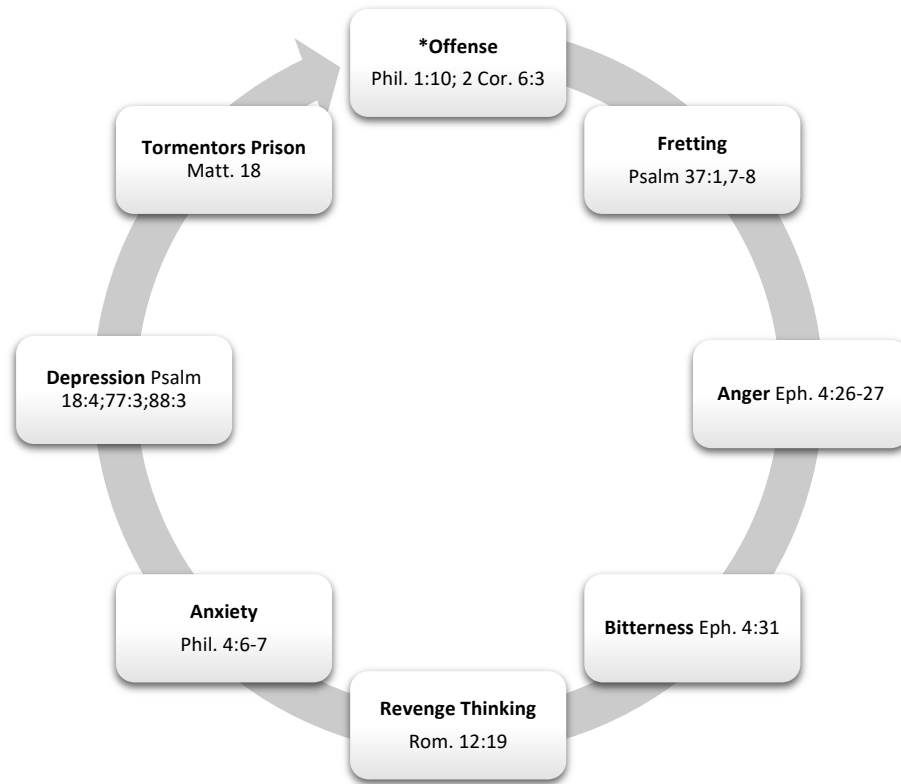


Lesson One

Tormented Mind Cycle



There are three types of Mental Torment: Inward, Subconscious, and Outward.

| | Tormented Spirit | |
|------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| Inward | Subconscious | Outward |
| Self-destructive | Physical Problems | Raging/Abusive |

Introduction

The person who exhibits **inward torment** develops exaggerated anxiety which ends in fear, anxiety or depression. This person may or may not have the ability to know when or where the torment started. They may not be able to trace the torment back to a particular event. Another form of **subconscious torment** can be identified by physical ailments: stomach problems, eating disorders, sleeplessness, physical sickness, twitching, choking while swallowing. There is a pervading looming anxiety over their entire life. This feels like a life characterized by tight rope walking.

The person who exhibits **outward torment** has exaggerated emotions. Exaggerated crying, moodiness, and racing thoughts. They often express their internal torment externally. There is a hyper focus on the temporal and trivial. Nothing seems to please them. Extreme levels of unleashed “torment”

drives them to rage, abusing themselves or others. You often see cutting or other self-destructive behaviors with addictions or even suicidal thinking. The cutting or the addictive behaviors give them temporary relief from their extreme torment. These are destructive coping strategies.

Lesson

Learn to recognize when you are in a tormented mind cycle.

1) **Offense** Being offended skews our ability to discern what is best for our lives. Taking an offense, leaves us with motives that may be impure. It seems an offense sets us up to be a magnet for chaos. The chaos increases our confusion and everything good we are trying to accomplish seems to be misaligned with an evil force or at the very least produces an unfruitful life of nagging unease.

*"...so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless (without offense) for the day of Christ." *Philippians 1:10**

*"We put no stumbling block (offense) in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited (blamed)." *2 Corinthians 6:3**

2) **Fretting** is a sister to murmuring, grumbling, and obsessive rumination. Recognizing fretting is half the battle. The next step will be to identify what person or circumstance (past or present) is driving the fretting and empower our self to make a plan of recovery. Fretting takes energy and strength and potentially leaves us drained and helpless to make a healthy decision for our lives.

*"**Do not fret** because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong... **Be still** before the LORD and **wait patiently** for him; **do not fret** when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes. **Refrain from anger** and **turn from wrath**; **do not fret**—it only leads to evil." *Psalms 37:1,7-8**

It's clear: **Do not fret!** The verses are acknowledging that people are doing evil, wrong, succeeding in wrongdoing and wicked schemes, but then it instructs us that if we fret, it will only lead to evil. The person in the wrong is wrong. But *our fretting makes us part of the problem*. So, what are we to do? Be still (quiet) and be patient. If we recognize we our fretting and refuse to fret, we can use our strength to smile and enjoy the day. The torment is then unable to cling to us. This is counter intuitive and requires **emotional maturity**.

3) **Anger** If I am angry at someone, do I need to communicate it immediately? **Remember: Anger blames someone else. Instead, accept my portion of the responsibility.**

- *"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires." *James 1:19-20**

Am I quick to listen? Am I slow to speak?

Wait before expressing anger:

During the waiting, you will analyze and claim your own part of the problem. If you do this wrong, the waiting will turn into a weapon of bitterness and you will build a case against someone else for the offense. But once you learn to rapidly release anger, this process can be done quicker.

RULE: Do not speak until you have control over your emotions and can speak out of love and not anger. I usually wait three days, then:

- I can't remember why I was angry.
- I realized it was a trauma memory and I was overreacting and very happy I didn't say anything.
- I have found a gentle way to discuss the situation with the person who needs corrected or coached.
- Or I decided the person isn't worth it and isn't approachable and would abuse me and I take it to the Lord and leave it.

4) **Bitterness** is an attitude that destroys present and future enjoyment of a relationship. Bitterness can be from abuse, neglect, unmet needs or simply unmet expectations. I know if I am bitter, because I can't let go of something that happened or something I expected to happen.

- *Get rid of all bitterness, rage, and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Ephesians 4:31*

Recovery:

- *Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4:32*

5) **Revenge** If bitterness is indulged and exaggerated it can quickly turn to revenge.

- *"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. Romans 12:19*

Recovery:

- *On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good. Romans 12:20-21*

6) **Anxiety** There is much to be said about the weight of anxiety. It can certainly overshadow any enjoyment of the day. Most anxiety can be resolved by staying in the present moment and trusting that however things work out, it will be fine. My anxiety is exacerbated by controlling people and circumstances. **There is freedom in allowing others to make mistakes and find their own path in life.**

"Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up." Proverbs 12:25

7) **Depression** The weight of chronic unresolved issues in our life can end in despair. There is a wrestling with our self that needs to be done. Many who sink into depression have an all good or bad mentality. The psalmist David took all his expressions of depression straight to the throne of God.

- *"The cords of death entangled me; the torrents of destruction overwhelmed me." Psalm 18:4*
- *"I remembered you, God, and I groaned; I meditated, and my spirit grew faint." Psalm 77:3*
- *"I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death." Psalm 88:3*

8) **Torment is extreme anxiety.**

Exercise

Evaluate the reasons why you may be stuck in torment.

Application

Recognize today how often your thinking is bound by an offense, fretting, anger, bitterness or anxiety and refuse this type of thinking.

Principle

Indulging exaggerated emotions produces chaos and torment.

Conclusion

A recognition of an offense that triggers this cycle is vital in recovery. A cognitive awareness of our behavioral patterns that follow is crucial. When we understand our cycle, then we can work through these behaviors and practice developing emotional maturity skills. The next two lessons are important in recovery. First, we will explore the mental replay loop that torment plays in our minds, explore lies we believe and build mature thinking skills. Secondly, we will unravel all the thinking traps of torment.

The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower. Psalm 18:2

Lord, help us to recognize our torment and know that we can be delivered and live free from fretting, anxiety and depression. Help us to trust you with all the outcomes of our lives. Give us the power of emotional maturity, love and a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7) In Jesus Name, Amen

Optional: **Mental Torment Evaluation** and evaluate your prison thinking. A=Always, N=Never, S=Sometimes.

| Reasons We may be Stuck in Tormentors Prison | |
|--|--|
| Mark the ones you need to work through: | |
| 1. Bad habit formed over the years; learned behavior or passed on from family | |
| 2. Indulging Self-pity through undisciplined thinking | |
| 3. Bringing up past (mounting up offenses) | |
| 4. Focus on self and not Christ | |
| 5. Fatigue, lack of sleep. Do I need to take care of myself, eat right, exercise and rest? | |
| 6. Having recently talked to or been with an angry person. Proverbs 22:24-25 | |
| 7. Offenses from others; some people are not safe to confront. Proverbs 9:7-8 | |
| 8. Helpless feeling. | |
| 9. Frustration with deeper unresolved issues or repetitive trauma. | |
| 10. Money stress. | |
| 11. Unchangeable circumstances – sickness, pain, etc. | |
| 12. Stuck in grieving cycle. | |
| 13. Refusing to forgive another, locks the prison door. | |