Lesson 1
Don't Panic — Believe

**John 16:1**
*I have told you these things to keep you from stumbling.*

**Spiritual First Aid**

In John chapters 14, 15 and 16 the Lord is equipping his followers for life without His physical presence.

- These things were said to His disciples the night before His crucifixion.
- He is giving believers instructions for survival as the world and Satan comes against them.
- Jesus instructions were like items in a survival kit.
- Jesus’ conclusion to chapters 14 through 16 is in John 16:1. Jesus said, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended*”.
  - *skandalizō* (stumble, fall away, take offence, lose your faith),
  - “a stumbling block or impediment in the way upon which another may trip and fall.
  - Metaphorically to entice to sin, cause a person to begin to distrust, desert, or fall away.

According to the parable of the rocky soil in Mark 4:17, Satan takes the Word of God from those who stumble.

- In other words, when you are offended, the Word of God stops releasing its life-giving power in your life.
- When you take offense—when you get hurt—you operate off of your emotions, not from the Word—the Word stops operating in you.
- The Lord said, "*These things* [John 14, 15, and 16] *have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended.*"

So “*these things*” that Jesus had spoken to them are the believers’ survival stuff to keep them from taking offence and falling away from the faith.

**What is the first thing you do in a crisis situation?**

In a book called *Terror at Tenerife*, Norman Williams, was in an actual accident on the Canary Islands in 1977, in which two huge 747s crashed on the runway and burned. Only a few people out of 500 or more escaped. The rest were killed.
It was miraculous how Williams got out. He looked at the people on either side of him, and it was so hot, the flesh just melted off of them. They became skeletons instantly. He said that people who were normally nice — little old ladies sixty or seventy years old — yelled things so vile it was unbelievable. He couldn't describe it. The things that were hidden deep in their hearts came out in a crisis situation and bothered him more than anything else.

But what came out of his mouth was different — he'd been seeking the Lord. He had agreed with his mother before he left on the trip that he'd be safe. The first thing to come out of his mouth was his faith that God would protect him. He had a huge fireball come right at him, but he wasn't burned. Then a landing gear came flying at him. He just caught the thing and threw it off. There was an explosion right above his head, and the plane, ten feet high at that point, was torn open. He jumped up right through that hole, even though he was fifty years old and overweight. God supernaturally delivered him.

Norman Williams didn't have time to sit back and ask, "Now let's see, how should I feel in this situation? What should I do in this situation?"

**First Things Last**

Your first reaction is going to affect the outcome in a crisis situation. Seldom do we have the luxury of sitting back and looking at things.

- The initial attitude, or your initial reaction you have when Satan comes against you is going to determine the final result.

- Jesus was preparing his disciples for the crisis of His death.
  - In John 14:1, Jesus says, *"Let not your heart be troubled"*
  - This is a personal command “You do not let your heart be troubled.”
    - Don’t you immediately react with your emotions.
    - God gave you power over your emotion. God gave you choice.
    - Many, in a crisis, think they have no choice but to panic, to be depressed and discouraged.
    - This is as much a command as, *You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.* It is a direct command from the Lord, “you shall not let your emotions be troubled”!
    - So the very first thing you have to do is say, "I am not going to let my heart be troubled."

**Who's in Control Here?**

Most believers think depression and worry is normal.
Their parents were that way.

It is their first reaction when things go wrong.

They give no thought to any other choice

But, we have an authority as believers.

Christians have missed this.

Satan doesn't have any control over your heart and circumstances — he cannot control you unless you let him.

In Deuteronomy 30:19, God speaks through Moses, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

- The subject is “you” choose life.

Many have allowed themselves to justify feelings and emotions that are contrary to God’s Word.

A Marriage of Convenience?

In marriage counseling, people invariably say, "But look what this person did," and they begin to tell all the terrible things their mate has done.

- The purpose of this is to justify their feelings. They say, "I know I'm not supposed to be depressed and discouraged. I know I'm not supposed to be angry, but look what they did."

- What they're really saying is, "Well, this justifies my feelings, this justifies my depression, this justifies my actions." But there is nothing that justifies our being less than what God called us to be.

- It doesn't matter what comes your way — death, physical problems, financial problems, relationship problems. Whatever the devil is fighting you with, God has given you the ability to overcome it.

- But you have to choose. Let not your heart be troubled. If you habitually choose discouragement, doubt, and depression, you set a precedent that will enslave you the rest of your life.

As a Man Thinks...

Proverbs 23:7 says that as a man thinks in his heart, so is he.

- Are you depressed? You've been thinking about things that depress you.

- You may not have said "I want to be depressed," but you're thinking on depressing things, and that's the reason you're depressed.
• Are you discouraged? You've been thinking about things that are discouraging.

• Do you never have enough money?
  o You may not have said "I want to be poor," but your thinking about all the things you don’t have helps bring on a feeling of poverty.

We are what we have chosen to be. It is vital that we understand this.

• You cannot say that people are 100 percent a product of their environment because I can show you people whose parents were alcoholics or drug addicts or child abusers, and they chose to go the other direction and live victorious lives. As a matter of fact, some of them say, "Whatever happens, I'll never be what I've seen." And they do it.

• Therefore, our experiences are the results of our choices, not our environments. Environment is a factor, but our choice is the deciding factor.

Unbelief, fear, and panic are choices—wrong choices. There may be many reasons we respond that way, but ultimately, the decision is ours.

Keep your eyes on the road

• The way to not let your hearts be troubled is, “ye believe in God, believe also in me.”
  o Jesus had just told them not to let their hearts be troubled and now He tells them how to do it. Believe! Faith in God is the victory that overcomes the world and all its troubles (1 John 5:4).
  o You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isa 26:3
  o Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. John 14:27
    ▪ You do not let your heart be troubled or afraid.

• In time of crisis we do not keep in mind the Lord’s promises.
  o The disciples believed in Jesus enough to be totally devastated when Jesus died, but not enough to believe His prophecies concerning His resurrection. Jesus make it very clear in this same teaching (John 16:1) that He was saying these things so His disciples would not be offended, but his word didn’t profit them because they didn’t mix them with faith.
    ▪ Heb. 4:2 but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.
A Fork in the Road — Choose One

You can react two ways when a crisis hits you. You can choose to be challenged or discouraged.

- You do not have to be defeated in a crisis. You do not have to fear. You do not have to be depressed.
- If you're not having a great time with the Lord, if your relationship isn't a constant upward trend, it's not because God makes it that way, it's because you've followed the wrong road—the wrong thinking.
  - You believed a lie, and you allowed your emotions to go up and down.
  - You're following your emotions instead of following your faith.
- So the first thing you have to do in a crisis situation is to take hold of your emotions, take hold of your heart, and set it in the direction you want it to go.
- Don't allow circumstances to dictate how you feel and how you're going to react. That's essential. It's important that the moment something comes against you, you make a right decision right then.
  - Don't let the circumstance be the last word. Let God’s Word be the last word!

Mature

That's what we're really dealing with here — growing up.

- The same principles used for child training apply here.
  - Most of us never grew out of feeling whatever we felt like as children. But it doesn't have to be that way.
  - You don't feel happy? Well, grow up! You were probably unhappy as a child.
  - Grow up — you are blessed.
    - Eph. 1:3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ.
      - You've got the joy of the Lord inside of you. You can choose to be happy if you want to be happy. You can choose to be blessed. You can choose to be excited about the Lord if you want to be.
- God holds us accountable for our emotions.
  - In Deuteronomy 28:47, the Lord said He was bringing judgment on the children of Israel "Because you didn’t serve the LORD your God with joy and a cheerful heart,
even though you had an abundance of everything, He held them accountable for their emotions! HCSB

- In John 16:33, Jesus said, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”!
  - You can and must control your emotions!

Prepare your heart ahead of time.

In 2 Chronicles 12 is the story of King Rehoboam, Solomon's son. He started out good. He started seeking God, but he turned out bad and actually got into idolatry. It says,

"Rehoboam did what was evil, because he did not determine in his heart to seek the LORD." (Verse 14 HCSB).

- He chose to react to the situation around him rather than making the choice to know the Lord’s will in the matter.
- When you come into a crisis situation, if you haven't chosen to seek the Lord, if you haven't already made some decisions, your heart is going to gravitate toward fear. It's going to gravitate toward depression, toward negativism, toward defeat.
- You've got to fix your heart so that no matter what the devil does, you're going to walk in victory. You're going to keep your eyes on the Lord.
- You have to keep the Lord’s words in the reservoir of your heart so you can draw from it in time of crisis.
  - With time the reservoir evaporates and has to be replenished.

QUOTES:

The self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action. John Dewey

*Do not sorrow, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.* Nehemiah 8:10 (NKJV)

*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.* Isaiah 41:10 (NIV)

*If you do what the Lord wants, he will make certain each step you take is sure. The Lord will hold your hand, and if you stumble, you still won’t fall. As long as I can remember, good people have never been left helpless, and their children have never gone begging for food.* Psalm 37:23-25 (CEV)
God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, 
Even though the earth be removed, And though the mountains be carried into the midst 
of the sea; Though its waters roar and be troubled, Though the mountains shake with its 
swelling. Psalms 46:1-3 NJKV