



INTRODUCING SPIRITUAL SURGERY

What Is Spiritual Baggage?

The objective of our time of 'homework' is to allow the Holy Spirit to expose the baggage we carry, to expose its source and show us how to get rid of it. **Baggage is any form of damage, abuse or sin carried in our hearts/spirits that adversely affect our lives, attitudes, behaviours, or our relationships with ourselves and those around us.** It is all that unnecessary sin and disorder that we carry that is contrary to God's wishes or intent for our lives.

Our human spirit springs to life when the Holy Spirit enters it at conversion, and a conflict immediately begins as to who is Lord - the Holy Spirit or us - a conflict exploited by the Enemy. The presence and extent of spiritual baggage in our lives consequently becomes significant, as the Holy Spirit stands against it and desires to expose it to us. This is why many new Christians find themselves with all kinds of uncharacteristic sicknesses and malaise after conversion.

The body will often physically begin to manifest the conflicts in the human spirit. It is always the will and wish of the Holy Spirit to cleanse us totally from all our baggage. This cleansing process is the true meaning of inner healing, to be free from what God never intended to be in our human spirit. God intends this to be the fruit of our discipleship journey. Unfortunately, we frequently fail to ask or listen to the Holy Spirit or to our bodies, so we do not assist God in this cleansing.

As Christians, if we do not choose to sort out these matters in our early walk with the Lord we begin to discover in later years that it takes increasing amounts of energy to manage or control this baggage and its sin. **As we grow older the cumulative demands of sitting on this cauldron of toxic sin and disorder become more and more unmanageable.** In our youth most of us manage it with ease. Yet as we get older we either become less able to manage it, lose control totally or become obsessed with it. Such stress, emotional and mental illness or accompanying physical disorders will begin to isolate us more and more from the Lord, others, and ourselves.

Scripture does not attempt to define 'baggage'. Instead, it calls it sin or disorder. But our Lord has a great deal to say about the damage that we can do to ourselves, and one another, through pride and our own words and actions. In addition, it is absolutely clear from Scripture that we reap what we sow in this world. Only Christ can fully redeem the damage of spiritual baggage in our lives.

Introducing Spiritual Surgery

Spiritual surgery is the term we use to describe cleaning out a room in our spirit or 'spiritual house'. All sin and sickness impacts our whole being, since we are spiritual beings at our core. **Therefore sickness always has a spiritual/emotional as well as a physical dimension.**

Since our human spirit is the eternal core of our being any attempt to bring healing physically must also address the sickness as God sees it in our human heart/spirit. Our observation is that much physical sickness is merely 'mirroring' disorder or damage in our human spirit. From a medical perspective

healing will often require three stages - diagnosis, surgery, and rehabilitation, and this helpful framework is what we will use now.

The purpose of your own homework with the Lord will be to allow Him to show you the damage and disorder in your spiritual house as He sees it (diagnosis), then to allow Him to cleanse the room (surgery), so that you and He can possess the room as part of your journey into wholeness (rehabilitation).

Often the Holy Spirit will move from one room to the next, though sometimes He will take us through several different areas of baggage in the same room before moving on. On other occasions He will clean one or two issues out of one room, then move onto another room, and then return, perhaps months later to a previous room. Don't fight this sovereign methodology. There is a precision and order in how He chooses to minister. Although this may at the time seem untidy to us we can guarantee you will see supernatural wisdom in later.

Diagnosis

Correct diagnosis is 90% of the cure. So where do we find out the truth about the root of the illnesses we carry, in order to do spiritual surgery and heal the sickness once and for all? The only totally reliable source of Truth is not the doctor, psychologist or the patient, but the Holy Spirit bringing God's perspective. Only the Holy Spirit is truly able both to see the 'root' or 'hook' in us, and know what to do about it.

Diagnosis is about **discovering the root cause(s) of the damage.** The Lord is always more eager to tell us than we are often willing to hear. Part of our baggage is often our blinkered focus of what we think we know God should say to us. Much of the description of what we see and struggle with in our own lives is merely the superficial symptom of a far deeper range of drives. Effective spiritual surgery requires that the root cause is identified first during diagnosis. This can take some time, with our growing understanding from the Holy Spirit, about the deceit or blindness we might have been living in. Remember, it is not so much what happens to us, but what we have ourselves done with those events. God can help us here by showing us how wrongly we have been thinking or living.

It is very important that you are open in mind and spirit. Because during your homework, as you begin exploring a room in your house with the Lord, you may well hear a whisper but what you hear is unthinkable to you. Your baggage can keep you from seeing clearly what the Lord is saying.

Some of the questions you may want to ask to help widen your thinking, is where did you learn these ways? When did you first feel it? Is it attached to a particular memory? What does God feel about the issue? What lies have you believed about it? What might happen if God were to heal you from it? It is very likely to be in areas of your life that have been out of bounds to you by your own choice. As you explore this with the Lord during your homework from one day to the next, expect to be shocked or surprised by what you find. Truth from God's perspective is often the opposite, or in contrast to what we humanly think.

Over the years a pattern has emerged in walking the road with many people. Frequently the reason we are not fully healed is **because of hidden sin or baggage.** Yet when God does talk to us, the sin He often exposes rarely surprises us. Usually it is sin which we are aware of but which we have not dealt with properly, or have not taken that seriously. Occasionally the sin will be hidden in the generations, in our forbears. So we would encourage you to ask the Holy Spirit by what authority the sickness or damage is remaining in your life. He will probably show you areas of sin and its baggage, sometimes your own, sometimes that of someone else.

This spiritual knowledge from the Holy Spirit can then be our authority over the Enemy. It is the Lord's way of ensuring the sickness is cleanly removed from our human spirit and our body when He tells us what must be dealt with, and how we must respond. Remove sin and its baggage from the human spirit and the body can heal itself. In our experience the Holy Spirit is more eager to heal us than we are to be healed. But we must always be willing to submit to the way God wants to heal us.

Diagnosis and Its Impact Even Before the Surgery

Truth once revealed by the Holy Spirit will always leave us with choices, **just like the presence of Jesus, the Word Himself, always forces us to make choices.** The principle choice is to either accept and act on what has been exposed and revealed, or to ignore it. Another question is should we treat the knowledge from the Enemy or from the Lord? Always assume it is the Lord, as He is more powerful to talk clearly to us than the Enemy can. Either way the choice will frequently lead to despair, panic, fear, confusion and all kinds of trauma. We may well begin to feel like Jeremiah did (Jer 23.9).

This process can best be described as 'falling apart'. **During these times, we make the choice either to take healing on Christ's terms and welcome the Truth, or to turn away.** This 'cross-roads' and 'undoing' is the direct result of the conflict between our damaged broken state and the challenge that the Truth of Christ brings to us.

Although this 'falling apart' is traumatic it need not continue for a protracted period of time. It may mean that for a week or so we will need to withdraw from our usual responsibilities in the church and our usual commitment with friends. Perhaps for that period you will want to spend more than an hour in homework, if that is possible. Remember that the Holy Spirit is aware of our obligations and our diary. He will provide a way through if we genuinely seek His path of cleansing.

Many Christians get fearful when they see such symptoms of conflict, but we should recognize it for the choice that it is - the beginning of His **ascendancy over our sicknesses.** As the diagnosis clarifies during our homework we decide whether we do or do not want the root to remain in our lives. If we choose to get rid of it by our repentance, then the inner conflict will heighten as we begin to separate ourselves from the baggage we are carrying in our spirit. In repenting, for the first time we begin to be able to see what is ours in Christ and what is the work or damage of the Enemy. We begin to be able to say with understanding, 'I do not want it any more', and be able to describe - often for the first time - what 'it' truly is.

As soon as we have made the choice, most often in private to begin with, will mean it is **the Holy Spirit's invitation to prepare us for His healing work.** The "undoing" will then begin, often accompanied by physical and emotional discomfort. Let the Holy Spirit "soften the ground" for the surgery. This will make the 'recovery' even more straightforward.

One other aspect of this undoing should also be mentioned. As Truth is further revealed by the Holy Spirit, at least some of the discomfort could be conviction of sin or the accompanying shame and guilt. **We must allow the repentance to grow in us and for us to not hold back.** The Enemy has no power over us where there is no longer any sin.

The subsequent falling apart could simply be, for instance, our realizing for the first time what our parents, grandparents or other relatives laid on us. The Lord will require that **we repent on behalf of others, not for their benefit, but for ours in our dissociating from their actions.** Alternately, the Truth may squarely put before us the fruit of our own private lifestyle or baggage. What you sowed you have reaped. Either way, the light of God's truth will always allow us to see clearly the extent of the hold the Enemy has over our lives.

As we so often emphasize, God is always more eager to break this powerful hold over us than we are willing to hear such truth and deal with it. It is very rare that what we share with a person spiritual knowledge that is not already known to them one way or another, at least in part. **Sin is rarely a surprise.** God requires we feel the damaging presence of sin, in preparation for releasing us from it. If we accept the Lord's way He will reveal the truth and guarantee us the life. The undoing begins the process of cleansing in our spirit and heart. It is not to be feared, but welcomed (Jn 14.6). For most of us the fear of dealing with this issue will prove greater than the act of becoming free.

The Surgery

Surgery may sometimes be as simple as a few words, when say we are removing the impact of lies or self-curses. Although this can become far more complex when we are working through several layers, identifying a web of issues all bound in together, layered like Kleenex in a box. With long-term illness we also frequently find the Enemy has woven a web of **'booby-traps' to keep the person ill.** So you should take a relaxed long-term view of your healing, as you may need to go through several layers to possess the wholeness you are seeking. As a golden rule deal only with the issue God has given precise knowledge on. Do not fabricate, pretend or try 'blanket prayers'. These will have failed in the past and may stir up things you cannot subsequently manage.

The actual prayer is usually straightforward. You should always take account of that which the Holy Spirit has been talking to you about, but it will broadly fall into 3 main areas:

- **Confession of sin:** This will be a time when you bring out into the open the damage that has been assaulting you. It will always involve your feelings, always involve a declaration that you do not want to carry the damage any more, and always involve repentance for sin. Engage your emotion.
- **Separation from sin:** This is an act of covering the sin in the Blood of Christ and separating yourself from any connection with it, by standing with Christ. It is a declaration and should be accompanied by waves of passion. You are letting go of the damage and giving to the Lord the judgment of any who have abused you - i.e. forgiving them and laying down the revenge.
- **Restoring from sin:** This is an invitation to the Holy Spirit to cleanse you and those around you from the damage that the sin has done, by redeeming the impact of the sin and restoring what was stolen. This can continue for several weeks after the surgery and will allow the Holy Spirit to begin to dismantle the reflexes and coping mechanisms you have put in place to hide or compensate for the sin.

God's Thoroughness

Why does God enjoy working in such a thorough way? The answer leads us on to the third step in spiritual surgery, rehabilitation. When knowledge of the root, for instance an open window or hook is first revealed to us, it can be shocking - often the opposite to what we thought, or just plain confusing to us. But as the Holy Spirit moves us on into more truth, we will take the ground from the Enemy in our lives. **This approach to healing ensures we know fully what we are being healed from, ensuring we never go back to the sin.** For God not only requires that we know what we are healed from - He wants us to close the door on the issue for ever.

We can only do this, however, if we know what the root cause was in the first place. Also, this approach to inner healing removes the danger of slipping back into sickness through blindness or ignorance. The knowledge both heals us and keeps us, by allowing us to clean out the room and shut the windows on the Enemy forever. It also becomes a testimony, an experience we can teach and practice on others (!).

Rehabilitation

So what does rehabilitation from spiritual surgery mean? It is the **process of successfully learning to live without the companionship of the sickness or the crutches it once provided**. We should never underestimate the profound shock that spiritual surgery will have on our human spirit and indeed our whole person. Invariably, the revelation of the truth of the problem and its removal will shake us to our very core. We reel with shock, even 'manifesting' aggressive denial!

Our daily declaration must be that we *'do not want to live this way anymore'*. We *will* be free. We will *not* go back. It is at this time that Jesus' warning about the returning demons has special relevance. We must fully possess the empty room He has cleaned, and ensure the windows are tightly closed. The knowledge of the surgery allows us to occupy this room and close the adjoining doors and windows that have been left open by ourselves or others (Lk 11.24-26).

Rehabilitation must involve not only our minds and choices, but also our emotion. For it is only after we have become free from the spiritual sickness that we see the damage it has done, often over many years. The awareness of that damage can become quite acute, perhaps leading to a 'post-natal' depression and a righteous anger for the lost years. Sometimes this will be accompanied by cleansing of memories with their associated feelings. Or even an emptiness, loss or sense of remorse as the Enemy's 'adrenaline' disappears and life is reduced to an unfamiliar 'empty box' feeling. The renewing will often happen only gradually, after major surgery.

Tears are an essential part of rehabilitation. As a general rule the more profound the surgery has been, the more extensive the rehabilitation required afterwards. It is common for those on a prolonged journey of healing to find the rehabilitation more and more demanding, as the Holy Spirit cuts deeper into their spirit. Support and encouragement are essential during this time. Each individual must be allowed to pursue this inner healing for as long as the Holy Spirit determines.

In Summary

Your homework is a journey through your spiritual house, cleaning out its various rooms through the process of spiritual surgery. Diagnosis is the discovering of the baggage in the room. Surgery is removing it God's way, while rehabilitation is the cleansing and possessing of the room by you and the Lord to allow His Lordship and Life to be fully indwelling.

For all of us, the length of time that this process takes in its initial intensity varies enormously. Although the goal of the Holy Spirit is that we can be free from our past, free to become the men and women we were created to be in Christ.

God intends to equip us to stand firm in the face of the attacks of the Enemy, so that such attacks do not do us damage. Then we are free to move into an anointed future of giving life to those around us, and fulfilling our calling in faithful service as the Body of Christ.