**Chapter 5**

**Reaping the Fruit of the Harvest**

Understanding Negative Behavior



 In Chapter 4, we learned that negative emotions are connected to our thought life. What we believe affects how we think, feel, and behave. In chapter 5, we will be focusing on the result of unhealthy belief systems that affect not only our emotions but our behaviors as well. The goal of this chapter is to start to see beyond negative behaviors and instead begin to focus on the need or faulty belief system that may be driving negative behaviors. Throughout our Christian life, we have been told to hate the sin and not the sinner. Many of us have found it difficult, even impossible to do that. My hope is that in this process, you will be able to learn to separate the behavior from the person. That’s another way we can separate the sin from the sinner. You see, we are not our behaviors. Why? Because behaviors change. We have all heard the old adage – hurting people hurt people. This is absolutely true. The bully on the playground is often seeking love or other unmet needs but asks for it in very unloving ways. Remember, we are born with three basic God-given inner needs:

**Love** – to know that someone is unconditionally committed to our best interest

**Significance** – to know that our lives have meaning, value, and purpose.

**Security** – to feel accepted and have a sense of belonging – to have a sense of safety from harm and feel protected.

In the case of the bully, the need driving the unloving act of bullying is often a desperate need for significance – to have value and worth. They may not be getting their needs met at home, so they seek to get it on their own. When then bully others, they feel empowered and significant. While their negative behavior is never okay and should be confronted, and boundaries must be imposed for protection of everyone involved, it helps us understand the “why” behind their negative behavior and may even begin to give us compassion for those who exhibit very toxic, harmful behaviors. We can start to ask ourselves, “What could have happened to this person to make them so hateful.” In doing so, we can begin to peer into the heart of Jesus and how He sees sinful humanity – through the filter of grace.

 In this Chapter, we are not only looking at the negative behaviors of others but prayerfully can begin to identify and take ownership of our own negative behaviors and how we respond to the negative behaviors of others.

 As a group leader, please continue to remind participants that this chapter continues the sifting process. By now, a clear picture is beginning to emerge of our rooted systems and the reason behind our faulty belief systems and problematic behaviors. The sifting process is often painful and difficult. It’s part of the process of healing, but it is purposeful. We will get to the solution for overcoming negative thinking and behaving. For now, trust the Lord to sift out and expose the old system so he can ready your heart for the new. Encourage the group not to lose heart and to hold on to hope. God is faithful to give them a life of purpose beyond the pain of the past.

**Group Discussion:**

Self-Evaluation section in the back of Chapter 5 can be used as discussion points in groups.

**Self-Study:**

Answer the questions in the Self-Evaluation section in Chapter 5.

**Spiritual Growth:**

1 Thessalonians

Read a Psalm & Proverb Daily

Meditate on Psalm 126:5