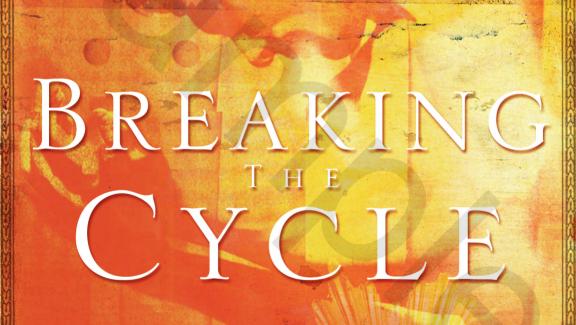
THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION to DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS



DR. JAMES RICHARDS

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION to DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS

Dr. James B. Richards

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# BREAKING THE CYCLE: THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS

**Impact Ministries** 

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# **DEDICATION**

God never gives up on an individual, but sometimes other people do. I thank God for the people who never gave up on me. They believed in me even when no one else did.

I dedicate this book to Dennis Peacock, my brother-inlaw, a church member, a trusted friend, and a co-laborer in this message. Your friendship, your belief in me, and your commitment to this message have been a constant encouragement. You have helped me touch millions of lives.

Thank you!



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### CHAPTER 1

# THE DEFINING MOMENT

I will never forget the Chance reunion. It became for me a defining moment in which I decided, I must find solutions to these types of problems—solutions for myself and for others. I had not seen Bob for a few years, but at one time his life had been such an inspiration to me. Now he looked different somehow. I couldn't tell what was wrong, but it was as if he had changed in some way. The sparkle was gone from his eyes. His trademark smile that once defined his presence had faded. He just wasn't the man I remembered.

As we chatted, he seemed to avoid eye contact. It grew more uncomfortable by the minute. As the small talk waned to an embarrassing lull, the emptiness I sensed was more than I could bear. "Bob, you've changed. Have you been doing all right?" The question blundered from my lips. After a hesitation that seemed like an eternity, he looked me in the eye for the first time and shockingly replied, "No, Jim, things aren't all right!"

As I recovered my composure and tried to hide my feeling of shock, I finally convinced this old friend to have coffee with me. His reluctance became more understandable as his story unfolded. The next hour was a painful revelation of how Bob had spent the past fifteen years struggling internally before he finally just gave up. His words burned into my mind, searing like a branding iron: "Life seemed easier before I got saved. I haven't been truly happy for years."

"Life seemed easier before I got saved. I haven't been truly happy for years."

# What Had Happened?

Bob had made a commitment to follow Jesus years ago. He wanted to experience the promises of God. He wanted a better life. Like most people who begin this journey, he started off great. He read his Bible and began to understand how to live a totally new quality of life. I remember how he talked about finding the answers for which he had searched all his life.

The first few years of his Christian experience were incredible. His marriage problems began to be resolved. He found new inner resources to love his wife. He even found the strength to face many of his internal issues about relationships and intimacy. His business began to grow as he discovered the values of integrity, dependability, and responsibility. Before long he was one of the most successful contractors in our area. Because of his life, many people came to Jesus to find what he had found.

Then Bob moved to another area and left our simple fellowship of "converted hippies." He became a part of a more organized church that had a lot of great programs. It was a very exciting environment that had a lot to offer. He was very active and committed. Then it seemed like he hit some invisible wall that not only stopped him from moving forward in his growth and development, but also caused him to take a nosedive. He vanished from my "radar screen." He stopped writing. He didn't return calls. For several years he virtually disappeared—until he moved back to town and we happened upon one another.

At first Bob expressed shame about his failures. I was amazed. I had never seen him condemn anyone else who had

#### THE DEFINING MOMENT

failed. I couldn't imagine where this was coming from. The truth was, his self-loathing had done more damage to him than his actual "sins." It had become a driving force that affected his every decision and emotion.

After we talked a while, he seemed to finish venting. I thought he would be relieved and that we could get down to some recovery. But just the opposite occurred. Once the shame was gone, something else emerged. I sort of felt like I was driving in fog. I couldn't see exactly where I was going, but I had the eerie sense that a collision was just ahead. I was right. Suddenly, like an unsuspecting driver who breaks through the fog into an unexpected traffic jam, Bob hit head on. It was like everything he feared, everything he hated, and everything he dreaded all surfaced at one time. And I was in front of him.

As the minutes passed, it became more than obvious that Bob was mad at the church, not at me. He felt that the church had led him down a path that stole what he once had in Jesus. He didn't know exactly what had happened; he just knew that it all changed when he got involved with the new church.

Bob was like thousands of people I have talked to. He started out great, but somewhere along the line he got off course. Like many believers, he associated his problem with church. He was not sure what the church had done, but he held the church and its people responsible. He started following Jesus to find a better quality of life, and he enjoyed that new life for a period of time. Now he had lost it, and he did not know how. He just knew that he did not feel right about himself—and he hadn't for a long time. When he went for counseling, it seemed to be little more than a list of religious duties he was told he should follow. He even believed that most of the counseling had made him feel worse about himself instead of better.

I promised Bob that life could get a lot better—and quickly. I explained that he had fallen into the cycle of lack. He had

replaced Jesus with religion. Although he was partially justified in his frustration with the church world, I explained that until he assumed responsibility for the places where he had surrendered his personal relationship with God, he would not find much relief.

I explained that he had fallen into the cycle of lack. He had replaced Jesus with religion.

It has been great watching Bob find his way back to peace and joy. He has become a missionary in reaching out to those who have lost their passion for life. Like Morpheus in the movie *The Matrix*, he has devoted his life to disconnecting people from the matrix of religion, illusion, and dead works.

# In Search of Happiness

He lovingly brings them back to the land of reality in Jesus.

Mankind is on a quest for happiness, peace, and fulfillment. This desire is part of our God-given nature. God created us to live in happiness and peace. Whether you believe in God or not, you are looking for the good things in life. Everyone wants a good life! In the heart of every person there is a desperate longing to experience a quality of life beyond what most will ever know. For some that longing is more like a deep, unidentifiable ache or an illusive dream that lingers just beyond our conscious awareness.

This vague sense of lack can drive people to commit every imaginable sin in their pursuit of happiness. It drives others to seek out thrills and adventure. Still others will vainly strive for perfection through religious performance and legalism. It is like a search for mysterious treasure. Every day we are driven on some level to identify and discover this nebulous source of evasive satisfaction.

#### THE DEFINING MOMENT

When people come to Jesus and make Him their Lord and Savior, they are seeking this quality of life. In fact, the Bible promises that following Jesus with our whole heart will result in an incredible quality of life. In Him we have our first real promise of hope. In Him are the answers to all the longings in life. You see, our relationship with God should not be the end of the search, but the beginning of the journey that leads to life at its best. Meeting Jesus should be the best day in our life. But walking with Jesus for the rest of our life should make every day get better and better. Jesus Himself said, "My purpose is to

Our relationship with God should not be the end of the search, but the beginning of the journey that leads to life at its best.

give life in all its fullness" (John 10:10 TLB). Yet, for some this new relationship seems to dwindle down to just another stepping-stone in the pathway of frustration.

# The Cycle

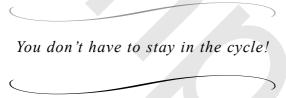
For the past thirty years I have witnessed a tragic phenomenon in my own life and in the lives of others. Instead of life being a process that leads from "glory to glory," from good to great, it is too often an incredibly frustrating cycle of ups and downs. For some the cycle ends in defeat, denial, or frustration. For too many, life is a series of ups and downs, a repetitive roller coaster from which they never recover. Every day counseling offices are filled with those who just can't seem to "pull it together" to find the longing of their heart.

This up-and-down cycle has dominated our lives for so long that we have unwittingly come to expect it. Religious leaders have created doctrines that justify it. Mental health care providers have given it medical names to make it seem

like the norm. It is validated and even embraced in Christianity at large. We have tried everything from sin to superachievement to numb the sting of its bite. Some have walked away from God. Others have blamed God. Still others have sunk into the world of denial. Regardless of the manner we choose to appease the beast, none of them brings us what we really want. We want the feeling of lack to go away! We want to be happy!

What we want is to live the life God promised. We want to have peace and joy. We want to live our dreams. We want our conscience free from guilt and shame. We want to face life without dread. We want to be free from the abiding sense of lack that drives us through life "by the sweat of our brow."

This is an age-old struggle. It did not begin with you. But it can end with you! You do not have to stay in the cycle. No matter where you are in the process, no matter how many times you have tried and failed, you can forever end the struggle of ups and downs. Your life can become a journey that takes you from one stage of victory to another, from good to great!



This book contains principles that will lead you to stability, peace, productivity, and endless joy. Read and ponder every word. Meditate on what you read. Open your heart and allow God to turn your life into an adventure of faith, love, and relationship. Allow every day to bring new joy and peace. Watch the problems that used to drag you hopelessly through the cycle fall away as you move into the life that God promised, the life that Jesus died and rose again to give you. Get your hope up one more time as you break the cycle and discover the unlimited power of faith righteousness. You will never be the same!

# CHAPTER 2

# THE SENSE OF LACK

ne of the most unrealized promises of the New Testament is found in Colossians 2:10, when Paul boldly announced to those struggling believers, "You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." When a person feels lacking, inadequate, or incomplete, nothing seems farther from reality than this. But freedom from these feelings of inadequacy is a part of our heritage in Christ!

As with many New Covenant realities, there was a tremendous gap between what Jesus had given and what the people were experiencing. The Colossian believers were like most people. They had no concept of what it meant to experience the finished work of Jesus. They did not realize that His death, burial, and resurrection ensured them a life free from the penalty of sin. They didn't know that all the promises of God were assured for those who believe on the resurrected Jesus as Lord and Savior. Because they were not experiencing the reality of the finished work of Jesus, they became susceptible to "circumstance theology." Circumstance theology is simply the doctrinal position we create to justify or explain our current circumstance.

The church of Colosse, like most of the other churches addressed in the New Testament epistles, had slipped away from that place of completeness in Christ. Instead of interpreting their situation by the New Covenant, they began to interpret the New Covenant by their experience. This made them

susceptible to the twisted doctrines of those who did not fully believe the finished work of Jesus. They had been seductively and systematically ushered into a sense of lack, and it took them back to the bondage of legalism and ritualism.

The Colossian believers had been influenced by teachers and prophets who brought them back under the slavery of dead works. They no longer saw Christ as enough to qualify them for all the promises of God. They felt they were open prey for the devil if they did anything wrong. They actually thought they could lose their authority as a believer by failing to live up to the standards set by these so-called teachers.

A believer should never feel a sense of lack.
It should be foreign to our emotions
and contrary to our new nature in Christ.

They surrendered their faith to one of the most subtle, devastating, and controlling emotions known to man. They became enslaved to the sense of lack. This sense of need and desperation made them vulnerable to the manipulation of every type of false doctrine. They didn't *lose* the life and power of God when they accepted this feeling of lack; rather, they alienated themselves from the supernatural life of God that was in them. They reached a place where they could not access that power. Like Paul said of the Ephesians, they "walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in

A believer should never feel a sense of lack. It should be foreign to our emotions and contrary to our new nature in

them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Ephesians 4:17–18).

<sup>1. &</sup>quot;Dead works" is a term used to describe the things we do to earn God's approval. The only thing that brings us God's approval is faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus. This will be explained as you continue.

#### THE SENSE OF LACK

Christ. We should feel complete and whole. We should never be driven by the feelings of separation created by lack. No matter how real those feelings may be, no matter how undeserving we feel, it is not real! It is a vain imagination. It is a lie! It is a lie that has been used to manipulate mankind for thousands of years. It is the most powerful lie that one could believe. Yet, it is rampant in Christianity. It is woven into the fabric of mainstream theology. It surfaced within a few short years of the resurrection and has never gone away! Lack has been here so long it is considered normal. There are doctrines that explain why you should feel lack. There are even doctrines that would have you believe that God brings lack as a way to teach you. All these are contrary to everything we know about God's promises.

Lack has been here so long it is considered normal.

Some would describe the sense of lack as low self-worth. Others may use the word *emptiness*. Still others would call it loneliness. Thousands of phobias and destructive emotional patterns, when reduced to their most basic feeling, are rooted in the sense of lack. That feeling is never from God! It is not how God motivates you. It is not how He leads you. In actuality, the sense of lack comes from not knowing, believing, and experiencing all that we have been freely given in Jesus.

The sense of lack comes from not knowing, believing, and experiencing all that we have been freely given in Jesus.

#### The Deceit of Lack

Since the Garden of Eden, man has been connected to the sense of lack. This is the emotion, whether subtle or overwhelming, that drives much of our decision-making. It is the feeling of lack that leads us to make desperate decisions that take us still farther away from our only true source of complete fulfillment. As a result, this sense of lack is a part of every dysfunction and is a precursor to nearly every pain we experience and sin we commit.

It all began in the Garden with a conversation between Eve and the serpent. Satan did not come straight out and attack God. That would have been too obvious. Neither did he immediately attempt to take Eve down a pathway to destruction. She would never have followed such an apparent ploy. Nor would you! No one gets up one day and decides, "I think I'll go out and commit some sin that will destroy my future and steal all my hopes and dreams."

Actually, just the opposite is true. Before we commit sin, we must first come to the place where we believe that sin will meet a need in our life. We don't commit sin to create problems. We commit sin to solve problems. The emotional state that so distorts our thinking is simply the state of lack. Before we look to sin to meet our need, we must first feel the need. We must have the feeling of lack!

Advertisers are masters at creating lack. Before they can sell us their products, they must first create the sense of lack. A master manipulator never creates lack with negatives. Quite the contrary, the sense of lack occurs when we are shown something we do not have, something desirable. The commercials show us the ideal man, the perfect woman, or the house of our dreams. They show the average person experiencing these perfect outcomes and then they show us a perfume, a lending institution, or even a cigarette. A subtle connection is made between smoking their brand and having this great experience. In the end we are made to feel that if we do not use

#### THE SENSE OF LACK

their product we can never have the "promise." This feeling of lack—the desire to have the dream house or the search for the perfect mate—is associated with their product.

We don't commit sin to create problems. We commit sin to solve problems. The emotional state that so distorts our thinking is simply the state of lack.

In other words, they make us feel a sense of lack, then they offer us a solution. They have to sell the need before they can sell us their product. They get us "hooked," then offer the fix! Advertising is actually designed to create codependency. Codependency is when we look outside of ourselves to meet a need that only God Himself can meet in our heart.

This is the primary strategy of political campaigns. They tell us how bad the country has become. They create a picture in our minds of how bad it will grow to be. They fill our hearts with fear (need), and then they offer to protect us from the evil of which they have persuaded us to believe. They make us feel needy and then offer themselves as the solution.

Satan simply asked Eve a few strategic questions. Questions are powerful tools. They have the ability to lead us down paths we would never choose otherwise. We have to be careful what questions we ask ourselves. If we ask the wrong questions, we always reach the wrong conclusions. Satan doesn't need you to deny Jesus in order to destroy you. All he needs is for you to believe that what Jesus has given is not enough. The moment you believe there is one thing that God has not given you through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, you connect to the sense of lack.

The church has been systematically trained to ask the wrong questions. Most of our questions are based on the presumption of lack. We do not really believe in the promises that

come to us through the finished work of Jesus. Instead, we view His promises as a work in progress, as something that is based more on our actions than on His. From this basis of lack,

Satan doesn't need you to deny Jesus in order to destroy you. All he needs is for you to believe that what Jesus has given is not enough.

we sincerely seek to solve our problems while creating more pain and frustration. Thus most of our attempts to discover freedom and victory take us farther from the truth. The more committed and genuine we are, the more we are susceptible to this type of subtle destruction.

## The Truth Is, We Are Complete in Jesus

When our beliefs are not based on the completed work of Jesus, we do not connect with the fact that we are complete in Jesus! Instead we start from the position that says, "I am not complete in Jesus." Starting from that theological and emotional basis, every question we ask ourselves, every decision we make, leads us farther from victory. It takes us in a cycle of religion<sup>2</sup> and dead works wherein there is no victory, only disappointment and failure.

Eve believed a lie. She believed there was something that God had not done for her, thereby alienating herself from the life of God. She abandoned the promises and power that had made it possible for her to live in paradise. Her beliefs drove her emotions, and her emotions drove her actions. The moment Eve believed the lie of lack, she began to be driven by fear instead of faith. Fear became a self-fulfilling prophecy that validated her seductive feelings.

Religion is man's attempt to know and please God apart from the finished work of Jesus. Faith, on the other hand, is trust in what Jesus did through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Once our feelings are validated, we begin to trust those feelings more than the realities of God. Our emotions become *lying vanities that cause us to forsake our own mercies.*<sup>3</sup> We are now in the cycle! Like a wind-up toy that runs in circles, our life's patterns are set. We will never break out of the cycle until we turn back to the truth of God's Word.

All of Paul's writings were focused on bringing the believer back to the finished work of Jesus, back to our new identity in Him, back to the foundation of the Gospel: faith righteousness. When your sense of wholeness and completeness, that is, your feeling of righteousness, is based on the finished work of Jesus, you are immovable. You are established. You are standing on the rock! You are free from the power of lack!

When your sense of wholeness and completeness, that is, your feeling of righteousness, is based on the finished work of Jesus, you are immovable.

Are you connected to the sense of lack or do you consistently experience wholeness? If you are not sure, here are some simple things you can do to determine the answer to this question. Find a quiet place. Settle your mind. Have your Bible, pen, and paper at hand. Pick out a few scriptures about completeness in Jesus. Quote them aloud, being sure to personalize them and stating them in the present tense.

You may want to use the scripture from Colossians 2:10: "You are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power." Simply state, "I am complete in Jesus. I lack nothing." Now sit quietly and see what thoughts or feelings come to mind. Write them down. These reflect your emotional reaction to this vital truth. You can do this with any scripture that promises you something through Christ.

<sup>3.</sup> Jonah 2:8: "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (KJV).

Another thing you can do is look at a picture of yourself. Then write down your first reactions to what you see. If your first response is negative, then you are probably connected to a sense of lack. Lack, rather than confidence and faith, is driving your decision-making. But you can change all of that forever. Take a few moments to pray. Let God know that you are willing to open your heart to a whole new sense of self. Commit yourself to establishing an entirely new sense of identity in Jesus. Now hold on for the ride of your life! The journey out of lack will be the best decision you have ever made!

We hope you've enjoyed this free sample of *Breaking the Cycle*. For more information on purchasing *Breaking the Cycle*, please visit http://www.truepotentialmedia.com/product/breaking-the-cycle/

# THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION TO DESTRUCTIVE PATTERNS

- Are you tired of repeating the same cycle?
- Do you feel like what you do is never good enough?
- Are negative feelings robbing your life of joy?
- Do you sometimes feel that you can't find the light at the end of the tunnel?
- Do you want to be in control and predict your own future?
- Are you ready for the roller coaster to end and the good life to begin?

Millions of people have these same feelings. You are not alone. But you can end your repeated struggles and break out of destructive cycles. Put an end to the frustration and begin to live your dreams. Everyone wants to enjoy a good life—a life of peace and happiness void of chaos! However, the sense of lack drives us into our never ending cycles...Two steps forward, one step back. Up and down, in and out. Mountain peak to valley. Like a hamster in a wheel, it never ends!

It's time to get off the wheel. This incredible book by Dr. Jim Richards will give you the tools to face life with a new confidence. On each page you will find new keys to personal empowerment. You will transform your self-worth. You will disconnect from the feelings of lack and inadequacy. Your life will become a constant process from good to great! Discover the life-changing secrets of personal empowerment that have brought transformation to millions of people around the world.

Breaking the Cycle provides the keys.
You can end your destructive patterns today!



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