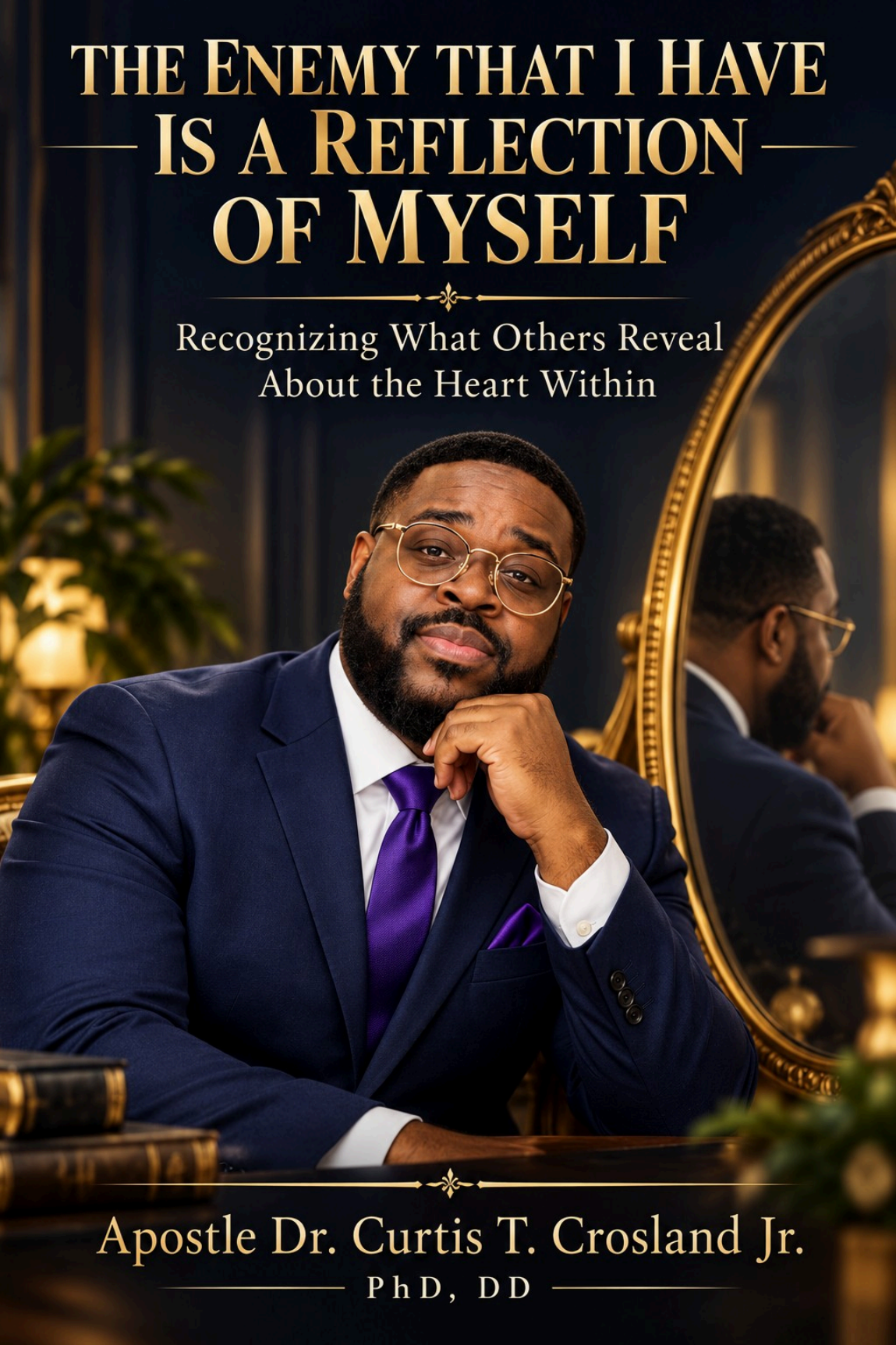




THE ENEMY THAT I HAVE — IS A REFLECTION — OF MYSELF

Recognizing What Others Reveal
About the Heart Within

Apostle Dr. Curtis T. Crosland Jr.
— P h D , D D —

The Enemy That I Have Is a Reflection of Myself

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Scripture quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

No personal testimony or account in this book identifies a specific individual. Examples invite reflection on conduct and relationships.

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DEDICATION

To My Best Friends



First Lady Keira Sade Crosland

To my beloved wife: Thank you for being my companion and my best friend. I thank God for the life we share and the love we continue to build. I dedicate these pages to you with all my love.



Evangelist Tiera Martin

Your friendship holds a special place in my heart. I honor you as a woman of God and treasure the bond we share. May these pages remind you of your worth and encourage you to keep growing in grace.



Evangelist Lakeisha NeSmith

I cherish your friendship and the place you hold in my life. I honor the greatness God has placed within you. May you always guard your peace, recognize your value, and walk confidently in His love.

YOU ARE LOVED. YOU ARE VALUED. YOU ARE TREASURED.

With love,
Apostle Dr. Curtis T. Crosland Jr.

A Word to the Reader

My friend, this book invites you to examine your heart without condemning yourself. Sometimes what angers us in another person reveals a struggle within us. Sometimes it touches an old wound. Sometimes we are responding to real mistreatment. Wisdom requires us to recognize the difference.

You will find invitations to prayer, reflection, and practical change throughout these chapters. Read slowly enough to hear your own answers. You do not have to agree with every example to consider the questions it raises. Bring what you discover before God, and seek trustworthy counsel when you need help understanding your circumstances.

When I speak about what we have allowed, I mean the choices we can honestly examine, the ones we made when we had the knowledge and freedom to choose. Another person's cruelty, deception, coercion, or abuse remains their responsibility. Love, trust, and vulnerability do not make a person responsible for being harmed.

Scripture quotations in this book are from the King James Version. Biblical passages are offered with their context in mind, as invitations to reflection and faithful living. This book does not promise that a boundary, prayer, or change of mindset will make another person behave differently. It asks what you can do with the life and choices entrusted to you.

Introduction

We often recognize an enemy by what they do to us. They offend us, challenge us, disappoint us, or disturb our peace. We remember their words. We question their motives. We can explain their faults in detail.

But what happens when the person we have been studying begins to reveal something about ourselves?

Sometimes the very thing that makes us angry and upset about someone is the very thing living within us. We dislike their pride, yet struggle to receive correction. We resent their need for attention, yet feel overlooked when nobody recognizes us. We accuse them of being controlling, yet become frustrated whenever things do not go our way.

Their behavior may be wrong. Still, our response deserves examination.

Jesus asked, “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?” (Matthew 7:3). His question calls us to look inward before attempting to correct everyone around us. In the verses that follow, Jesus directs the person to address the beam so that they can see clearly to help their brother. Clear sight begins with honest examination.

Self-examination takes courage. It is easier to describe another person’s weakness than to confess our own. It is easier to say, “They made me angry,” than to ask, “What did that anger reveal?”

Sometimes it reveals pride. Sometimes jealousy. Sometimes an old wound that has never healed. A person’s rejection may awaken years of feeling unwanted. Their success may expose our fear that we have fallen behind. Their criticism may touch an insecurity hidden beneath our accomplishments.

There is also another possibility: someone has actually mistreated us. The mirror must never become an excuse for their behavior. We can examine our response and still say that what happened was wrong. We can seek healing and establish boundaries at the same time.

The title of this book is an invitation to consider what an encounter reveals. It does not declare that every enemy is a copy of us. It asks us to stop assuming that every problem exists entirely outside our own hearts.

We cannot control every person who enters our lives. We can allow God to shape the heart we bring into each encounter. We can tell the truth about our circumstances, accept responsibility for our choices, and learn to care for ourselves.

My friend, before we point again, let us pause. Before we accuse again, let us examine. Before we demand that someone else change, let us ask God to search us.

The Mirror I Avoid

There are things we recognize quickly in others and slowly in ourselves. We hear arrogance in their words, but call our own arrogance confidence. We see their impatience, but explain ours as being under pressure. We condemn their excuses while asking everyone to understand our circumstances.

The mirror becomes difficult when it asks us to apply the same standard to ourselves.

Consider a person who interrupts you. Their behavior may be inconsiderate. But if your anger is especially intense, ask what else is happening. Do you also interrupt others? Have you often felt unheard? Are you afraid that listening will weaken your position? Each answer points toward a different need. One may call for correction, another for healing, another for a clearer boundary.

You do not need to force a conclusion. Self-examination begins with observation. What happened? What did I feel? What did I assume? What did I do next? Separate what you know from what you suspect. A person arriving late is a fact. Your conclusion that they do not value you may need a conversation.

Psalms 139:23–24 gives us words for this work: “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

The prayer asks for both revelation and direction. We need help seeing, and we need help responding to what we see. A discovery about your character should become the beginning of a change, not another reason to despise yourself.

If you recognize pride, practice receiving correction without an immediate defense. If you recognize jealousy, acknowledge what you desire without diminishing someone else’s achievement. If you recognize fear, ask what support would help you respond more steadily.

A mirror is useful because it shows something you can attend to. Looking into it endlessly without taking action changes little. Choose one response you can practice this week. You might pause before speaking, ask a sincere question, or acknowledge a mistake without adding an excuse.

My friend, someone else's behavior may have brought you to the mirror. What you do with that reflection belongs to you.

REFLECTION *What behavior in another person provokes me most? Have I practiced it myself, or does it touch a wound? What evidence helps me distinguish those possibilities?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me see clearly. Give me humility to accept correction and wisdom to recognize harm. Lead me toward a change I can practice.*

When Love Becomes Competition

Sometimes a relationship begins in love and gradually becomes filled with resentment. The person you welcomed as a friend, brother, or sister begins to see you as competition. You see someone to walk beside. They see someone to get ahead of.

You celebrate their accomplishments, speak well of their character, and encourage others to love them. Yet behind your back, they question your motives, discuss your weaknesses, and try to turn those same people against you. One of the deepest pains of betrayal is discovering that you were protecting a relationship the other person was quietly undermining.

Some people say, “I have your back,” while speaking against you when you leave the room. Their words offer loyalty, but their actions create division. You may be working to build their reputation while they are working to damage yours.

Still, we must distinguish an honest disagreement from a pattern of betrayal. A friend can love us and offer correction. Someone questioning our decision is not automatically jealous. Look for repeated behavior, direct evidence, and willingness to speak honestly. Avoid building your judgment entirely on what a third person reports.

Competition can enter a relationship when someone begins measuring their worth against another person’s progress. Your opportunity feels like their rejection. Your recognition feels like their invisibility. Instead of enjoying what you share, they begin keeping score.

We must also ask whether that spirit has entered us. Can I celebrate someone whose progress exceeds my own? Can I support a friend when they receive the opportunity I wanted? Do I still speak well of them when nobody is watching? The mirror must face both directions.

Philippians 2:3 instructs, “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.” Paul’s appeal is toward humble concern for others. We can honor another person’s gifts without denying our own value.

If someone betrays you, their actions belong to them. Yet you remain responsible for what you allow hurt to produce in you. Will you recruit people to take your side? Will you reveal private information to punish someone who revealed yours? You can grieve without repeating the same harm.

A direct conversation may clarify the situation when it is appropriate and safe. Describe the behavior rather than announcing a hidden motive: “I learned that you shared something I told you privately. I need to understand what happened.” Their response and subsequent actions will tell you more than an argument about whether they are jealous.

REFLECTION *Can I celebrate another person’s success freely? In a strained relationship, what do I know directly, and what have I assumed?*

PRAYER *Lord, keep comparison from ruling my heart. Help me recognize betrayal truthfully and respond without becoming deceptive or cruel.*

When Love Blinds You to What Is in Front of You

What happens when you refuse to accept what is happening right before your eyes? Sometimes your love for a relationship makes it difficult to acknowledge what that relationship has become. You remember how it started: the laughter, the promises, and the moments when you felt safe. Those memories become reasons to explain away what is happening now.

You tell yourself, “They did not mean it.” You say, “Maybe I misunderstood.” You think, “After everything we have shared, surely they would never do that to me.” You keep giving their behavior an explanation that protects the relationship, even when that explanation leaves you unprotected.

There is grief in admitting that someone you love has been hurting you. Accepting the truth may mean accepting that the relationship needs to change. Sometimes we delay that grief by refusing to acknowledge the pattern. But refusing to see a wound does not stop it from bleeding.

Then comes a moment of clarity. Through prayer, wise counsel, or something you can no longer explain away, you begin recognizing what you have overlooked. You may understand that moment as God opening your eyes. Clarity still requires discernment. Examine actions carefully. Seek truth. Resist assuming that you know every hidden motive.

You do not need to understand someone’s entire heart before acknowledging the harm their behavior causes. You can say, “I love you, but this is hurting me.” You can value your history while recognizing a present problem. Good memories do not cancel repeated harm.

Proverbs 14:15 says, “The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” This verse invites thoughtful attention to how we proceed. Love does not require us to believe every promise without observing the behavior that follows.

If an apology comes, receive it thoughtfully. What was acknowledged? Was responsibility accepted without blaming you? What practical change followed? Time and consistency matter. You can leave room for growth without assuming that growth has already occurred.

The truth may hurt before it helps. Give yourself permission to mourn what you hoped the relationship would be. Speak to someone trustworthy who can listen without inflaming the situation. If confrontation would place you in danger, seek support rather than handling it alone.

My friend, you do not have to stop loving someone to stop overlooking what they do. Love can remain in your heart while wisdom changes their access to your life.

REFLECTION *What repeated behavior have I explained away? What would I advise someone I love who described the same situation?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me accept what is true. Give me courage to acknowledge a pattern and wisdom to respond with care for everyone involved, including myself.*

When Loving Others Means Leaving Yourself Behind

Eventually, you have to ask a difficult question: “What keeps drawing me toward relationships in which I get hurt?” The question deserves honesty and compassion. Some people earn trust before revealing harmful behavior. You may not have seen the warning signs at first. But when a pattern repeats, examining it can help you understand what you need, what you fear, and what you have learned to accept.

Sometimes you have such a great capacity to love others that you forget to include yourself in that love. You make room for their struggles but minimize your own. You protect their feelings while swallowing your pain. You give another opportunity even when nothing has changed. You become so committed to keeping the relationship that you begin leaving yourself behind.

Sometimes being needed feels safer than being loved. When someone needs your advice or constant support, you understand your place in their life. Receiving love asks you to express needs and trust that you still matter when you have nothing to give.

Your confidence in your ability to endure can also become a trap. You tell yourself, “I can handle this.” You believe, “I can love them through it.” Your strength is real. But being able to endure something does not mean you must continue enduring it.

There may also be fear beneath your patience: the fear of being alone. You keep accepting hurt because you cannot imagine life without the relationship. You thought you were okay because you had learned to function through pain. Functioning and healing are different experiences.

Self-sabotage can appear when you silence a need, abandon a boundary, or disregard a pattern you have recognized. Understanding those choices gives you somewhere to begin changing. It does not transfer responsibility for someone else’s wrongdoing to you.

Jesus said, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (Matthew 22:39). His words direct us toward love for our neighbors and invite reflection on the care we extend. You also need care. Your voice deserves room. Your limits deserve respect.

Practice receiving kindness without immediately trying to repay it. Spend time with people who ask about your needs and listen to your answer. Notice whether you can disagree without fearing punishment. Healthy love can make room for two people’s humanity.

Being alone for a season does not make you unlovable. You can learn to spend time with yourself without treating solitude as proof that you are unwanted. You can keep your capacity to care while learning to recognize relationships where care is returned.

REFLECTION *Do I feel valued, or mainly useful? What need do I hide because I fear someone will leave?*

PRAYER *Lord, show me the patterns I overlook. Teach me to receive care and to honor the needs I have been dismissing.*

See the Greatness in Your Own Life

You see, my friend, you must learn to recognize greatness in your own life. You see potential in everyone around you. You encourage them, defend them, and remind them of what God has placed within them. Can you speak to yourself with that same love?

Sometimes the choices that hurt you are your own: the moment you silence your voice to keep someone comfortable, the promise you repeatedly break, the boundary you abandon because you fear someone will leave. There comes a time when you must accept responsibility for how you treat yourself.

That requires an honest conversation. “They hurt me.” Yes, they did. Their actions belong to them. “But after I recognized the pattern, I kept dismissing my needs. I kept hoping my love would produce a change they were unwilling to make.” Their wrongdoing and your choices can both be examined.

Sometimes you stayed because you lacked support or could not safely leave. Sometimes someone concealed the truth. Accountability requires the whole truth, including what you knew and what options you actually had. Do not judge the past as though you possessed today’s understanding and freedom.

When you recognize a choice you regret, what do you do with yourself? It can feel easier to forgive another person than to forgive yourself. You tell them, “Everybody makes mistakes,” while reminding yourself of yours every day. You offer them another chance but treat your disappointment as a permanent sentence.

Romans 8:1 begins, “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus.” In its fuller setting, the chapter speaks about life in the Spirit. Bring your failures before God, seeking forgiveness, correction, and a faithful way forward. Endless self-punishment will not teach you everything you need to learn.

You can say, “I wish I had chosen differently. I understand more now, and I am willing to change.” Self-forgiveness allows you to carry responsibility without carrying endless shame. Where you harmed someone, it also asks you to acknowledge the harm and make appropriate repair.

Respecting yourself becomes something you practice. Keep a promise you made to yourself. Speak honestly about a need. Ask for help when you cannot find your way alone. Take your gifts seriously enough to develop them, rather than waiting for someone else to announce your worth.

Your greatness is still there beneath disappointment. A painful relationship has not erased your value. A decision you regret has not exhausted your future. Forgive yourself for what you did not understand. Accept responsibility for what you understand now. Honor that understanding with your next decision.

REFLECTION *What would self-respect look like in one specific decision this week? Is there a repair I need to make?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me receive forgiveness and practice responsibility. Teach me to care for the life You have entrusted to me.*

The “They Did, but I Allowed” Season

There comes a season when you have to see yourself. You have named the disappointment, described the betrayal, and remembered the words that wounded you. Now comes another question: “What did I keep accepting after I recognized how it affected me?”

“They disrespected me, but I kept dismissing my need for respect.” “They repeatedly broke my trust, but I kept giving the same access without seeing change.” “They ignored my boundaries, but I stopped honoring those boundaries myself.”

These are painful admissions. Their wrongdoing remains their responsibility. Your reflection concerns the choices you could make, the needs you silenced, and the changes you can begin now. There may have been times when you were deceived, afraid, dependent, or unable to leave safely. Tell the truth about those circumstances, too.

Where you do have a choice, learn to see yourself. See the voice you keep quieting. See the exhaustion beneath your constant availability. See the person who deserves respect. You cannot keep disappearing from your own life to preserve someone else’s place in it.

This is the “They did, but I allowed” season: the moment you recognize a harmful pattern and examine your response. You may need to say, “I feared being alone,” or “I wanted approval so much that I abandoned my judgment.” Naming the reason helps you identify what needs support and what needs to change.

“Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD” (Lamentations 3:40). This verse belongs to a passage reflecting on affliction, mercy, and returning to God. Its invitation to examine our ways gives us a prayerful starting point. Examination should lead us toward a faithful response.

Begin with something concrete. If repeated late-night arguments leave you exhausted, set a time when difficult discussions will pause. If private information has been used against you, share less while trust is being assessed. If you feel overwhelmed, seek counsel before agreeing to another demand.

A boundary is strongest when you know what you will do. “You must never upset me” attempts to control someone else. “If insults begin, I will end the conversation and revisit it when we can speak respectfully” describes an action within your control.

Eventually, your words can change. “They did, but today I recognize the pattern.” “They did, but today I will speak.” “They did, but today I will honor my boundaries.”

My friend, you have seen what happened. Now see yourself, and care for the person you see.

REFLECTION *What choice is available to me now that was not available before? What support would help me act on it?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me tell the whole truth. Strengthen me to act on what I now understand without condemning who I was before.*

What Do You See?

My friend, what do you see? It is easy to see them. You see their behavior, choices, and disappointments. You can describe what they need to change. But do you see you?

Do you see your needs, gifts, and possibilities? Do you recognize the person whose voice has grown quiet while you have tried to preserve every relationship around you? It is time to see yourself again.

Perhaps you began seeing yourself through someone else's criticism. Perhaps disappointment convinced you to expect less from your future. Now you must examine those beliefs. What have you been telling yourself? "I am always rejected." "I will never get it right." "This is all I deserve." How have those words shaped your choices?

Romans 12:2 tells us, "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind." In the passage, renewal is connected with discerning God's will and presenting our lives to Him. It invites more than a moment of positive thinking. It asks for an ongoing reorientation of how we understand and live.

Recognize the thoughts that guide your life. Bring them before God. Consider whether they agree with His Word and with the facts of your situation. Practice choices that reflect what you are learning. You can seek help, learn new habits, and take your own goals seriously.

You may not be able to change every circumstance today. But there are choices within reach. Give yourself time before answering another request. Take one step toward a neglected goal. Stop measuring your value entirely by how much someone needs you.

Genesis 1:27 teaches that humanity was created in the image of God. Your value begins before anyone applauds you. Your life deserves care, even when you are disappointed in yourself. Recognizing that value does not make you superior to others. It helps you see that you also deserve the dignity you extend to them.

As you take responsibility, remember the One who sustains you: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 1:24).

Jude closes with praise for God’s preserving power. Bring your weakness to Him. Ask for wisdom when judgment is clouded. Receive support when the next step feels difficult. Your responsibility and your dependence on God can walk together.

Ask yourself again, “What do I see when I look at me?” Then begin caring for your life in a way that reflects the value God has placed within it.

REFLECTION *What belief about myself needs examination? What action would reflect a more truthful understanding of my worth?*

PRAYER *Lord, renew my mind. Help me recognize my value and live responsibly with the freedom and opportunities I have.*

When Brotherhood Becomes Rivalry

Competition can enter the places where we expect fellowship. People can worship together, serve together, and speak affectionately while resentment grows beneath the surface. Someone who stood beside you may begin measuring themselves against you. If we are unwilling to examine ourselves, we can become that person.

Absalom's story gives us a sobering picture of ambition, manipulation, and betrayal. Second Samuel 15 describes how he positioned himself before those seeking judgment from the king. He questioned the provision the king had made for them and presented himself as the person who would give them justice.

“And on this manner did Absalom to all Israel that came to the king for judgment: so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (2 Samuel 15:6).

The history matters. Second Samuel 13–14 describes sexual violence within Absalom's family, failures of accountability, revenge, and estrangement before the conspiracy. Those wounds help explain the setting without excusing his deception. The story asks us to examine both those seeking power and those responsible for exercising it.

The phrase “Absalom spirit” is often used in church teaching to describe manipulative rivalry and disloyalty. The Bible does not name a fixed twelve-stage spiritual condition. The following twelve patterns form a framework for reflection. They are not a sequence every person follows, and they must never become a way to dismiss honest questions, reports of harm, or legitimate departures.

1. Independence Becoming Isolation

A person begins refusing cooperation or accountability while seeking recognition. Initiative itself is valuable. The concern arises when someone expects influence without responsibility or refuses every opportunity to examine their conduct. Ask whether your independence serves a shared purpose or protects you from correction.

2. Self-Promotion

A person maneuvers for praise, presenting themselves as the solution to everyone's frustration. Absalom cultivated affection while positioning himself against the king. Examine whether your words encourage genuine resolution or persuade people that only you can be trusted.

3. Spiritual Pride

Recognition becomes a reason to consider oneself more spiritual than others. Gifts, eloquence, and popularity cannot establish superiority. Ask whether you remain teachable when someone with less visibility offers correction. Leaders must ask the same question about the authority they hold.

4. Unresolved Offense

Disappointment becomes resentment. A person feels overlooked and gathers agreement rather than seeking clarity. Some offenses involve real wrongdoing and require accountability. The issue is how the concern is handled: truthfully and responsibly, or through repeated retelling designed to build a following.

5. Destructive Criticism

Decisions are persistently distorted or undermined. Honest criticism can help a church recognize error. Destructive criticism withholds relevant facts, assumes motives, or denies any possibility of a good decision. Ask whether you want a problem resolved or need the person to remain wrong.

6. Competition

Another person's influence becomes an obstacle to one's own. Shared service turns into comparison. A leader may resent another person's gifts just as a member may resent a leader's position. Notice whether you can support a good work without controlling it or receiving credit.

7. Sowing Division

A person spreads discontent and pressures others to join it. Conversations become recruitment. Seeking appropriate counsel or reporting misconduct is different from gathering allies through gossip. Ask whether you are speaking to someone who can responsibly help, or simply multiplying resentment.

8. Selective Accusations

Small concerns are exaggerated while inconvenient facts are omitted. Preferences about appearances or styles may be presented as moral failures. Genuine allegations of wrongdoing require a fair response and investigation. Neither popularity nor office should protect someone from accountability.

9. Open Factionalism

People are pressured to choose sides and prove loyalty. Friendship becomes conditional on agreement. A healthy community makes room for truthful concern without demanding personal allegiance. Ask whether your language invites careful judgment or punishes anyone who will not follow you.

10. Conspiracy

Deception becomes coordinated action to obtain power. Plans are concealed while public words suggest loyalty. The concern is intentional manipulation, not the appropriate confidentiality involved in reporting wrongdoing. Examine whether you are willing to tell the truth about your purpose and methods.

11. Rupture or Separation

Relationships fracture, people leave, or a congregation divides. Manipulation can cause serious damage. Still, leaving a church or starting a ministry does not by itself prove rebellion. People may leave because of abuse, doctrine, conscience, relocation, or an honest difference in direction. Examine the actual conduct and circumstances.

12. Consequences and Accountability

The final consideration is the harm produced and the response required. We cannot pronounce God's judgment on every ministry born through conflict. Matthew 7:15–20 uses trees and their fruit to discuss discernment, especially concerning false prophets. Observe conduct over time. Seek repentance, repair, and accountability rather than using Scripture to announce someone's inevitable failure.

My friend, before asking, "Who is doing this to me?" ask, "Am I seeking recognition more than reconciliation? Have I turned disappointment into a campaign? Am I telling the whole truth?" If you lead, also ask, "Have I listened, addressed harm, and accepted correction?"

The purpose of this chapter is clear sight. Before identifying an Absalom in someone else, examine the ambition, resentment, and pride within yourself. A congregation is better served when its members and leaders can both tell the truth.

REFLECTION *Which pattern challenges my own conduct? How can I raise a legitimate concern without distortion, gossip, or pressure?*

PRAYER *Lord, make me truthful and teachable. Protect our fellowship from manipulation, and give us courage to address real harm with fairness.*

Guard Your Heart

You can forgive someone and still recognize that a relationship needs boundaries. You can wish them well without continuing to give them access to every private part of your life. Guarding your heart asks you to care for your inner life while remaining capable of love.

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). In its surrounding verses, the passage also attends to speech, sight, and the path we walk. Guarding the heart is connected with how we live, where we direct our attention, and what we permit to shape our decisions.

Notice what repeated encounters produce in you. Do you leave a conversation clear and respected, even when it is difficult? Or do you routinely leave confused, intimidated, and unable to express a need? A single uncomfortable exchange may require clarification. A continuing pattern deserves careful attention.

My friend, guarding your heart does not require you to assume the worst of everyone. You can observe without becoming suspicious of every act of kindness. Take time to know people. Let trust grow through experience rather than granting deep access because someone uses affectionate language.

You can decide what to share, when to respond, and which requests you can accept. Someone who repeatedly exposes your private struggles may be trusted with less. Someone who turns every disagreement into an insult may need a limit on how you will continue the conversation.

A useful boundary is specific and practical. Explain the concern when it is appropriate: “I am not comfortable with my private information being shared. I will be more careful about what I discuss.” You do not need to deliver a speech or convince someone that your boundary is justified before taking a reasonable step.

Consistency matters. If you repeatedly announce a boundary and abandon it at the first sign of disappointment, you may begin doubting your own voice. Start with a limit you can realistically maintain. Seek support where following through is difficult.

Also remain willing to examine your boundaries. A limit should protect legitimate needs rather than punish someone for disagreeing. You can be firm and still receive thoughtful feedback about how you communicate.

You can remain loving while becoming careful. Love can stay in your heart while wisdom changes someone's access to your life.

REFLECTION *What access have I given that needs reconsideration? Is my boundary clear, realistic, and within my control?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me guard my heart with diligence. Give me steadiness to maintain wise limits and humility to communicate them well.*

When Peace Becomes Priceless

*“I would rather adjust my life to your absence than
adjust my boundaries to accommodate your disrespect.”*

There comes a point when you must honor the boundaries you have expressed. You explained what hurts, asked for respect, and gave opportunities for an honest conversation. Yet the behavior continues. Their absence may hurt. You may miss the companionship and what you hoped the relationship would become. Give yourself room to grieve.

Missing someone does not require you to welcome the same disrespect back. A boundary loses its protection when you repeatedly move it to keep someone close. You begin teaching yourself that your needs can always wait and your peace can always be sacrificed.

Now keep a promise to yourself: “I will speak honestly. I will pay attention to consistent behavior. I will follow through when a boundary is repeatedly crossed.” If reconciliation becomes possible, let it grow through accountability and sustained change.

*“Once a man understands his peace is
priceless, arguments become too expensive.”*

Every argument asks you to spend something: time, attention, energy, and sometimes rest. Before entering another one, ask, “Is this conversation moving us toward understanding, or are we repeating the same hurt?”

There are conversations worth having. Protecting your peace may require speaking clearly about what is wrong. But when a discussion becomes insults, provocation, or an endless demand that you defend yourself, you can choose to pause or end it. Say, “I am willing to discuss this when we can speak respectfully.” Then honor those words.

Romans 12:18 says, “If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.” Notice the recognition of what lies within your responsibility. You can choose your conduct, but you cannot guarantee another person’s cooperation. The surrounding passage also calls believers away from vengeance. Peaceful living includes refusing to retaliate.

Silence alone does not establish peace. Avoiding a necessary conversation may allow resentment to deepen. Choose your time thoughtfully. Ask whether you can speak without insults and whether the other person is willing to listen. When repeated attempts fail, distance may be appropriate.

You do not have to answer every accusation immediately. You do not have to keep explaining a boundary to someone who understands it but refuses to respect it. As you recognize the value of peace, become more careful about where you spend your energy.

REFLECTION *Which disagreement needs an honest conversation? Which repeated argument needs a limit? How can I respond without retaliation?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me pursue peace responsibly. Give me courage to speak when needed and restraint when another argument will accomplish little.*

Forgive Yourself and Learn to Trust Wisely

Forgiveness can become difficult when the person you keep accusing is yourself. You replay the conversation you wish you had ended. You remember the warning you dismissed. You wonder why you kept hoping after disappointment had become familiar.

Regret may identify something important. Listen long enough to understand the lesson, then decide what you will practice. Returning to the same accusation every day can leave you exhausted without producing a different choice.

If you made a mistake, name it accurately. “I shared information with someone who had already broken my confidence” is something you can examine. “I ruin everything” condemns your whole life. Specific language leaves room for a specific response.

First John 1:9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Where your own actions were wrong, confess them honestly. Where you were hurt, seek healing. Being harmed is not a sin you must confess.

If you owe someone an apology, identify what you did without demanding immediate forgiveness. Ask what appropriate repair may look like. Accept that another person’s trust may take time to return. The patience you need for your healing also belongs to those affected by your choices.

Likewise, you can forgive someone before trust is fully restored. Forgiveness does not establish that they are ready to receive the same access. Trust grows through honesty, reliability, and consistent change. You can acknowledge an apology while observing what follows.

Begin rebuilding trust in yourself through small promises. If you need time before deciding, take it. If you tell yourself you will seek counsel, make the appointment or have the conversation. Each kept promise gives you evidence that you can care for your own needs.

Remain open to healthy relationships. After betrayal, it can be tempting to treat everyone as a potential threat. You can proceed slowly without refusing every opportunity for connection. Seek people whose words and actions agree, who can hear a respectful no, and who take responsibility when they make mistakes.

My friend, you can forgive yourself and continue learning. You can receive love without earning it through endless usefulness. You can make room for people who care about your humanity, not only what you provide.

REFLECTION *What specific regret needs a lesson rather than another accusation? What small promise can I keep to rebuild trust in myself?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me receive forgiveness, offer appropriate repair, and learn to trust wisely. Keep disappointment from closing my heart to healthy love.*

Becoming Who God Called You to Be

You have looked into the mirror, examined your relationships, and considered your choices. Now the work enters ordinary life. What will you do when the familiar invitation arrives, the old accusation returns, or the person who hurt you asks for the same access?

Growth becomes visible in a response. You pause before answering. You ask a question instead of assuming a motive. You say no without adding an apology for having needs. You acknowledge when you are wrong. You choose a conversation that seeks truth rather than an audience that will celebrate your anger.

These changes may feel unfamiliar. You may feel guilty after setting a reasonable boundary. You may miss someone you have chosen to step away from. Feelings deserve attention, but they do not automatically determine whether your decision was wrong. Consider your reasons, observe the situation, and seek wise counsel.

You do not need to announce every change publicly. Some of the most important work happens quietly: returning to a neglected responsibility, caring for your health, developing a gift, or listening well to someone you once dismissed.

James 1:22 says, “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” In the verses that follow, James describes a person looking into a mirror and then forgetting what they saw. The image brings us back to this book’s question. Will you act on what you have recognized?

Choose one practice to begin. When you feel provoked, write down the facts before deciding what they mean. When you recognize comparison, name your own goal and take a step toward it. When you need a boundary, communicate it clearly and identify how you will follow through. When you fail, acknowledge it and begin again.

Bring God into this daily work. Pray before the difficult conversation, and remain truthful during it. Ask for humility before offering correction, and receive correction when it comes. Let your faith become part of your conduct.

My friend, you can love others and care for yourself. You can acknowledge betrayal without making it your entire identity. You can examine the enemy you see outside you and the habits you need to change within you.

You still have a life to live. You still have people to love. You still have choices to make. Let what you have learned shape the person you are becoming.

REFLECTION *Which practice from this book will I begin today? Who can offer honest support as I grow?*

PRAYER *Lord, help me act on what I have seen. Give me humility, courage, and consistency as I become the person You have called me to be.*

CLOSING

A Prayer for Clear Sight

Lord, search my heart and help me tell the truth. Show me what needs repentance, what needs healing, and what needs a boundary. Give me wisdom to recognize the difference.

Help me see the value in my own life. Teach me to love others without disappearing from my own care. Help me receive correction, forgive myself, and repair harm where I have caused it.

Keep jealousy and pride from shaping my relationships. Where I have been betrayed, help me grieve without retaliating. Where trust has been broken, give me patience to observe real change and courage to maintain necessary limits.

Renew my mind. Strengthen me to make the choices within my reach. Help me seek support when I cannot move forward alone. Preserve my capacity to love as I learn to love wisely.

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen” (Jude 1:24–25).

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Scripture Guide

Introduction	Matthew 7:3–5 <i>Self-examination before correcting another person.</i>
Chapter 1	Psalms 139:23–24 <i>Asking God to search and lead us.</i>
Chapter 2	Philippians 2:3–4 <i>Humility and concern for others.</i>
Chapter 3	Proverbs 14:15 <i>Thoughtful discernment about how we proceed.</i>
Chapter 4	Matthew 22:37–40 <i>Love for God and neighbor.</i>
Chapter 5	Romans 8:1–4 <i>Freedom from condemnation and life in the Spirit.</i>
Chapter 6	Lamentations 3:21–40 <i>Hope, mercy, and examination of our ways.</i>
Chapter 7	Romans 12:1–2; Genesis 1:27; Jude 1:24 <i>Renewal, human dignity, and God's preserving power.</i>
Chapter 8	2 Samuel 13–15; Matthew 7:15–20 <i>Absalom's context and conspiracy; discerning fruit.</i>
Chapter 9	Proverbs 4:20–27 <i>Guarding the heart and attending to our path.</i>
Chapter 10	Romans 12:17–21 <i>Peaceful conduct and refusal of vengeance.</i>
Chapter 11	1 John 1:8–9 <i>Confession and God's forgiveness.</i>
Chapter 12	James 1:22–25 <i>Acting on what we hear and see.</i>
Closing	Jude 1:24–25 <i>Praise to God who is able to preserve His people.</i>

About the Author

Apostle Dr. Curtis T. Crosland Jr., PhD, DD, is a devoted husband, loving father, pastor, educator, author, and community leader. He serves as Senior Pastor and Founder of New Life Perfecting Praise Ministries in Jacksonville, Florida, and as Assistant General Superintendent of the Grace Temple Fellowship of Churches.

His educational and community work includes serving as a campus director in adult education and supporting adolescents through classroom teaching. His writing and teaching address biblical discipleship, personal responsibility, family life, and spiritual growth.

YOUR STORY IS NOT OVER



My friend, there is still greatness in you. What hurt you does not have to define you. What you discover in the mirror can become the beginning of healing and change.

Take responsibility for what you can change. Forgive yourself. Guard your heart without closing it to love. Protect your peace, honor your boundaries, and keep walking with God.

You still have a life to live, people to love, and a purpose to fulfill. Take one faithful step today.

KEEP GROWING. KEEP PRAYING. KEEP MOVING FORWARD.

With love and encouragement,
Apostle Dr. Curtis T. Crosland Jr.
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