A person wearing a white robe is seen from behind, walking up a set of stone steps inside a dark, arched stone tunnel. At the end of the tunnel, a bright, glowing light emanates from an opening, creating a strong silhouette effect on the person and illuminating the surrounding stone walls. The overall atmosphere is one of hope and a journey towards light.

PATHWAY OUT
OF THE PIT
The Personal Journey

REGINA M. DICK

The Journey of a Lifetime



This book is dedicated to my four children Harlan, Britney, Karson, and Cameron. God's gift to me and one of my greatest joys in life, they each have shown me in their own unique way God's path and the love for His children.

Special thanks to my editors and friends who encouraged and supported me during the continued effort to get this book published.



Pathway Out of The Pit
The Personal Journey

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Prologue

“Then the Lord replied:

***Write down the revelation
and make it plain on tablets,
so that a herald may run with it.
For the revelation awaits an appointed time,
it speaks of the end
and will not prove false.
Though it linger, wait for it,
it will clearly come,
it will not delay.”***

Habakkuk 2:2-3 (NIV)

Despite language and even cultural barriers, never before in the history of mankind have we had the power to communicate with one another on such a global scale. The door is open wide and our choice is either to come together in unity under God or face the unimaginable consequences of turning our back on him.

The era in which we live is gaining momentum in our access to information, in our growth in all areas of technology, and in our pursuit of knowledge, which is now faster than we are able to comprehend or weigh the consequences. Left to our own devices, without any divine arbitration, we might very well destroy ourselves. This is not by our own intentions, but by



our own naiveté to the consequence of our actions or inactions. The choices are ours; we have free will.

Likewise, like no other moment of time has there been such global pressure manifesting through climatic and geological upheavals, wars and threats of world wars, famine and the fear of global pandemics. The pressure to find answers is at its all-time high. From Lima, Peru to Shenzhen, China; from New Delhi, India to New York City, New York, the sense of something brewing is prevalent. Even in our local communities within family units there are individuals are experiencing the deep sense of making a choice –the dividing lines are becoming more evident. It is time for many to get off the fence.

Some have said, “We are our own worst enemy.” But the real fact is that many have not gone beyond themselves to find Truth. It is not the knowledge of this world, but the wisdom of the next that brings to us the experience of Truth. And the Truth is very simple, yet most will spend a lifetime and never find it. Nonetheless even an “*inexperienced*,” “*unsophisticated*,” “*non-intellectual*” child can and does access Truth all the time. It is this Truth and only this Truth that fills the deep “void” that all of us experience and never seem to be able to fill. This Truth not only fills the void, but fills it to overflowing abundance like nothing ever before experienced. Lives are being changed, relationships revived, lost loved ones restored, individuals healed and miracles taking place. Nothing or no one on this earth can make these promises, but this one Truth.

The Truth is very simply this: “*Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through him.**” Our only access to God is through His Son, Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells us once we choose to believe, and then fully receive Jesus Christ as Truth. Thus begins the journey of a lifetime.

* John 14:6



These words that lie before you are words of testimony to the truth of Jesus Christ as the Truth, and the power of the Holy Spirit moving in individual lives on a global scale like never before. The purpose of this testimony is to encourage and support you on your own journey, whether a newcomer or fellow believer. New wine will be poured into the new wineskin as you progress on this personal, intimate journey with Jesus Christ.

The reason I boldly proclaim these words is because, in my own journey, I have experienced confirmation after confirmation of these revelations from the Bible, from fellow believers and from the prodding of the Holy Spirit. And I am not alone! This one journey, like yours, among millions can cause a ripple effect, along with so many other journeys that are creating a tidal wave. It's happening— look around you. It is one of the scariest times on earth, but absolutely one of the most exciting if you are a believer.

To make it perfectly clear, I am not a teacher. Only Jesus Christ is your Teacher on this journey, and it is through Him by the power of the Holy Spirit that you will learn and know Truth. My part, as a follower of Jesus Christ, is to share with you my experiences. In no way am I declaring my perfection; to do so would in essence break my dependence on God and leave me vulnerable to deception. No, it is in my weakest, most broken state in surrender to Jesus that I have experienced the height of true love in this world. There are no words that can adequately explain this occurrence. It can only be explained by experiencing it yourself. I cannot teach it to you, but I can testify to its validity in my own life and in the lives of those around me, and encourage you to keep moving forward trusting in God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) alone.

The words I present before you will serve as revelation to some and confirmation for others. I invite you to test or even challenge what is presented, for that is the very idea of this personal journey. The gift of discernment (ability to distinguish the truth from a lie) is available to you through the power of the Holy Spirit. This is your classroom and you can



ask Jesus anything you choose. If you *ask, you will receive, if you seek you will find, and if you knock the door will be opened to you*[†]. The key is simply surrender to Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within you when you make the decision to believe. Learn to test what you hear, what you read and what you experience through the Bible and the direction of the Holy Spirit. That is what will bring you into that personal intimate relationship with your savior, Jesus Christ.

Answers to your questions may come immediately or may come later. They may come in the form of an inaudible inner voice or some sensitivity to words being spoken or written; most often you will be directed to certain Biblical scriptures whose meaning will become clear to you for the first time. You will see your life and your answers in the Bible. Do not be discouraged if an answer does not come right away. You may have to wait or just learn how to listen. In any case, the Lord will answer in His way and in His timing— trust Him. It will be one of the most exciting revelations on your journey when you come to the realization that he is *really* there, he *really* loves you, and you ARE WORTHY of this love.

The Purpose

As a believer, I could read every book available, listen to every magnanimous orator or attend every Bible study and seminar, but with all this knowledge I will still not understand the ways of God. *“I must lean not on my own understanding, but trust in God alone.”*[‡]

Understanding within my limited capacity to understand (theory), and experiencing actual events (practical application) are two completely different things. The actual daily experiences in the “walk” with Christ, are the lessons in and of themselves. We tend to look to the end of the journey, when the journey itself is the end.

[†] Matthew 7:8; Luke 11:10

[‡] Proverbs 3:5;



The Bible, being the one and only God-inspired written account of God, is the only book that can give some rhyme or reason to this journey. Yet, without the Holy Spirit's guidance the Bible will make little sense, or may even be used for what it was never intended. With the Holy Spirit, we have all the tools necessary to go beyond our limited concepts within this earthly plane and to enter into the heavenly realm— the Kingdom of God. All that is required is a simple surrender to His calling. And our calling is to see ourselves and others through Jesus Christ's perspective.

I am a born-again, Holy Spirit-filled believer who has found the freedom that comes in total submission to Jesus Christ. This submission, which brings into being personal victories, creates a confidence that arises from a posture of humility, and an uncommon strength that can only be received by acknowledging my own state of weakness. All the eloquent, profound words I could muster could not adequately explain what we each can experience in this life-long journey with Jesus Christ. What it all boils down to is one single word— the word which we all seek from the moment we are born to the moment of our death, and that word is love. It is only by this love that our void will ever be filled; not only will it be filled, but filled to overflowing. If you do not have this love, nor understand it, you have nothing.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:8 (NIV)

The Pit

My own journey began with the realization that my own choices and my own actions had led me into a deep, dark void in the middle of my being –a bottomless abyss called “The Pit.” This was a pit that I was totally unaware I was in and spanned a major portion of my lifetime.

In my teens I had a profound experience of being “born-again” and filled with the Holy Spirit. As I was saved, I thought, “I’m okay; I am going to heaven.” I did not realize that although I



had “flown,” I never really learned “how to fly.” This magnificent experience was just the beginning of the first part of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The next part was the journey— the Path into the fullness of salvation in Jesus Christ. It was not until many years later that I picked up where I had left off when I was young, and began to “continue” on this journey.

It was in those absent years that I became deceived and began falling deeper and deeper into “The Pit.” So deeply did I fall, that nothing could console me, confusion plagued me and fear consumed me. When I finally reached bottom, I cried out to my Creator and He answered me. It was not until then that I discovered this truth: He had been there all along waiting for me to turn back to him and experience Truth.



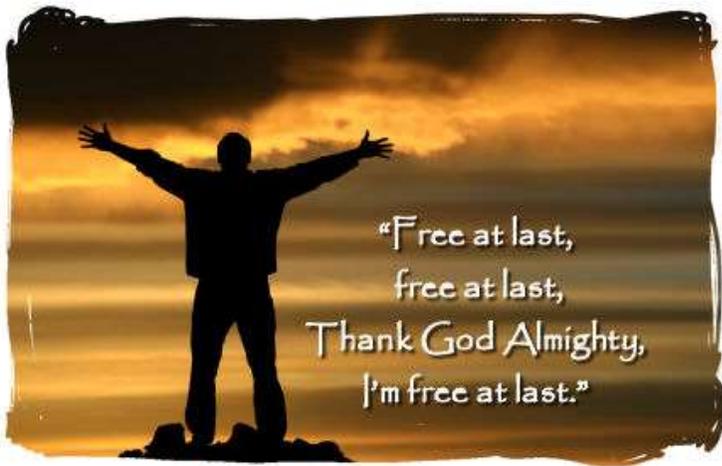
THE ONLY way I could get out of my pit was by His direction; all other attempts on my own inevitably failed. Not until I finally came to the “end of myself” did I surrender. It was only through the grace of God and eventually learning to trust and lean upon him that it became clear that, little by little, He was bringing me on the “*Pathway Out of The Pit.*”

The time had finally come to learn how to fly –to do what I thought was impossible. The path that lay ahead of me was the journey to the fullness of His salvation; the most consuming and awe-inspiring time of my life- the journey of a lifetime. Once He gave me a glimpse, I hungered for more.

*...until we all reach **unity in the faith** and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to **the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.***

Ephesians 4:13 (NIV)

Over time, I gradually began to understand the real person of Jesus Christ through a personal and very intimate relationship with Him. I had been clueless for so many years; I never knew I could have a relationship with Him. I grew to realize without a shadow of doubt that He would never leave me or forsake me. He is my Teacher, my Counselor, my Provider, my Healer, my Alpha and my Omega, and my best Friend. He takes me to places I have never been before, and fills the void to overflowing. He teaches me everything I need to know. He answers all my questions, and He makes clear the path designed specifically for the purpose He intended for my life.



He has taken the crumbled pieces of my life and put them back together, giving me a glimpse of a purpose beyond myself. The only requirement on my part is to simply surrender my free will to His love and care on a daily basis, for the rest of my life in this world and into the next. The freedom and peace arising from this daily choice goes

beyond words; it can only be understood through personal experience. The very words of the hymn referred to in Reverend Martin Luther King's 1963 speech, "*Free at last, free at last, Thank God Almighty, I'm free at last,*" carries a profound personal meaning for me in my own freedom from the bondage of deception and sin.

The End of the Testimony

Recently, I gave my testimony before a group of individuals in search of their own answers. At the end of the testimony the question was asked, "What encouragement could you give a newcomer (*about your journey*)?" The answer had come to me months before the question was even asked, and without realizing it until later, it summed up the whole purpose of my journey.



This is what I shared:

The Lord has shown me that the past is over and forgiveness is mine; the future belongs to Him and He gives me enough grace for only one day at a time. And in that day, I am to be anxious FOR NOTHING– but with everything in prayer and supplication let my request be made known. (Phil. 4:6)

Since the crux of my problem was pride and a deep need to be in control, co-dependency[§] became my “drug of choice.” I eventually became so focused on my problems and others in my life, that I lost sight of HIM, so He put it very plainly before me.

I needed to understand what I was really fighting and who the enemy really was. When my focus turns from looking to Him to looking at the people, places or events in my life that are troublesome, I get off path. Then the enemy has a field day with me. He has shown me that the victory is already mine; it is just a matter of walking it out – day to day.

*It can be explained very simply in **The Armor of God** found in Ephesians 6:10-18 – It says we are to put on the FULL ARMOR OF GOD to stand against the devils schemes.*

§ Co-dependency is typically defined as pertaining to a relationship in which one person is physically or psychologically addicted, and the other person is psychologically dependent on the first in an unhealthy way



First of all, we are to know who our enemy really is:

Oxford Scholar C.S. Lewis wrote, “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors...”

SO our struggle is NOT AGAINST FLESH AND BLOOD, but against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm (Eph. 6:12)

Every Day:

1. I PUT ON THE BELT OF TRUTH

- *This belt of truth holds everything else to together.*
- *And that SIMPLE truth is:
Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth and the Life– there is no other way to God except through HIM. (John 14:6)*
- **ALL ROADS LEAD TO JESUS CHRIST**

2. I AM TO PUT ON THE HELMET OF SALVATION (to protect my mind)

- *I am learning to “take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 10:5)*
- *I am beginning to see life through the Christ’s perspective and no longer my own.*
- *Each challenge that I face throughout the day I now see as an “opportunity” to witness the glory of God in my life, rather than an obstacle impossible to overcome.*

3. I PUT ON THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

- *Through the Holy Spirit I now have the “Righteousness of Jesus Christ” living within me, therefore there is no condemnation.*
- *Therefore, I am an heir of God and co-heirs with Christ and I AM WORTHY! I no longer feel unworthy!*



4. I SHOD MY FEET WITH THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

- *Everywhere I go or whatever I do, I bring the good news gospel of Jesus Christ to others.*
- *The opportunities are always there and he gives me the words in the right timing to lift the veil to Truth.*

5. I TAKE UP MY SHIELD OF FAITH TO EXTINGUISH THE FIERY DARTS FROM THE EVIL ONE

- *On a daily basis these “Fiery Darts” can come from anywhere and everywhere, and especially from the ones closest to me.
Example: When Jesus was in the garden of Gethsemane with His apostles explaining his upcoming death. Peter rebuked his words, saying, “This shall never happen to you, Lord”, and Christ said, “Get thee behind me Satan.” (Matthew 16:23, Mark 8:3, Luke 4:8) He was not calling Peter, “Satan”; He was referring to the words Peter spoke without thinking.*
- *Those closest to us often fire the hottest darts, speaking without thinking and causing the most damage.*
- *Therefore, I hold up the shield of faith that quenches every fiery dart.*

6. I TAKE THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT- THE WORD OF GOD THAT SLICES BETWEEN THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT REACHING THE INNER CORE.

- *The double- edged sword IS the Word of God –Meaning the Bible and the revelation words of the Holy Spirit.
Example: When Christ was in the desert for 40 days and tempted by Satan three times, he used scripture to overcome the temptation and the evil.*

With all of this Armor of God, my Christian friend pointed out a missing link. She said, “While you are fighting from the front, who is watching (or covering) your back?”



- *Those of you who are in fellowship with me, my brothers and sisters in Christ. Those in our groups. This is TRUE FELLOWSHIP, not just idle chat, but honesty and unity.*
- *When I came out of my particular belief system, I had heard about Fellowship, but all I saw was an opportunity for others to boast about how well they were doing and how wonderful their kids were.*
- *But I have discovered this truth: True Fellowship is a Fellowship of Sinners, not a Fellowship of Saints.*

For me **True FELLOWSHIP** offers three vital points:

- **UNITY** – *When we come together the common bond is Jesus Christ –this is an unbreakable bond of unity that nothing can shake.*
- **ACCOUNTABILITY** – *I feel accountable to the ones I fellowship with each week, making me stronger in my resolve to do what I am supposed to do and not give up!*
- **CONFESSION**- *The ability to confess to others, to get honest, thus bringing light into the darkness; therefore, the enemy must flee – And from this comes realization that “YOU ARE NOT ALONE.”*



WITH ALL OF THIS BEING SAID, in complete armor and TRUE fellowship – THE ONLY WAY TO WIN THIS WAR IS BY SURRENDER, SURRENDER TO JESUS CHRIST ONE DAY AT A TIME!!!

It is by this surrender that we come to truly experience the glory of God that descends upon us and fills us with the love that makes obeying Jesus Christ a perfectly natural act of love. We do not work at it, create it, or even



deserve it; we are simply given the grace to accomplish whatever He calls us to do.



Introduction ~ The Only Way Out

***“I waited patiently for the Lord;
He turned to me and heard my cry.
He lifted me out of the slimy pit
out of the mud and mire.”***

Psalms 40: 1-2 (NIV)

This book is designed to assist those of us who are currently in, trying to climb out of, or do not even realize they are in “The Pit.” The Pit can be described as a deep dark hole, a void, the abyss- often a self-imposed prison with an overwhelming sense of no escape. Both believers of Christ and non-believers have or will experience the Pit in one form or another- varying in length and intensity. Others, perhaps friends or even entire families, may be in the Pit with us. The reasons for being in this Pit can vary from making the wrong choices in life to being merely circumstantial. The key is the way out!

The Pit, itself, is nothing more than a lie or series of lies straight from the enemy’s camp. This deception is intended to kill, steal and destroy everything you hold dear in this life and beyond. Some will remain all their lives in this Pit, and oftentimes bring others into it along with them. Still others have not quite recognized they are in a Pit, they remain blind. They just know that their lives have become totally unmanageable, and they just cannot explain



how, when or why it came about and/or what to do about it. Even those who have come to understand how they got there still do not know how to get out.

Then, there are those who receive the grace to recognize the Pit they are in and pay heed to the only voice that can lead them out. The voice that has been waiting to be heard is the Voice of God. It is in this beginning of the most intimate of relationships, the lifelong relationship with Jesus Christ, that one finds the only *Pathway Out of The Pit*. Only He can bring an individual to the root cause of the problem. Only He can heal them in ways they have never before understood, and make their path clear in order to fulfill the very reason for their existence.

Within these pages are some of my own intimate life passages, designed to testify as a witness to God's great love and mercy. The only way this book could be written was by trust in Jesus Christ, and in the same way the only way it can be read and understood is by trusting in Jesus Christ.

For those who are currently experiencing trials and tribulations that appear overwhelming, this book was written with you in mind. You are not alone, there are many individuals within this time in history who are being tested and refined to what nearly seems to be the breaking point. For God's own purposes, it is a time of separating the wheat from the chaff. So how do you stand?





The Parable of Nassir

Take heart, for it is in the heart that you will find the answer. The following is a simple parable; one that I found to be a glimpse of my own experience.

As the story goes, there once was a man named Nassir who for whatever reason or reasons found himself trapped in a deep, dark, slimy pit with absolutely no visible means of escape. Nassir began to cry out for help— begging and pleading to anyone who might come along and hear his sobbing.

Alas, along came a friend, someone he just knew would help him out— after all it was his best friend. The closer the friend neared the edge of the pit, the more he realized the dire predicament that Nassir was in, and he became too afraid to help his friend for fear of falling in himself. And so, the friend, out of his own perceived need of self-preservation, decided to turn away and not be a part of Nassir and his “situation.”

Again Nassir began to cry out, this time with more intensity. As time passed, along came a counselor— a learned advisor to many of the people in the nearby village. He heard Nassir’s pleas and asked him just how he got into the pit in the first place. The counselor began to analyze the many possible reasons why and how Nassir ended up in this pit. The counselor gave him a list of possible solutions for dealing with his circumstance and he even tossed in some medicinal herbs to help Nassir to cope with his predicament. But these strategies only served to frustrate Nassir even further. The counselor, although very learned in his profession, could only go so far to assist Nassir in finding his way out. Never quite comprehending the entire picture, the counselor could provide Nassir with limited answers to only part of his dilemma, the result: Nassir was still in the pit.

As time passed, Nassir began to feel that his situation was hopeless, yet he continued to cry out for help. To his relief, he heard the voice of the local clergyman



whom he had heard so many previous times before in church. Nassir was certain that this man of God who gave such awe inspiring sermons and tearful testimonials would indeed help him to get out of the pit.

As the clergyman came to the edge of the pit and solemnly listened to his plight, Nassir thought, “Yes, this clergyman has a direct line to God, and God will surely help me out of this pit.” Much to Nassir’s amazement, the clergyman began to speculate and to judge why God would put poor Nassir into this pit in the first place, and thus to preach his well-practiced sermon on “How God Works.” He filled Nassir with many antidotes for pleasing God. With jubilant anticipation Nassir was certain that if he could just follow all of the instructions, and keep all of the commands, God would be happy with him and *get him out*. But to no avail, for poor Nassir was still in the pit. Filled with anger and disappointment, he admonished the clergyman for trying to *be* God rather than helping him to *find* God.

Despair, desperation, and hopelessness were now permeating Nassir’s every thought until he felt as if the very life was being drained out of him. Eventually, with what he felt was his last breath, he cried out, “Lord God, my heavenly Father, I surrender everything! Help me get out of this pit!”

Deep within the very core of his being, he heard a still, quiet voice clearly say, “Do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10, NIV).

Nassir could now feel new life being poured into his being— a peace that surpassed all understanding and a joy that filled him with unspeakable strength. He knew His Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, was there in his midst- that He had been there all along, patiently waiting for Nassir to call upon him, because He loved Nassir.



Christ was not at the edge of the pit calling out instructions. He was in the very midst of the pit *with him*. God had sent Nassir the right hand of righteousness, His only Son Jesus Christ, to personally help him out of the pit.

And Christ took his hand, his heart and his soul and delivered him from this miry pit of despair and hopelessness. Nassir now knew that he was on the path of salvation and that only Christ would take him every step of the way.



Modern Day “Pits”

Our modern society, filled with the overwhelming seductions and temptations to take us off course, has led to some of the deepest and darkest Pits of all time. As members of this society, we seek answers from one another as to the way out. We are more often than not left short of grasping the full scope of the situation, and those who seem to have the answers end up worse off than ourselves. We seek alternative and temporary means to hide or suppress the pain, only to revisit the same issues at a later date with even more intensity. The answer seems to elude us as we continue our journey on this merry-go-round of deception.

I once attended a Family Recovery Group that was secular in nature. Each week, every member in this round table discussion group discussed where they were in regard to a family member who was involved in some form of addiction or obsession. Although the discussion focused primarily on alcohol and drug abuse, other forms of addictions and obsessions might be included. Each week I intently listened to the many stories of troubled and confused parents and spouses who were searching for answers. At times we would listen to pretty good analogies of what was happening, but no solid wisdom. Finally, out of pure frustration from the group came the resounding unified question, “So what IS the answer?” At that moment, I could not hold inside what I knew without a doubt to be the ONLY answer, so I shouted, “The answer is God!” Some heard me and agreed while others just stared blankly off into space feeling hopelessly lost.



I do remember one man in the group who had been an avid drinker and was now attending for both his sons who were seriously involved in alcohol and drugs. Although appearing totally beaten down, he was far from being defeated. He spoke bravely and solemnly witnessed that the answer for him was indeed through a true intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. As all facades were broken as the man boldly declared that had it not been for this relationship with God, he would not have made it. In his voice there was a strong and steady sound of hope that gave each of us food for thought.

Thus, the question for us becomes very clear: “Do you really want to get off the merry-go-round— and out of the Pit?” Are you sick and tired of being sick and tired? Are you willing to simply open your heart, and your mind, to Truth as professed in the Bible?

If you answered “No,” then these words are not for you. It could be that you may not be ready to get out of your comfort zone, which is more than likely not very “comfortable,” only familiar. It’s okay, because God loves you no matter what, and He will always be there, waiting for you.

If you answered “Yes,” then let’s take a look, and move into this incredible journey that our Heavenly Creator personally designed for us all along. The question becomes, “If God is the Answer; *how do we get to Him?*” How do we get to this Being that seems so far out of reach for some, while others seem to “know everything” about him, yet clearly have no true, intimate relationship with him?

The Answer can only be found in God’s son, Jesus Christ. A “personal relationship with His Son” means a “personal relationship with the Father.”

Jesus Christ is our only personal Savior, our only Teacher and our only most intimate best Friend. It is He who gives us the Spirit of Truth, the Holy Spirit, to be our Guide throughout



our entire lives. How much simpler could this be? Yet, many of us search for answers in everything else but God! This is the ultimate deception, “the great lie” that keeps us in the mires of the slimy Pit.

Together let’s take the journey *Out of The Pit* with all those who have journeyed before you, with all those who are presently on the path, and for all those yet to come. It is more than mere coincidence that you have come to this point in your life.

In The Beginning was the Word

It begins with a simple vocal affirmation of faith. The righteousness found in Jesus Christ that He presented to mankind many years ago.



***“The word is near you;
it is in your mouth and in your heart,
that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming:***

***That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.
For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified,
and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.”***

Romans 10: 8-10 (NIV)

So now is the time to open your mind, your heart and your mouth with the following proclamation of faith. Those of you who are believers are welcomed to join in the following as a fresh affirmation of your faith.

Proclamation of Faith

Say Aloud:

“Lord, I come before you now and ask for forgiveness for all of my sins and I forgive those who have offended me. I receive your forgiveness and your unconditional love for me. I proclaim that you are the one True God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. I believe



that your only Son, Jesus Christ, is our Lord and Savior; that He died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins and rose again on the third day for our eternal salvation. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God who counsels me, teaches me and directs my path to all truth.

I now receive God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as the blessed Trinity, One in the same, into my life. I am now a child of God, an heir and co-heir with Christ in all that His Kingdom has for me.

I surrender every aspect of my life totally and completely to Jesus Christ. I surrender my will to Christ, and I believe that the Holy Spirit dwells within me to lead me, guide me, comfort me and serve as my direct line of communication with the Heavenly Father. I come to be restored in you, to receive from you all the grace and mercy I so desperately need. I trust you completely to meet my every need and fulfill my true desires, for You are my Redeemer, my Sustainer and my Provider.

I boldly declare that now I am more than a conqueror through Jesus Christ; for greater is He that now lives in me than he that lives in the world. No weapon formed against me will prosper for I am no longer a victim; I live victoriously.

In the name of Jesus Christ, it is done. Amen.”

The angels in heaven are giving you a standing ovation, for you are now a child of God and your name is forever written in The Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 21:27). You have made the most important decision of your life; you are a Believer and now your journey begins.



*Your name is written
in the
Lamb's Book of Life*

The Journey Begins

This relationship that you have just formed with your proclamation of faith is a lifelong journey. Your choices and your decisions can now be divinely inspired. You will no longer have to live in fear or doubt. You live in the peace and joy of knowing that God is directing your path. Imagine knowing that everything you do, even when you do make a mistake, if turned over to your Heavenly Father will turn out not only for your good, but for the good of **all** concerned. The simple requirement is to love and trust in the Lord -- to seek first the Kingdom of God, which is the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is now within you, and all things shall be added unto you. This is true freedom and your way to an abundant life.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

This is a personal journey not just for me as the author, but for you as the reader, if and/or when you are willing to take the trek. It is your choice; you may choose to read the book as a non-active participant or choose to participate in the journey of a lifetime. For those who choose to participate you will not be alone in this journey in both the natural and the supernatural, for there are those who have gone before you, those who are with you now and those who are to come.

The main purpose is your personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This is your personalized journey with Christ in your day to day experiences. While you may get glimpse of the Truth, no one individual, no single book, no religion, structured program or belief system will have all the answers for you –they are not meant to. This was a real revelation to me when I fell into utter confusion trying to find answers outside of my relationship with Christ. What finally struck me so profoundly was the thought of dying, and going before Christ, and hearing Him say, “I never knew you.” He would be right, because I followed the religious belief systems, I read the books, followed the Christian motivational speakers, attended the conferences, even did the Bible studies, but I did not KNOW HIM as the Truth.

I had to KNOW HIM, Jesus Christ, Who is the only one who knows you even better than you know yourself. Take a look at the story of the woman at the well:



When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

*Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the **true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."*

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

John 4:7-26 (NIV)

Things to be aware of on the journey:

It is the Holy Trinity that has entered your life, God, the Father; God, the Son, Jesus Christ; and God, the Holy Spirit. These three are separate, yet all in one.

Trials, tests and tribulation will come your way as in everyday life, but as a Christian you will learn to be aware through the power of the Holy Spirit of what is happening, learn to overcome, and walk in victory by surrendering and standing firm in Jesus Christ.

This WILL AFFECT all those in your sphere of influence, it is meant to. And you will become connected to others in Christ in an unshakeable bond like never before.

At some point you will experience a glimpse of “Agape Love” (the unconditional love of God) and you will begin to understand that this is what carries you - the Grace of God. This part brings everything in your life into clarity. This is the very engine that propels you on your path.

Your life will be blessed in the midst of trials and hard times, and you will remain a blessing to others. You will experience the peace of God that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7) and a joy that knows no bounds.

At the end of each chapter is a series of questions that pertains to that chapter. The pages and text are clearly marked in blue. The questions are often very personal in nature and some may test you way beyond your current comfort zone.

There are some necessities, the first of which is to invite the Holy Spirit to guide you before you begin answering the questions, and open your heart to learning how to listen attentively to His gentle urges or directions. For those who are new to this, the process will be unfamiliar and may seem somewhat uncomfortable at first, but do not give up. Each

individual is unique in their ability to hear Him, and His call may come in various ways, but the point is to keep your heart open to him. And TRUST HIM.

For those who are already familiar with the prodding of the Holy Spirit, keep in touch with Him and pray for discernment through each series of questions.

Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

1 John 4:1 (NIV)

Secondly, keep a Bible on hand to help assist you on your journey. An invaluable online resource that will give you numerous Bible choices is www.biblegateway.org, which is ideal if you do not currently own a Bible or would like to check various interpretations. The key is to trust the Holy Spirit to guide you even through your Bible readings and its personal applications. And third, keep on hand a personal writing journal or notebook to record your answers, thoughts, prayers, questions, or even letters to God.

Online video content will become available through Good News Broadcasting & Multimedia at www.gnbm.org for each section as a means of additional support and awareness of others struggling with similar issues. This content will include any or all of the following: teaching, testimony, group fellowship and prayer. You can view the video content at your own pace.

There are no absolutes in this journey. However, it is recommended that you allow enough time to give complete answers to the questions, whatever that might mean. Always keep in mind that the purpose of this journey is to build a personal intimate relationship between you and your Holy Counselor, your Ultimate Healer and your very Best Friend, Jesus Christ, by the power of His Holy Spirit that now resides in you. No matter what you have done in the past or where you have been, you can trust in this developing relationship.

If at any point the journey becomes too difficult, or if you become anxious or even fearful, then really lean on Christ. Immediately surrender this yoke or burden of anxieties and fears to Him (Matthew 11: 29, 30). Ask him for the grace to get you through whatever it might be. Then simply receive the peace that surpasses all understanding (Philippians 4:7) and the joy that knows no bounds (2 Corinthians 7:4). The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; He will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. (Deuteronomy 31:8; Joshua 1:5; 1 Kings 8:57). He will meet you right where you are at!

Although the questions are limited to this book, the journey is life-long. The book and subsequent questions serve to establish fellowship within the most intimate of relationships known to man— that of himself to his Creator. The rewards are beyond measure in every aspect of your life here on earth, and your life beyond.

Throughout the book you may be taken to places you never have known, but the one question proposed to you will always be the same, “Do you trust him –your Savior Jesus Christ?”

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart;
do not depend on your own understanding.
Seek his will in all you do,
and he will show you which path to take.*

Proverbs 3:5-6 (NIV)

Introduction: The Way Out

(Remember to take your time and ask for help from the Holy Spirit who will guide you honestly through the questions –even if your answers seem negative at this time.)

Use a journal or notebook and answer the following:

1. Do you think you are in the Pit? If so, describe your Pit – What does it look like, feel like or even sound like, and who might be in there with you?
2. In the Parable of Nassir, did any of the characters sound familiar? If yes, then which ones did you encounter and what did you experience from them? (e.g. disappointment, anger, confusion, betrayal, feeling of being unworthy.)
3. Can you forgive these individuals? (If the answer is no, do not worry— just keep going.)
4. Have you ever experienced doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results? If yes, why do you think you were unable to experience successful results?
5. If this is your first time to state your “Proclamation of Faith,” what was your reaction to this experience? (Wait for a few days before you answer this question, and do not worry if at this time you feel nothing.)
6. If you already made your “Proclamation of Faith” in the past, what was your experience?
7. Are you ready for the life-long relationship with Jesus Christ?



Chapter One: You Are Not Alone

***“The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;
He will never leave you nor forsake you.***

***Do not be afraid;
do not be discouraged.”***

Deuteronomy 31:8 (NIV)

From the very beginning of my own personal journey, I felt alone. I felt as though no one had ever quite experienced what I was going through and I dared not tell anyone for fear of being judged and breaking down the barriers of my façade. It was a perfectly comfortable façade that kept a nice-looking picture for all to see in which it appeared that my life was good, my marriage was okay, and my children were just fine. I felt so alone, separated with my negative thoughts as my only company. Gradually, my fears began mounting, day by day, month by month, and year after year. I could be in a room full of people –even with my own family – and feel so very alone. Even when things really began to go haywire and out of control I convinced myself that *if* I could keep up this front just a little longer everything would eventually be all right. In retrospect, I could not have been more wrong.



I tried to conform to the pressures that our particular society placed on us— that if you are not behaving or looking just like everyone else, something is wrong with you. And if something is wrong, you dare not share it with anyone; after all we supposed to be perfect in every respect, right? Even my loved ones would consistently remind me, “Don’t tell anyone, it’s no one’s business but ours.” We had to keep up the lie. So the pressure kept building, and the pain mounted as the problems piled one on top of another -- problems that were now being passed on to the ones I loved the most. Until finally, there came a point when the pain became too much for me to bear alone and I exploded like a vocal volcano spewing to anyone and everyone that would listen. Uncaring hearts and insensitive judgmental ears were all I could seem to find at the time. So needless to say, I made a complete fool out of myself.

The Paralysis of Analysis

As time passed and I began to share, much to my annoyance I found that most well-meaning friends took a stab at over-analyzing my predicament. They in turn promoted opinions based on their own means of figuring out life’s problems. In actuality, they were not much better off than I was, each having their own self-deceptive façades. But, hey, I was guilty of doing the same to others with my limited knowledge and overactive ego. So none of us were in a position to judge or give advice.

After going through a barrage of opinions and advice from friends, family members, counselors and even well-meaning but clueless clergy, I began to feel really alone. I grabbed every self-help book I could get my hands on at this time. This did serve to give definition to some of my problems, but I was always left short of the true complete answer—the best answer not just for me but also for the unknowing victims around me. You see, I was not in this Pit alone. The ones I loved the most were right there with me, gradually falling apart at the seams. I went to every resource I could get my hands on but the one source that would have all the answers specifically designed for me, as well as the true



purpose for my life, and my relationship to others. Eventually, I was to find out that this Source had been patiently waiting for me all along. I was never really alone, just deceived!

For me, this was a gradual process over a period of years that involved trial and error, heartbreak and disappointment. All my own efforts as well as the efforts of those around me, were getting me nowhere— just another spin on the merry-go-round and deeper into the Pit. One person would suggest one thing, the another would suggest something entirely different. This one book or seminar would definitely give me some answers, and my motivation would rise, only to fall right back down in the deep dark pit of my circumstances.

I was in a self-imposed prison. I became so paralyzed with doubt and confusion that I would freeze at even the thought of making a decision in my life, for fear of making the wrong decision. I came to a point where I wore myself out with searching, reading, analyzing, and talking with others until I finally surrendered to God the best way I knew how at this time.

Like a person drowning in water over their head, it was not until I would stop flinging around in a panic that I could even begin to be rescued. God waited until that moment of surrender to gently bring me on the path to the fullness of salvation. From the “paralysis of analysis” to complete, sweet surrender, my heart finally began to be truly open to His voice. I started to realize that I was on a path of His design. This path was way more dynamic than I could ever hope to understand or imagine. I was only a piece, but a very important piece to Him, in a multidimensional incomprehensible puzzle – and only He knew how to fit all of the pieces together. The only way for my piece (part) to fit and connect correctly to all of the other pieces was by my submission to Him.

Ooh! Submission – that was a hard one, because my pride would tweak in rebellion at even the mention of that word. “Pride” had been my friend, along with his pal “Need-for-control,” both of whom guided me in life. I had been a quick learner in the past, and figuring out the system was my rock— the rock on which my confidence was built. But the rock could not



withstand this tidal wave of uncontrollable circumstances. And the biggest variable I failed to include in this equation were my emotions and the undeniable effect they had on others.

“Pride” and “Need-for-control” had led me to search every available resource or person I thought could give me consolation, give me assurance, or give me the answer that would bring peace into my life. It was nowhere to be found and I felt absolutely ALONE! “Pride” and “Need-for-control” had brought me exactly where I was at, the bottom of the Pit.

The really scary part is that I was totally unaware of their existence, let alone their effect on myself or others. I was clueless. My approach was all wrong, but it was all I had ever known or been taught. The very idea of humbling myself - by surrendering to Jesus Christ in a personal relationship with Him - was foreign to my thought pattern. It was upside down in my world.

I was taught that by trying to follow the rules of my particular religion I was submitting to God. After all, religion and God are one, right?

WRONG! My religion itself had become my god, its rules were my litmus test to my devotion and the traditions were my foundation by which to judge the rest of the world. The problem was I kept failing in my personal life. I could never get it right, so I just continued to play the part by following the rules to appease other people in order to get their approval and maybe a little bit of their love. I was not being honest, and my motives stunk!

In this endless cycle of pretending, guilt would relentlessly pursue me, and because of my upbringing, I thought this feeling was perfectly natural. Later, I discovered that I was far from alone in this belief system. What I did not know at the time was that I was falling deeper and deeper into that deep, dark hole of deception. The only telltale sign that I was falling deeper inside the Pit was the gradual signs of depression, obsessions, and addictions that were now becoming part of my character.



Religion for me was on the outside, but never changed me on the inside, or even gave me the desire to change. I was doomed to live out this “personality”, this “genetic inheritance”, these particular “set of circumstances” and I had to make the best of it. Yet I had another life, a secret life that went on between my ears in my mind that no one knew about. The thoughts that would sometimes come into my mind would either cause me to feel pretty bad about myself or invoke incorrect judgments of others. I presumed that if these thoughts came into my mind they belonged to me, so I took ownership of them. And from some of these thoughts I figured, “I must be a pretty rotten person if this comes to mind.” A cycle of feeling unworthy began to creep into my head and my heart.

So, okay, I will just think “positive.” I will psyche myself into thinking only good thoughts about myself and others. That will change me and all those around me, I thought. Positive thinking had to be what would bring me the self-actualization (reaching my full potential) I so deeply desired.

Even as a born-again, Holy Spirit-filled believer I became deceived for many years. I never lost my salvation; it just lost priority in my life. I was clueless and deception ruled the day. I did not know that it was a day-to-day, lifelong, joint undertaking with Christ on this path in the fullness of salvation. I made the mistaken of presuming that once I was saved, that was all that was needed. I knew nothing of the journey into a continual intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. I had missed the best part for so many years.

From pride to positive thinking, it was all about me and me figuring it out. I had to reach the end of myself before I could reach beyond and begin to see the light, and it was painful. I did not know that Christ was with me the whole time. He waited for me to find the end of myself, and then showed me that I was never really alone. To think I had lost my salvation was to presume that I was in control, when in actuality God was the one in control. He merely stepped back until I reached the end of myself drowning in the pool of self-pity.



The Deception and the Answer

To live in the misguided thought pattern that our problem (or problems) are so unique that no one else would “understand,” is a lie straight from the pit of hell. To believe that no one really cares is equally destructive. The Enemy’s plan is to continually try to persuade us that the best thing we can do is to keep it secret: “You have a secret life that no one will understand,” or is “far too embarrassing to share” with others whose lives look so perfect. Even if we dare to share, we often end up more confused than when we first began. So where do we begin?

First Steps

We have taken the first step by inviting Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit into our life. The next step to overcoming any trial in life is to first acknowledge that there might be a problem and the problem might begin in us. Even if it looks like it is someone else’s problem, we can must get honest with ourselves before our situation begins to change. This requires humility and just plain surrender to Jesus Christ. Be careful, because if you do not find humility before Christ, you just may encounter humiliation later on before others. My journey testifies to this fact.

Oftentimes we are so blinded by our everyday life and our own self-denial that we cannot even acknowledge that there is a problem to begin with. Believe it or not, we do have an Enemy and it is his job to keep us going in circles deep down in the Pit. That Pit is his world, and he wants us in it. A word of warning: We can be saved (Believers), and still be in a Pit. However, as born-again Believers we have all that is needed to get us out.

As in any war, the best leader understands full well, “Know thy enemy!” We are in an unseen war and the enemy is Satan and his cohorts. He is a formidable and unyielding opponent. However, fear not, for we have the Answer within us to conquer any opponent no matter how formidable. That Answer is Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit Who now dwells within us. By His death and by His resurrection, Jesus Christ has already won the war. It is our duty



and our benefit to first recognize this Truth, and then learn to stand firmly rooted in it– no matter what the circumstances around us may look like.

As noted earlier, Oxford Scholar and former atheist turned believer, C.S. Lewis wrote, *“There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors...”*¹

In our daily lives, we might instinctively begin to feel that something is just not quite right, or we might ask ourselves, “Is this all there is to life?” or “How did my life and everything around me become so unmanageable?” Some of us start to suffer with bouts of repression (denial) that often leads to chronic depression and even oppression. Viewed as such, we begin to deal with the symptoms while not quite understanding or defining the root cause of the problem. We try to mask the pain or hurt by turning to any apparent relief we can find - in people, places or things. These so-called pain relievers are only temporary antidotes that often become addictions and obsessions in and of themselves. Thus begins another vicious circle on the merry-go-round deeper in the Pit.

So, where do we turn? Our society is currently plagued with an array of assorted “solutions.” We read this, go here, talk to this advisor, visit with that counselor, talk to this mentor, seek counsel with that spiritual director, take this pill, go to that seminar, join this self-help group, or attend that church. Again, the circle on this merry-go-round continues because we only get bits and pieces of what we suspect might be the answer (or answers). What we do not see is the fact that the Pit is much deeper than what we can hope grasp with our own natural sense.

“A God Experience”: **God of the impossible.** *During one of the most difficult periods of my life, just like poor Nassir, I went to an individual I thought would give me direction and help me with the answers I needed to get out of the Pit. This individual was a church leader who was highly esteemed within the community, especially known for his tear-jerking spiritual*



sermons. The profound words he spoke in church led me to believe he would be the one individual who could provide the help I so desperately needed. I humbled myself before this man and begged for help with my situation. Unfortunately, his response was what seemed like a well-rehearsed boilerplate answer which left me feeling totally unworthy to step foot in God's house. I was shocked at this response, so I presumed that maybe I just misunderstood him because of the state I was in at the time.

Months later and still dealing with the same serious issues I went again, and the same well-rehearsed boilerplate answers resounded from his cold, unsympathetic lips. He stated "that there was a 99% possibility that God would not answer my prayers." I was literally broken-hearted over this individual's lack of compassion and condescending demeanor which seemed so completely devoid of God.

So I took my broken heart to God and cried out for answers, "God, you heard what this person said, You tell me the truth." Within the next few days He took me to several resources, including the Bible, that addressed every single point this individual had thrown at me. Very clearly he showed me that I was to put my confidence in no man, but trust in God alone. He planted in my heart a desire for that 1%, because even that small amount, that mustard seed, could move mountains. I did not serve a "God in the box," but God of the impossible!

Although this man was superciliously sure that he had the answers, they did not match what he had so often preached in his sermons. Later on, I was to learn that I had not been singled out – that this was his standard response to any individual that requested his counsel. His words in church which he spoke so eloquently and tearfully did not stand up to his true belief system. Despite what happened, God turned it into good; I learned the importance of really taking it to God and trusting Him to give me the answers.

Years later I was tested again in this area. This time I had gone to a "Christian Counselor," sharing with him the problem concerning a certain individual that still seem to be plaguing my life at that time. This particular counselor's response was a quote he repeated to me from a



psychology professor he had years ago, “Well, you know that after 50 years old, the chances of anyone changing is slim to none.” This time I was more spiritually mature in my journey and immediately I felt the Holy Spirit spoke through me as I retorted, “Well, you know I do not serve a ‘God-in-the-box,’ I serve the God of the impossible.” He recognized his error and immediately grabbed his Bible and agreed with the answer I had just given. He recognized truth in that statement.

Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

Matthew 19:26 (NIV)

Not any one individual or particular resource will have the complete answers tailor made to our circumstances, or our true purpose in life. It is so easy for us to try to find the one person or resource we think will have all the answers. We are sadly setting ourselves up for disappointment. God will show us just how frail others really are so that we will not trust the best of men too much. From the very middle of the Bible comes the words “It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man” (Psalm 118:8). This lesson often comes very hard, but it is a lesson that we all must learn sooner or later.² Even Paul with all his wisdom proclaimed to the Corinthians,



“When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”

1 Corinthians 2: 4, 5 (NIV)



What a heavy burden this is for any one person to carry, a yoke of torment that only gets heavier with the passing years. It is this yoke that Christ will take in exchange for His, if we but turn to him and ask him to teach us.



“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Matthew 11:28-30 (NIV)

Until we come to a point of surrender and turn to Christ himself on a daily basis, we will remain in the Pit. The enemy does not take a break; he is 24/7/365. And this time that we have on this earth is his only to get us in the Pit and keep us there. But, all he has is lies to lure us into the Pit and deception to keep us there. God’s unconditional love manifested in human form through Jesus Christ is the Truth. The Light of Truth illuminates the darkness, and deception is replaced with Truth. This is the only way out!

No one can do this for us or tell us each personalized step to take, except Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit living within us. This is the only way to living not just a victorious abundant life, but life everlasting.

Until you come to a point of surrender and turn to Christ himself on a daily basis you will remain in the Pit.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter One: You Are Not Alone

In personal journal or notebook:

1. Have you ever felt alone? If so, describe these times and what it was like. Do you currently feel alone? If so, explain.
2. What is the façade (cover-up) you are most likely to use? Why do you feel that you need to use it?
3. Would you be willing to give up that façade at this point in time? If yes, explain why. If not, describe the factor(s) you feel would have to change in order for you to be comfortable with giving it up.
4. Do you have a secret life – separate from others – that gives you some sense of being in control? If yes, explain? (This could be any hidden secret, or one that is partially hidden but involves a secret motive for participation or involvement –e.g. drinking, smoking, legal or illegal drug use, shopping, Internet escapism, religious

concerns growing into fanaticism, anxiety over the future, sexual obsessions, possessing money or material things, excessive concern for other people's problems and circumstances, a general sense of constant worry, excessive anxiety about your spouse and/or children, sexual desires turned obsessions, pornography, excessive anxiety about health or body, perfectionism, vanity, etc...)

5. Do you believe in the existence of Satan and his cohorts? Why or why not?

6. How many self-help (including spiritual) books or seminars have you read or gone to in the past year? Would you be willing to put these materials on the shelf and learn from Jesus Christ first-hand?

The purpose of these questions is to identify the areas of your life where you may be in living in the Pit, a place completely devoid of God. This is area of your life that you feel that you are alone, that no one really knows and you think you have some control over. The truth is that God knows, and He still loves you unconditionally. He wants to take your burdens in exchange for freedom in every area of your life. The answer is letting go, and trusting him no matter what your circumstances may look like at this time.

Actively pray (talk with God) in order to allow the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the areas of your life that may need healing.



Chapter Two: God is In Control

*"Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:
"Who is this that darkens my counsel
with words without knowledge?
Brace yourself like a man;
I will question you,
and you shall answer me.
Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation?
Tell me, if you understand.*

*...Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea
or walked in the recesses of the deep?
Have the gates of death been shown to you?
Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death?
Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the earth?
Tell me, if you know all this.*

*What is the way to the abode of light?
And where does darkness reside?
Can you take them to their places?
Do you know the paths to their dwellings?
Surely you know, for you were already born!
You have lived so many years!"*

Job 38:1-4, 16-21 (NIV)



What a joke it is for any one of us to believe that we have all the answers; that we can figure out God's plan for any one individual or even ourselves for that matter. Just take a good, honest look at our current society here in the United States – the land of opportunity, and oh so much more. We are by far becoming the most lost and confused of all the nations, yet we have the most man-made resources at our disposal, some of the most noted minds of our day, along with the latest in technology, educational resources, medical facilities, pharmaceutical companies, etc. Yet, with all this, we still ask ourselves, “What is the answer?” Have we deceived ourselves into believing that we are in control and that we do not need God?

Job's Friends

Let's turn a moment to the Bible and read a time-tested case study that applies even today, just as it did then. This time the focus is more on Job's friends than Job.

Here is the story of Job and his friends:

As the story goes, Job was a truly righteous man— not perfect, but blameless and upright in the eyes of the Lord. He was a prosperous man with a large family and a high position of honor in the community. Yet despite all of Job's righteousness, God chose to allow Satan, within certain constraints, to test Job. God let down his hedge of protection around Job, leaving him to contend with Satan's devices.

Satan began to wreak havoc on Job's possessions, his livelihood, his family and eventually his health. Things went from bad to worse. Even Job's wife wanted him to give up; “Renounce God and just die,” was her answer for him. He himself questioned the day he was born, and looked to death as a means of relief from the pain and grief he was experiencing. However, no matter what tactics Satan employed, Job remained a loyal and faithful servant to God and did not speak against him. “In all this Job sinned not nor charged God foolishly” (Job 1:22, Amp).



Then lo and behold, the all-seeing and all-knowing friends of Job came to analyze his dilemma, and with this brought their unsolicited solutions. Sound familiar? In comes the first of his friends, Eliphaz the Temanite, with his diatribe against Job. His conclusion was that Job was suffering because he had sinned and he needed to go and lay his cause before God. Eliphaz's attitude toward God was simple: "I have personally observed how God works and have figured him out." He based his wisdom on his own observations and experience in life. His advice to Job came from his overly confident, firsthand knowledge.³

Our timeless propensity to lean on our own understanding, and then with great pride share this limited wisdom with poor souls all too ready for any advice, is both false and misleading. No human being, except Christ, can claim to have all the answers. We cannot see into the future, we do not walk in anyone else's shoes other than our own, and we have no control over the choices of others.

Proverbs gives us a glimpse of true wisdom, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding*" (Proverbs 3:5 NIV). It does not say to figure it all out yourself, including everyone else's problem while you are at it. God can and often does use others in our lives. Throughout history, He has done so to help open our eyes in certain areas, although true solutions in their fullness can be traced back directly to God. The Bible says to go to the Lord, and trust in Him with all your heart. It says to lean not on your own limited understanding, but allow Him to guide you, allow Him to bring things together in His timing – even allowing Him the waiting period necessary to prepare us for the incredible blessings He has in store for us. Although we are limited, we serve a limitless God!

The next friend to speak to Job was Bildad the Shuhite. Bildad claimed that Job was still suffering because Job would not admit that he sinned. He wondered how long Job would go on like this. His proclamation was, "Those who have gone before us figured God out and all we have to do is use that knowledge."⁴ His theory was that wisdom is inherited from the



past. Trustworthy knowledge is secondhand. He based his advice on traditional proverbs and sayings that he frequently quoted.⁵

It is not always true that suffering is God's judgment for sin. Suffering can be God's way to teach, or refine us. We do not know all of God's ways. He is the One in control. We were not there when He formed the oceans, when He breathed life onto this earth. Yet, we are all guilty of putting God in a box at one time or another. It is NOT our job to figure it all out. It is our job to turn to Him in love with all our hearts, all our minds and all our strength, and to love our neighbor as we love ourselves.

Zophar the Naamathite, the self-proclaimed wisest of the friends felt that Job's sins deserved even more suffering than he had already experienced; he needed to get rid of his sins. "The wise know what God is like, but there aren't many of us around," was Zophar's boastful rhetoric. As a man wise in his own eyes, Zophar based his advice on his wisdom that had no other source but himself.⁸

Beware of individuals who are quick to judge and quick with solutions to life's situations. The Lord is our Judge. He knows the end from the beginning. He knew us even before we were in our mother's womb, and loves us unconditionally. He is the One we should be putting our trust in. Trusting Him should be easy, but we so often find it hard. We allow ourselves to be led by our flesh (humanity), by our emotions, by our society, or by the Enemy. We make it harder on ourselves than it ever should be. It is simply a matter of surrendering our mind, our will and our emotions to Christ, then giving him our attention in order to hear his direction.

Another area to watch is this: once we become more sensitive to the prodding of the Holy Spirit we can fall into judging and criticizing others when the Lord is actually trying to deal with us about our own area of concern. This tendency of deflecting (looking at others rather than looking in the mirror at ourselves) and becoming one of "Job's friends" is very easy trap to fall into.



The Lord allowed certain people into my life that were struggling in an area that I, too, needed refining in. My first reaction was to criticize and judge them just like one of Job's friends, but within a short period of time that judgment call would come right back on me and I had to get honest with myself and the Lord. In addition, the Holy Spirit led me to turn this criticism into intercessory prayer (where we stand in behalf of someone else) for that particular individual(s). Soon this compulsion to judge others dissipated, because each time it fell right back on me. It is much easier for us to look at others and judge their actions rather than getting honest with ourselves.

The fourth and wisest of this counseling group, albeit the youngest, was Elihu the Buzite, who rebuked Job's three friends for not being able to give Job a reasonable answer for his suffering. Elihu felt that God must be using Job's suffering to teach and to mold him. Although Elihu gave the best answer, it was not the complete answer. His advice was to say that man cannot understand all that God allows— but must trust Him.

Job's friends were supposed to be comforting him in his time of grief. Instead, they were "miserable comforters," according to Job. We too are all too ready to figure out someone else's problem, without the vaguest idea why the problem might be there in the first place. Could it be that it is not the problem that is the problem, but how we handle the problem that is the problem? Whatever the case, it belongs to God. He is the One in control. If he chooses to open our hearts to his wisdom, that is His choice. If He chooses to keep us in the dark, waiting on Him, again that is His prerogative. Gaining true wisdom is an ongoing lifelong pursuit with God at the helm. Do not ever think for one moment that God is not in control.



"It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire or effort, but on God's mercy.

For Scripture says to Pharaoh:

'I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display my power in you and that my name might be proclaimed in all the earth.'
Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy, and He hardens whom He wants to harden."

Romans 9:16-18 (NIV)



Scripture teaches us that none of us seek God (Romans 3:11). The desire to know Him comes through the Spirit's work of convicting our hearts and providing us with the faith to believe in Jesus as our Savior (Ephesians 2:8). Salvation belongs to God from first to last. We can take no credit for our salvation. It by God's grace (unmerited favor) we are saved, not the result of man's effort.

We as mortal beings are limited, but our Creator is limitless— something we will never be able to completely understand, at least not while on this earthly plane. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. He is omnipresent (all seeing) – being anywhere and everywhere at once (Genesis 16:13); He is omniscient (all knowing) – nothing is hidden from his sight. (Hebrews 4:13); and He is omnipotent (all powerful) – no plan of his can be stopped – nothing is impossible with God. (Luke 1:37) He is the great “I Am.”

Even though we do have free will, He knows the end before the beginning. He knows what we will do before we do it. He is not a mean, heartless God, but He is a just God. We cannot see the whole picture -- only small bits and pieces within a given amount of time -- but He can. So while we may not fully understand, we can trust Him as our heavenly Father and delight in knowing that He loves us even more than we can possibly imagine. All we need do is seek refuge in Him.

In conclusion to the story of Job, God rebuked the three friends for adding to Job's suffering through their false assumptions and critical attitudes. It took Job's own prayers for his friends for them to be spared the consequences of their own words.



Back on Path

For many years my perception of God was of a mighty, spiritual being whom I believed was my Creator, but Who was also a figure to be feared like a tough, punishing father. You just did what you were taught by religion, and you never questioned what or Who He really was to you personally. This probably reflected how I perceived, mistakenly or not, my own earthly father.

Talking to God was just non-existent, let alone having a personal relationship with Him. I learned many types of prayers and did my duty to please my family by participating in rituals and traditions. However, I never truly felt a connection to God, that is, until I reached the age of thirteen. I had just gone through a major turning point in my religious duties by participating in a ceremony that was to usher in an acceptance of my faith. This religious ceremony that I participated in out of duty to my parents meant very little to me. The real turning point and what this ceremony was supposed to be all about came upon me quite by what I thought was chance.

“A God Experience”: *Divine intervention wrapped up in grace. There was a woman in my neighborhood whose three young children I looked forward to babysitting. She was very generous with her pay and also very frequent with her requests for a babysitter. I watched her three children on a fairly regular basis since she was attending a daytime meeting of some sort.*

Within a short period of time, I began to notice that when she came home from these meetings she had an effervescent glow about her. I can remember, even after all these years, the indescribable beauty in this sweet woman’s face. I could feel this bubbling up of joy that seemed to touch my very soul. I was more than curious; it was something I could not understand, yet I knew I had to know. To just look at her would fill me with a joy and peace I never had experienced before. I saw truth in her eyes and I wanted to know more.



So finally I asked her what was going on at these meetings, and why she was glowing and bubbling with joy. Since she did not really know me or my family (added to the fact I was only 12), I sensed her hesitancy. But she just could not hold back her jubilation, so much to my surprise she shared with me the source of her exuberance.

What she shared with me was the very truth of what I was supposed to have experienced in the ritual I had recently been through in my own denomination. She took me to the Bible and showed me the verses concerning the baptism of the Holy Spirit and what it meant to be “born-again”.

While Apollos was at Corinth, Paul took the road through the interior and arrived at Ephesus. There he found some disciples and asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?”

They answered, “No, we have not even heard that there is a Holy Spirit.”

***So Paul asked, “Then what baptism did you receive?”
“John's baptism,” they replied.***

Paul said, “John's baptism was a baptism of repentance. He told the people to believe in the one coming after him, that is, in Jesus.” On hearing this, they were baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in tongues and prophesied. There were about twelve men in all.

Acts 19:1-7 (NIV)

In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born-again.”

John 3:3 (NIV)

And she showed me the gifts of the Holy Spirit in I Corinthians 12:4-11:

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to



another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.”

1 Corinthians 12:4-11 (NIV)

These verses, along with numerous others, exposed me to the most exciting news I had ever heard in my life. I could invite the Holy Spirit into my life and maybe even receive some of these gifts. As a 12 year-old child, I was so open, so filled with wonder, so ready to receive anything He had to offer.

Something deep down in my inner being just knew that this was absolutely what I wanted and needed. Something spoke to me and confirmed that this experience was the very reason I was born on this earth. No questions, no debates— just simple sweet surrender to a perfect love.

So at my persistent request, Melody prayed over me and walked me through the gift of tongues. It was the most exciting feeling I had ever experienced, like being in love with everything and everyone around you all at the same time. Yet even this explanation of the experience does not give it justice. It was like an awakening to Truth that nothing in this world could come close too. Even after all of these years of experiencing the love of a spouse, the birth of my children, or the joy of accomplishment, none of it successfully imitates this one experience of perfect love. I can say that to this day, over 30 years later, that that event was the single most poignant experience of pure love I have ever encountered. My desire coupled with my innocence just swept me into my Creator’s arms into complete bliss. His glory radiated throughout my entire being and it could not be held back or hidden. Even now, just writing about this experience fills my entire being with an unspeakable joy.

This heavenly bliss continued for some time with prophetic visions and a hunger within me that would not cease— a need to know more about the Holy Spirit. But at this time in my life,



the duty to my family and religion took hold, and without the spiritual food I needed to grow, life in the Holy Spirit gradually lost priority in my life. It was not yet my time.

While I had experienced a true baptism of the Holy Spirit, I did not quite understand that this was just the beginning of the journey. It was not until many years later that I discovered by grace the second part– walking in the fullness of salvation through a personal intimate life-long relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Recently, one of the visions I had had so many years ago finally made sense. The vision itself was very clear and somewhat troubling; no one was able to interpret the meaning at the time. Now, I finally understand its meaning. It spoke very clearly of a dying of the flesh (the natural, human self) through a series of difficult trials and tribulations that I would experience much later in life. God gave me a glimpse of my own future. He also gave me the comfort in knowing that he would provide me with the strength I needed to get through this time.

Faith at the Edge of the Abyss

Throughout these many years there have been days in which, like Job, I wished God would just let me die, and relieve me of my misery. Some days I literally wanted to crawl out of my flesh in order to escape the pain. It was not until I would reach the edge of the abyss, the height of a trying circumstance, ready to fall off the edge, that I came to really realize that God is in control. He has great mercy and grace for all of his children. And like any body builder would know, my spirit could only be strengthened by experiencing the pain in order to gain the faith I needed. I had to be stretched to beyond my breaking point, and this could not have been done or even understood without this relationship in Christ. God knew when I was ready and He gradually built my faith with these circumstances so I could learn to really trust Him – not just with words, but with actions. It is only by building up strength through these exercises of faith that I can speak boldly of my testimony without doubt or fear.

My journey is not your journey, and your journey is not mine, so like Job's friends it is not my place to tell you what, when, where or how God does things. That is not the point. The point



is for you to communicate with Him to discover and learn your own personal walk with Him. My part is to testify as a witness to his mercy and grace; and, to encourage and support you on your own journey.

Each trial only brings us that much closer to knowing without a doubt that He is in control, and without a doubt that we can trust Him. We can rest in knowing that He knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows the whole picture as well as the many individual pieces—trust Him!



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Two: God is In Control

In personal journal or notebook: (Please keep in mind, some of these questions may take some time to answer, and others you may not be able to answer right now. It is OK, because this is your journey. Jesus waits for as long as it takes.)

1. In the questions from Chapter One, you may have admitted to a secret life that brings you some sense of control. Has the secret life in some way spilled over or sabotaged your everyday existence?
2. Like Job, can you believe that God is good and just, even if your circumstances do not look that way?
3. Have you been guilty of being one of Job's friends and/or experienced it from one of your own friends? Is your focus on pleasing people because of gossip and criticism?
4. Would you be willing to surrender certain every areas of your life for complete healing? What if healing meant surrendering every hurt, pain, disappointment, unforgiveness, guilt, anger and fear to God -- would you be willing at this time? List

the areas you are willing to surrender at this time, and those areas, if any, in which you are not ready?

If you are willing to go through the tough areas of your life in faith, God will meet you right where you are at. Remember, Christ came for the broken, and He took their burdens and in exchange gave them life. *“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* (Matthew 11:27-30)

In the areas of your life in which you are willing to surrender, take them to Jesus right now, leave them at His feet, and completely let go of them. Do not look back. If you have trouble letting go, talk to Him about it, then watch and listen how He answers.

Actuality Check:

If at this point in the study, are you having reservations about continuing? To pause and rest until the Lord fills you with new strength is a Biblical principle. If you feel the need to take some down time, do so. Allow our Lord to draw you back to the study once you have fully received His renewal and refreshment.



Chapter Three: Jesus Christ – Your Best Friend

“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well.”

John 14:6-7 (NIV)

***“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friend if you do what I command...
...This is my command: Love each other.”***

John 15:12-14, 17 (NIV)

I have had many friends over the years, many acquaintances and relatives, but despite all of these relationships, none can compare to the one relationship that never fails or disappoints me. It is a relationship that I never really knew existed. As I look back, I now realize that this friend was there all the time, but because of my blindness I never realized it and never understood that He had actually been waiting for me. What a long-suffering friend to wait for me in all my pride; to actually love me that much to not take offense at my rebellion! Wow, I never knew. I was clueless.



In my limited scope of understanding, when times got tough I would resort to what I had always been familiar and comfortable with: either in my religious belief system or my own means of handling problems in life. Unfortunately, both always seem to fall short of any real solution. So as time passed it became analogous to putting Band-Aids on a festering malignant tumor that showed no signs of healing. And this tumor was contagious!

Nothing seemed to change, until out of pain, frustration and sheer exhaustion I surrendered. Like a drowning victim in a pool of water, not until all my energy was spent could I finally receive the answers I so desperately needed. I surrendered everything I held dear, everything I knew, and humbled myself before Christ and asked Him to be my teacher. I traded my religious tradition, my comfort zone, and even my family support system for faith in Jesus Christ alone to show me the way. I went to the Boss!

And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, "Who then can be saved?"

But Jesus looked at them and said, "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Then Peter began to say to him, "See, we have left all and followed You."

So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Mark 10:26-31 (NKJV)

Although, I had received the Holy Spirit into my life, having been born-again and Holy Spirit filled at age 12, I did not understand that this was only the first part of the Gospel of Salvation of Jesus Christ. There is a second part: the fullness of salvation – the lifelong walk with Jesus Christ as my personal, intimate Friend and Teacher.



It was not a matter of just being saved to go to heaven. There was so much more. It was a lifelong relationship that not only changed my perspective of life as I once knew it, but changed every part of me and even those around me. So yes, I was born-again, having invited Jesus Christ into my heart and the Holy Spirit into my life, but I had not lived and walked in the Holy Spirit, the Kingdom of God “within,” until I understood Him as my personal intimate Friend. And I did not understand this until I gave up everything I once knew, and put Him first.

This point of complete surrender did not come until; by God’s grace, he began to slowly open my eyes. I had prayed for many years for help, but it was not until this time in life did things begin to change. It began with one particular devastating situation that forced me to look at life differently. I was at the bottom of the Pit and absolutely clueless on how to get out.

Instead of running in another direction, blaming others, or falling back into temporary relief by relying on religious tradition, Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit put it into my heart to “put Him first,” period. Family, friends, desires and goals would fall in line later. My path was to follow Christ through the Holy Spirit as my Teacher, my Counselor, my Healer and the only Way to the Father. I was to make a choice to follow Him no matter what the cost.

This was a scary proposition and I did not know how to do it, but I was desperate. I called out from the bottom of the Pit and He answered me. Thus began the development of a relationship with Jesus as my friend– my very best Friend.

An Appointment with Christ

Finding and building an intimate relationship with Jesus Christ is simple, yet most of us do not realize just how close the answer really is for those who choose. Now is your time to get to know him. So, for a moment, think of Jesus as someone you are really trying to meet and



get to know on a personal level. Just as you would with any other potential friend, begin by talking to him plainly and naturally. Do not be concerned about an immediate two-way dialogue; just begin to open up to Him. Remember, you have received the Holy Spirit so trust and lean into this surrender.

Each day make an appointment with God the Son, and be sure to keep this appointed time for Him and you only. This is an intimate relationship you are beginning– so be just with Him. Find a place of complete quiet, free from all distractions.

When you begin your appointment with Christ speak to Him from your heart out loud or in silence– however you feel comfortable. Begin to share your desires, your concerns, your hurts, and even your victories; anything you need to say, just say it! Despite whom you have been or what you have done in the past– **come to Him**– even if you feel totally ashamed or completely unworthy. Come to Him like you would that one special friend that would not judge, criticize, or condemn you – just love you unconditionally.

Do not be afraid to share your emotions, including the good, bad and ugly, with Him– just share with Him. When you have poured out your heart for that particular meeting, then let go and just rest in Him. If he speaks you will hear Him, if not then just rest in hHis company.

The more you walk this path the more you will begin to sense His presence. This appointed time each day will become the most refreshing, energizing, all-consuming peaceful place you will ever know. You are learning to converse with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit within you. The idea is to really get to know Christ, to be able to lean on Him and follow Him without even questioning. Gradually, your appointed time will begin to expand, spilling out into every part of your day. But still keep the appointed time; it is the most important part of your journey.

Begin to bring your Bible to your appointment. He may have something there to show you, to reveal to you, to teach you or even confirm what He has said to you. The key is to rest in Him. This is not difficult -- it is the simplest most natural order of things.



This rest in him will allow you to surrender your being simply and completely. As you progress on your journey, you will begin to feel His glory; bask in it. This is your appointed time, so be anxious for nothing; there is no need for worry here. If there is something hindering you, driving you to center your attention on it instead of Him, ask Christ to take it. Whatever it is drop it and leave it behind you, because this is your appointed time with your most intimate of friends. This may seem very hard or uncomfortable at times, but don't stop, **JUST DO IT!**

Do not try to analyze or become mechanical in your approach, rather just surrender to and rest in Him. You will gradually begin to treasure these most intimate times with Christ, especially when life is at its worst for you, when you are the angriest, when you are in the most despair and confusion. If you continue to keep your appointment, you will drink from the living waters and be revived and restored, walking in victory in every area of your life.



Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:10-14 (NIV)

Even further along in this journey you may be led to walk through certain areas of your life that may be extremely uncomfortable. This is the time for "reckless abandonment" (meaning complete trust) to Him. Trust him, because He will never leave you or forsake you. You are on the journey of a lifetime and He will take you to places you have never been before. Go beyond your flesh, your physical being, and allow the Holy Spirit to guide you. No one in this



world, even yourself, knows you better or more completely than God. He knows every hair on your head and He even knew you before you were born. So you **can** let go and really learn to trust Him.

Wherever Jesus leads you through the prodding of the Holy Spirit, follow, even if it does not make sense at the moment. If you remain unsure, ask God for the gift of discernment (*distinguishing between spirits* - 1 Corinthians 12:10). Ask the Lord for confirmation to the words you hear or see. You are building faith.

For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."

Romans 1:17 (NIV)

Ponder the stories of Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David in the Old Testament and Peter, Paul, Luke and John in the New Testament (as well as many others) in the Bible that speaks of reckless abandonment to trust in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Do you think that was only for then, but not true for this day and age? You would be wrong. These stories give us testimony to truth and serve to build faith in our own individual journeys. These stories were recorded and continue to be told for you today.

With this much evidence, do you still doubt? If so, then take it to Christ and ask Him to show you His presence in this time, this day and this age. Then wait and listen for the answers, your proof will come. When it does, and you receive it as truth, your world as you have previously known will be turned upside down and inside out. You will be taken beyond your limited understanding and your comfort zone. It is a journey specially designed for you, your fingerprint in time. Stand firm once you choose to commit to Christ because many do not yet understand or believe. That is one of the key reasons to keep your appointment each day. God will give you enough grace for each day to keep you on the path.



K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple Saint

Jesus knew when I was ready to take that intimate walk with Him. He knew at what point in my life I was ready to learn all that He had planned for me to learn. I am not saying that I had no free will in making my decisions, but once the scales really began to fall off my eyes, I **wanted** to know more. I hungered for wisdom that could only come from Him. All of life began to come into perspective – past, present and future – and it was very simple.



“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.”

2 Corinthians 11:3 (NKJV)

There was no confusion, no ego, no debate, no worry, and no misunderstanding. God is the core, and His son Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit is the only way to the Father. The three are one – the Holy Trinity. And we are His creation, part of God and part of one another.

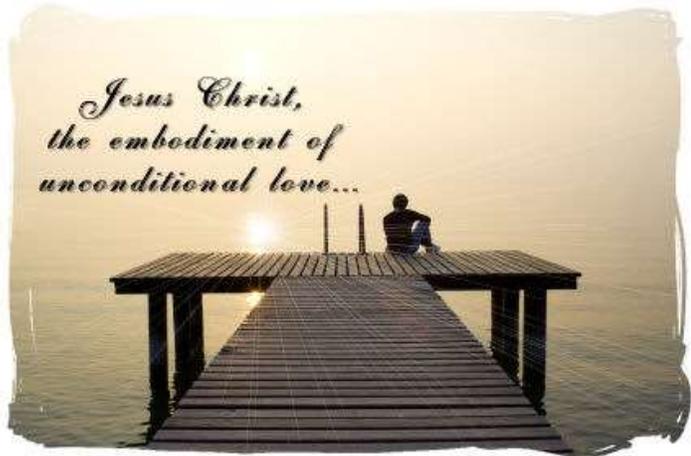
We are to love Him with all our heart, all our soul, and every fiber of our being. And we are to love one another, as we love ourselves. In order to do this we must first come to the point where we are able to glimpse how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is for us – a love that surpasses all knowledge. This can only be done by a daily surrender to His will, not our own.

The sum of all human understanding would not have gotten me to this one simple truth, for this truth was divinely inspired and given in the purest of forms – “Unconditional Love.” Noted scientist, esteemed mathematicians and star-gazing physicists of our day are discovering other dimensions, and searching for how we all began are still coming right back around to the same simple conclusion: the answer to our questions is found within. So simple -- the “Kingdom of God” is found within and all around us in the form of the Holy Spirit.



Jesus Christ, the embodiment of unconditional Love, is given freely to all those who seek Him. He is our best Friend, and He will teach us everything we need to know in order to find all of the answers in this life. We can go to this Friend with every problem we have, without fear. If we ask His guidance, and surrender to it, He will give us the answers to our prayers and the solutions to our problems:

He will lead us in the direction best suited for our life and all those concerned. We will be given the spirit of wisdom and understanding that enlightens the eyes of our heart to clearly see the root of our problems and how to apply Truth to our lives.





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Three: Jesus Christ- Your Best Friend

In personal journal or notebook (Take your time with this part, it is important):

1. In your journal this week, record your perception of Jesus Christ in your life. Discover who He is to you at this moment in time.
2. If you were a born-again Holy Spirit-filled believer long before reading this book, have you wandered into the world and maybe put your relationship with Jesus on the shelf only for Sundays or special church functions? Are you ready to continue on your personal journey with Him and really get to know Him?
3. Have you made your appointment with Christ and followed through just being with Him? If not, what do you think is holding you back?
4. At some point, ask Him a question, then listen for a response. Record your journey. (Do not worry when, how or where it comes from, just listen with your eyes, your ears and your heart.)

The concept of personalizing Jesus Christ in your life may feel very uncomfortable at first, but remember this is a journey into a personal intimate relationship with Him through the power



of the Holy Spirit that dwells within you. Take a moment and think of Christ's Apostles and Disciples, and how they hungered to know more of Him, to learn from Him and to understand His purpose with and for them. How exciting, yet scary to imagine that this man was the Son of God living on earth amongst them. Now imagine yourself during this time before His popularity grew, conversing with Him, asking him every question that was on your heart. The Holy Spirit is with you and will guide you gently and lovingly through this process.



Chapter Four: The Salvation Journey

In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes.

Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight.

All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal him."

Then He turned to His disciples and said privately, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things you see; for I tell you that many prophets and kings have desired to see what you see, and have not seen it, and to hear what you hear, and have not heard it."

Luke 10:21-24 (NKJV)



Salvation, by secular definition, is a source, means, or cause for the preservation or deliverance from destruction, difficulty, or evil.** It is the agent or means that brings that

** The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition

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deliverance. Jesus, by his death and resurrection, is our means of deliverance from the present evil in this world.

From beginning to end, we can take no credit for our personal Salvation (Romans 3:11). God is in control of our Salvation from the moment we were given the grace to believe that *Jesus Christ is our Savior*. It is His will that no one perish, and He waits patiently for anyone who will accept his invitation.

You were given the invitation and your affirmative response now makes you a child of God. The seed has been planted and you are saved. By your simple repentance of sin and belief in Jesus Christ as your Savior, your name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life – never to be erased. (John 3:16; Romans 8:37-39; Romans 10:9-10;

Revelation 3:5). No true believer should doubt his eternal salvation and protection in Christ, because no one can snatch us away from Him (John 10:28-30).



*Your name is written
in the
Lamb's Book of Life*

The Lamb's Book of Life, or the Book of Life, is the list of names of those who are saved and have been redeemed by the blood of the Lord, Jesus Christ – the Lamb of God (Revelation 13:8; 21:27). The sacrifice of lambs was a very important means of atonement for sin for the Jewish religious life, as described in the Old Testament of the Bible. The whole sacrificial practice that was set up by God in the Old Testament was the precursor for the ultimate perfect sacrifice – His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Jewish Passover Feast commemorates an important event on the Old Testament: of God's deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. By applying the blood of the slain lamb over the door post of their homes in Egypt, the angel of death, (the last of ten plagues delivered to Pharaoh by God) "passed over" the homes of the Israelites and they were saved (Exodus 12:12-13). The practice of sacrificing a lamb for the atonement of sins was pointing



the Israelites to Jesus Christ, the true Messiah: our sins are atoned for by His death on the cross, and are covered by His blood (1 Peter 1:19; Revelation 7:13).

John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” (John 1:29) telling his listeners that Christ is the ultimate Lamb that was sacrificed for our sins that we might have eternal life.

Power of the Holy Spirit

God the Father, God the Son, Jesus Christ, and God the Holy Spirit are three in one. The Holy Spirit is God whom you have invited to reside within you. The Holy Spirit is a Person because He has a mind, emotions, and a will.

The Holy Spirit thinks and knows– *but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. (1 Corinthians 2:10 NIV)*

The Holy Spirit can be grieved– *And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30 NIV)*

The Holy Spirit intercedes for us– *In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. (Romans 8:26-27 NIV)*

The Holy Spirit makes decisions according to His will– *Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of*





healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11 NIV)

The Holy Spirit is God, the third “Person” of the Trinity. As God, the Holy Spirit can truly function as the Comforter and Counselor that Jesus promised He would be— *And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever. (John 14:6 NIV) But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. (John 14:26 NIV) When the Counselor comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who goes out from the Father, he will testify about me. (John 15:26 NIV)*⁵

First, the Holy Spirit is a gift given to all believers in Jesus without exception, and no conditions are placed upon this gift except faith in Christ (John 7:37-39). Second, the Holy Spirit is given at the moment of salvation (Ephesians 1:13). Galatians 3:2 also emphasizes this same truth, saying that the sealing and indwelling with the Spirit takes place at the time of believing. Third, the Holy Spirit indwells believers permanently. The Holy Spirit is given to believers as a down payment of their future glory in Christ (2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 4:30)⁶.

Through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, you now have the power within you to find Truth, to overcome evil, and to live life eternal. This is an ongoing, lifelong journey that affects your choices and your decisions in every part of your life. The Holy Spirit, your Advocate and your Counselor, will give you all that you need and even more to walk on this journey through life.

There are spiritual gifts that are given through the Holy Spirit. These gifts are given to help us walk on this journey and to bring the Good News to others, thus in bringing every part of Christ’s body (His Church) together. These gifts are given to us when we receive Christ, and they are cultivated through our daily walk with God. We can seek after certain spiritual gifts, but it is in God’s hands. He knows which gifts will bring Him the most glory and be the most productive for your journey.



Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:7-11 (NIV)

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:27-30 (NIV)

Once Saved, Always Saved?

One of the most hotly debated questions in the church world is “Once saved, always saved?” The Bible gives no evidence that our new birth can be taken away from us. Even so, many come to a point in their journey where they question why they are not delivered from temptation– and from sin in their lives.

“I do not want to sin,” my heart cries out, “But my flesh and my emotions seem to have a will of their own. If I am really saved, why am I not instantly delivered from sin – why do I still seem to be at the bottom of the Pit?”

“Why are bad things happening to me if I am a child of God?”

“Have I somehow committed the unforgivable sin– the sin of denying the Holy Spirit – by being mad at God?”



The questions come and the doubts surface, but that is all part of the Salvation journey. That is the reason we **keep** going to Christ. He has the answers, He teaches us the way, and He gives us the revelations we need day in and day out. He is our best Friend and He always has our best interest at heart. The added bonus is this: He not only works on us, but also with all those around us within our sphere of influence. What human being could ever manage that?

“So, once saved, are we always saved?”

Let’s take a look:

No believer should doubt his eternal salvation and protection in Christ (John 10:28-30). Once you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you are saved and on the path of the fullness of Salvation – the entire Gospel of Jesus Christ. “Fullness” in this context refers to all that God has to offer us in His divine plan. We take up our journey, and follow Him (Luke 9:23^{††}). God will not take back His salvation from us, and He will never leave us or forsake us. We were given His grace, which means His unmerited favor, in order to receive salvation in Jesus Christ. Since we are now children of God, we will not lose this official standing if we *fall from grace*.

To think that we should live in fear that we are continually living under the threat of losing our salvation, not only discounts God’s grace, but keeps us in a continual merry-go-round of “working” to keep our salvation. We in essence have reached our “ceiling” and cannot move any further in our journey with Christ and all that he has designed for our lives. We no longer genuinely trust in God and the salvation He has bestowed upon us.

^{††} Then he said to them all: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.(Luke 9:23 NIV)



We still have the option to choose, and we make those choices on a daily basis. This means our free will is never taken away from us. Although we do have free will, God is still and always will be the one in “control.” Like a parent with a young child, that child has free will to obey or not to obey, to listen or not to listen. The parent loves that child and knows what is best. So even though the child has free choice, the parent is still the one in control. And because the parent loves the child they will teach the child through various means of parental control. With this in mind, how much more do you think God loves us, and by controlling our circumstances and even our hearts to direct us on the path not just to the best, but the very best. We can indeed trust this Parent!

The source is in your life. He invited you and you accepted, but you through your free will you always maintain the option of rejecting Him and His guidance along the way and for whatever reason. Due to our rebellious nature and the slippery deception of the enemy, all of us are vulnerable to getting off the Path at any time. We **need** Christ through the Holy Spirit on a daily basis as our Shepherd in order to bring us back whenever we stray.

This is an ongoing, steady path with such twists and turns. If we stay focused, Christ will teach us how to listen to the still, inner voice of the Holy Spirit. We will be able to recognize how He communicates to us through our circumstances. We can learn to trust *Him*, and have faith that *He* is in control of every piece of the puzzle of life. And He will give us all the desires of our heart in abundance if we will wait upon HIM.

Christ is not an “on again, off again” non-committal entity. He loves us **unconditionally** and He is totally committed. This is a divine love that not one of us can truly understand in this world (Romans 8:38-39). So while Christ is fully committed to us, the question becomes, “Are we truly committed **to him?**”

Just like Peter, we are sometimes called to get out of the boat and walk on water. By looking at the waves and the wind, or even listening to those still back in the boat, we can lose focus



and begin to sink. We can walk on water – do even the impossible – as long as we stay focused on Christ.

What it all boils down to is a matter of faith. This is a walk of faith on your individual Path with Christ, with the Holy Spirit guiding every step of the way if you will but listen. While this may sound clear-cut, it takes some of us our entire lives to grasp the concept of true faith. This true faith can be accomplished only through trials and tribulation.

Whenever we take our focus off Christ **and His love for us**, then we are bound to fall into confusion and deceptions. The Lord is not the author of confusion. If we could grasp even a speck of the concept of His unconditional love for us, we would not find it necessary to ever question Christ or the power of the Holy Spirit that resides in us.

For those who outright deny Christ, and deny the Holy Spirit – yet at one time professed to be born-again – the question is remains: Do they still have eternal salvation? Will they go to heaven?

Again, it is a matter of God's love for us and our free will. God is the ultimate Judge, and each one of us individually will have to give account on the day of His judgment. Our responsibility is simple: do we make the choice during this lifetime to receive His unconditional love, or not.

If we choose to receive, we are saved – no question. The real question comes in our decision whether to walk daily on the path of the fullness of Salvation with Christ, or not. You can be saved, but still do not know Jesus Christ.



"And so I tell you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven.

Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the



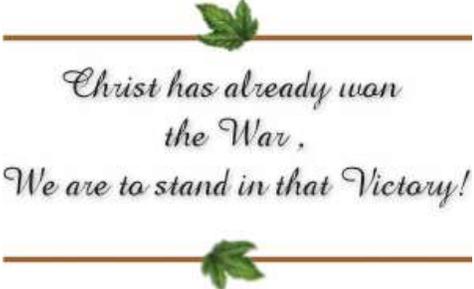
Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.”

Matthew 12:32-33 (NIV)

Choosing to deny the Holy Spirit at any time and under any circumstance says “I choose to harden my heart to the only source of forgiveness – thereby breaking fellowship with my heavenly Father.” By rejecting the prompting of the Holy Spirit, we are saying “No” to the only source that can lead us to repentance and the restoration of our fellowship with God our Father.

Even if we profess that we do not believe, it does not mean that God is not there or that He does not exist. It simply means that we choose to turn our back on the Holy Spirit– and forgiveness does not exist in this state of denial.

While we are all vulnerable to getting off path at any time, if we have allowed the Holy Spirit into our life and believe (trust) this is true, then forgiveness is ours at anytime. We can come humbly to Jesus, our High Priest before the Father, and through Him receive forgiveness, cleansing and restored fellowship with our Father in heaven. It is in our weaknesses that we turn to the Lord and find strength, knowing that He loves us.



*Christ has already won
the War,
We are to stand in that Victory!*

One thing is certain: God loves the believer and the non-believer, the sinner and the saint, those who fall short of the mark and those who finish the race. His stance is unchanging. It is His love for us that gave us our free will to decide if we will love Him in return.

Thus continues our Salvation Path, our transformation and the renewal of our mind. As long as we are on this earth, we are fair game to the Enemy, the master of deception. But His only power is deception.



To live under the false assumption that once we are saved we are now on an “easy street” to heaven is one of the Enemy’s major deceptions. At the point at which we are saved the real battle begins, because the eyes of our hearts are being opened to the Truth. The Enemy will use everything possible to cover the Truth.

Although I received Salvation and the Holy Spirit at a young age, because of lack of the spiritual food I needed I wandered off the path within a few short years. It was not my salvation that was lost, it was me! The Holy Spirit was there with me all along, but I had followed the worldly path because of from a lack of spiritual knowledge and a desire to please man instead of God. I could still speak in tongues and sometimes did in desperate situations. I could still hear the guidance of the Holy Spirit that kept me from complete devastation, but my focus was not on Jesus Christ. I did not KNOW that I could have an intimate, personal relationship with HIM. Years later, when I needed to re-establish that powerful connection with the Holy Spirit, He was still there waiting for me! What an amazing friend I have in Christ to wait for me all of those years - **my Best Friend**.

At the point in my life when grace reached my heart and I chose to let go of everything I knew, I found that complete surrender opened the door to a whole new world. The doors to the Kingdom of God were being opened, and I was being invited to eat at His banquet laid out before me.

I was back on “The Path,” the journey of the fullness of Salvation (John 12:24). This is the journey of a lifetime: It is a personal journey unique to each of us, and the love the Father has for us. It is a journey of change, a journey of wisdom and understanding, a journey of abundant living, a journey of truth in our own personal life, and a journey to all Truth. This journey will not only affect us personally, but all those around us in our sphere of influence, as we stand firm in God’s Word. And at the end of this journey our rewards here on earth and in heaven are beyond measure, beyond natural understanding, and for eternity.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Four: The Salvation Journey

In personal journal or notebook:

1. You have begun your walk with Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. At this point what does this walk mean to you? Are you afraid, doubtful, unsure or even skeptical? Be anxious for nothing, just let go and see what happens.
2. Take your Bible and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal himself to you. Check out the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Do you think these gifts are available to us today? (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11; 1 Corinthians 14:1-3)
3. What do you think the role of the Holy Spirit is in your life today? In your local Church? In the world today?
4. Are you curious at this point to know more about the Holy Spirit? If so, then use your Bible and begin to research the purpose of the Holy Spirit. Try an online resource called GotQuestions.org and get to know the different opinions. Then go directly to the Holy Spirit and ask for the answers.

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name,

He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you,

My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14: 26-27 (NIV)

Other references: John 1:37-39; John 17:12a; John 17:19 (Amp.); John 17:24 (Amp.); Luke 5:12-13; Luke 10:21.



Chapter Five: Mine Your Mind

***“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world,
But be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is –
His good, pleasing and perfect will.”***

Romans 12: 2 (NIV)

Whether you believe it or not, there is a daily, intense battle going on for your well-being as well as your eternal life. So much is at stake, yet most of us just brush it off as having nothing to do with us. We expend only enough energy to pacify our pre-programmed conscience and get us our spot in heaven. At the same time many others are just plain clueless to what is going on all around them. I was one of these.

Well, guess what? We are all called to a deeper walk with Christ. It is not just for the missionaries, the ministers, the prophets, and the priests. The salvation you received is not a one-time event– it is a lifelong process. Unfortunately, as we have become more complacent over the years, the results of our actions and inactions are becoming far more apparent each year in our modern society. The good news is that we have the answer to this battle that is going on, and it comes from the Holy Spirit within. The challenge comes first in understanding what you are really fighting, and secondly in realizing that the war was already



won when Christ died on the cross and was resurrected. We, as His children, are to walk daily in that victory.

It is up to us to keep in mind that the challenges are daily, and that the Enemy is sly and relentless in his deception. He is relentless because this, our time on earth, is his only opportunity. Satan and his cohorts are on a daily prowl *to kill, steal and destroy everything you hold dear*, but Christ came so that we could have life and have it in abundance (John 10:10).

This is a battle that begins in the mind, and defeating the Enemy takes a daily renewal of the mind. This renewal means a change of perspective, and the only perspective that can both discern the battle and overcome in victory is the mind of Christ. Our submission to and focus on the Holy Spirit's prompting is the only clear path that will bring us — and those around us — out of the Pit.

The battle begins in the brain:

"Watch your *thoughts*, for your thoughts inspire your words.

Watch your *words*, for your words precede your actions.

Watch your *actions*, for your actions become your habits.

Watch your *habits*, for your habits build your character.

And watch your *character*, for your character decides your *destiny*."

To win this mind battle we are *to take captive every thought to the obedience of Jesus Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:5). When we get bombarded with thoughts that we know are destructive, that have no place in our lives, we have a choice either to reject or accept these thoughts. It is when we accept these thoughts — taking ownership of them — that is when we begin to give our control over to the Enemy. It is important to first consider where a thought might be coming from. We need to discern the source of thought by asking, "Is this thought coming from my emotions, my desires, from the Enemy, or from the Holy Spirit?"



Mind Battle Strategy

It is not a matter of “if”, but “when” the mental battles come. The key is to be prepared. So when tormented with a thought or thoughts that you have discerned as being wrong and will not go away, you now have the tools to do battle – **P.R.A.Y.**

Prepare–

Get ready, because the thoughts will come, and usually when you least expect them. You DO NOT have to take ownership of these thoughts. It can be very subtle, like a thought that you just do not know where it came from, or it can be a pressing emotion that beckons immediate but unwise actions. The point is to recognize it, capture it, discern it, then take to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Recognize–

Be aware of what you are really fighting – not flesh and blood, but the Enemy posed to kill, steal, and destroy everything you hold dear (Ephesians 6:12). The Enemy is the master of lies and deception, but you have the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, who knows the truth.

Know who you are in Christ: You are bought with a high price, redeemed, accepted, adopted and complete in Christ. You have the authority as child of God, and as a co-heir with Christ. The Enemy has no power, only lies.

Abolish–

Use the Word of God, Holy Scripture, sharper than any double-edged sword as the weapon dividing the Spirit from the flesh (Hebrews 4:12). Speak aloud, ***“I take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.”*** (2 Corinthians 10:5) Or find a



passage of Scripture that speaks to your particular situation. The very mention of his name, Jesus, has the power to abolish any destructive or untrue thought.

Yield–

Submit to the power of God, through the Holy Spirit within you, and resist the devil for he will flee (James 4:7). If the thoughts continue, seek shelter in the tent of the Almighty, the safe place (the refuge of God, Psalm 57:1), rest in Him, and all thoughts will come into proper perspective.

Never Forget: You are Worthy!

I cannot tell you how many times I have run into individuals – young and old, male and female, wealthy, beautiful, and talented who exude this belief of being totally unworthy. I have felt it many times myself. This notion comes straight from the Enemy's camp. As long as he has us believing we are unworthy before God and unworthy of his abundant life, then hope is squelched and the door is open for attack. These attacks come either through thoughts that enter our mind or from the words of others in our life. In either case, they can be destructive only if you choose to receive them as truth.

Remember when Christ began to teach his disciples that the Son of Man– meaning himself– must suffer many things including death and resurrection. Peter began to speak out against such talk, but when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" He said. "*You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men*" (Mark 8:33). Christ was not calling Peter, "Satan", but rather addressing the words that came from Peter's mouth, as he spoke without thinking (considering their source).

Our words do have power. They make a difference in our own lives as well as the lives of others. Therefore, our first line of defense is our own thoughts. If we begin to believe lies about ourselves that come from our own distorted sense of self-worth, lies that come from the Enemy, or even lies in the form of the abusive words coming from others, then we

become vulnerable to “Stinking–thinking.” This clever analogy shared by a popular televangelist sums up thought patterns that can be extremely destructive.

As born-again, Holy Spirit filled believers, we **are** worthy in God’s eyes as we hold the Lord’s own righteousness (we have on the Breastplate of Righteousness). We are children of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:16, 17). The Holy Spirit can and will provide us with everything we need to discover who we really are in Christ! All we need to do is **ask**.



As Christ renews our minds, our thought patterns take on a whole new dimension. Through Christ’s perspective we begin to see our lives, our relationships, and our circumstances from a completely different viewpoint. A sense of clarity, definition, direction, and utter peace floods every corner of our being. Any sense of unworthiness is completely erased.

The Bible gives us numerous passages in Scripture that tell us who we are in Christ. As I read aloud the following verses over and over again, they become ingrained in my mind and seared into my heart because they are God’s Word about me. I belong to God, so I AM WORTHY!





I AM WORTHY!

I BELONG TO GOD:

God loves me. (Ephesians 2:4)

I am a child of the Most High God. (Psalm 82:6)

God sent His only son to die for me. (John 3:16)

My life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:3)

I am joined to the Lord and one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17)

I am God's child, since I am a child of the resurrection. (Luke 20:36)

I am a child of God because my own spirit testifies with His Spirit. (Romans 8:16)

I AM WORTHY:

I am God's temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16)

I am delivered from sin's hold on me. (Titus 2:14)

I am free forever from condemnation. (Romans 8:12)

I am rooted and grounded in God's love. (Ephesians 3:17)

I am an heir of God and co-heirs with Christ. (Romans 8:17)

I have the righteousness of Jesus Christ within me. (Philippians 3:9)

I am a saint, because I believe and have faith in Jesus Christ. (Philippians 4:21)

I am redeemed, reconciled and forgiven through Christ's blood. (Colossians 1:14)

I KNOW GOD WILL PROVIDE ALL MY NEEDS

I am complete in Christ. (Colossians 2:10)

I belong to God and He meets all my needs. (Matthew 6:33)

I cannot be separated from the love of Christ. (Romans 8:35)

I know God answers my prayers because I trust Him. (1 Chronicles 5:20)

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

I ask it is given, I seek it is found, and I knock and the door is open to me. (Matthew 7:7)

I do not have to worry about what I will eat, drink or wear because God will provide. (Matthew 6:31-33)

I CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE:

With God all things are possible. (Mark 10:27)

I can talk to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18)

I have been chosen and appointed to go and bear fruit. (John 15:16)

I am a branch of the true vine, a channel of Christ's life. (John 15:1-5)

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. (Philippians 4:13)

I am set apart for the Lord and the Holy Spirit intercedes for me. (Romans 8:27)

If God *is* for me, who *can be* against me – God plus one is the majority. (Romans 8:31)



Each day is a new day, and even if we made mistakes yesterday– and most assuredly will in the future– through our imperfections and weakness we turn to him for the courage, the strength, and all of the resources necessary to move *forward*.

Divide and Conquer

We have become a generation of problem-solvers because there are so many problems to solve. Our problems are fast becoming our idols. We are moving so fast that we are literally spinning out of control, all on the same merry-go-round. Sad to say we have created for ourselves numerous lucrative industries that do nothing but deal with the symptoms of our ever-increasing problems.

We have fallen victim to the Master of Lies, but now is the time to get off the merry-go-round. It is time to wake up! You are either a lover of the world or a lover of God– we are learning there is no such thing as lukewarm Christians. The battle lines are being drawn this very minute.

At the hour of our Savior's death and His subsequent resurrection, the ultimate battle was won. The Enemy has no power– only lies that keep us from realizing our true identity and authority as believers in Jesus Christ. As long as we submit to these lies and refuse to believe in the power and authority we have in Jesus Christ, we will remain in the dark.

One of the best strategies of the Enemy is to divide and conquer. We are the most vulnerable when he has us alone and doubting. So, a full-force frontal attack is being made upon our families; this basic foundation designed by God is being attacked from every direction. The answer is to stand up in unity as a member of the body of Christ – His church – and to help one another. So do not fall into the misconception that you as an individual cannot make a difference, or that our world is too far gone.

Because of the gradual process of edging God out (EGO) in our lives, many individuals have become guilty of limiting God and carrying around a “God-in-a-box” mentality. Just like Job’s friends, we are guilty of thinking we have Him all figured out. This opens the doors to mixing secular beliefs with Biblical teachings to make it fit into our “modern” world. Through Jesus Christ anything is possible, so even though you think you cannot make a difference, **Christ working through you can.** Your choice needs to be to STAND FIRM– not leaning on your own limited understanding, but trust in Christ with all your heart. This is a daily battle that requires a continual choice.

Word of Warning (WOW): All of us are vulnerable to making mistakes, and we will! The beauty of the relationship with Christ is that we learn to lean on Him especially in our times of weakness. This makes the relationship all that more intimate. He does not beat us up as we do ourselves, but loves us even more!





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Five: Mine Your Mind

In personal journal or notebook:

1. When a thought comes to your mind do you immediately take ownership of it?
2. Can you see from past thoughts that have entered your mind that these trains of thoughts have led to your actions (decision-making), then from actions to habits, then from habits which in turn formed your character? Explain, and then watch for a pattern.
3. Have you ever experienced a time when thoughts would flood your mind that you knew were negative or destructive, but you could not seem to shake them? If you are currently experiencing this phenomenon then try P.R.A.Y. (pp. 96-97).
4. Do you presently feel unworthy before God, undeserving of an abundant life with Christ? If yes, explain why.

5. Are you currently living in a “God-in-a-box” mentality? Has society, your upbringing or even a particular belief system molded your current perception of God that keeps him at a distance?
6. Would you like to experience that personal relationship with Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit who now resides in you? Then now is the time to lean not on your own understanding, but trust in God alone.

Print page 101, “I AM WORTHY!” Say aloud and meditate on God’s word to you and about you until they are seared on your heart. Find verses in the Bible that are your favorite and speak them aloud – you are renewing your mind!

Biblical References: Matthew 9:4, Matthew 12:25, Acts 13:46, Romans 8:16, 17, Proverbs 3:5,



Chapter Six: One Day at a Time

***“Whether you turn to the right or to the left,
Your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying,
“This is the way; walk in it.”***

Isaiah 30:21 (NIV)

“It is the little things that count.” This day to day and oftentimes hum-drum existence does have purpose and reason. God does not waste a moment. It is in not the “big” thing that we are all waiting to happen in our lives, but the day to day little things which really count. As mentioned in a previous chapter, it is not the end that God is looking at but the process to the end. How are you measuring up on a day to day basis?

Do not be fooled into believing that once certain things happen in your life then things will get better or life will make sense. Think of when Jesus was walking this earth: did He come across as grandiose as the Sadducees or Pharisees? No, he came from very humble beginnings with what many would call an ordinary life in those days. His purpose was not to be put into a position of power because Christ was the power (authority). He humbled Himself by being a man.



It is in the little things that we build the faith needed to move mountains. It is a process of spiritual maturity and growth beyond our own limited understanding. So begin with the little things right where you are at! There is no need to move geographically– to look somewhere else for the answers– since the answers will be found in you. No matter where you have been or how old you are, as long as you have life left on this earth, you can begin anew in Christ.

Your Daily Choice

Nothing, and I repeat nothing, can compare to the awesome goodness of the Lord once he has you in the palm of His hand. Yesterday is gone and tomorrow is another day that we don't even know for sure that we have. What we have is "today" alone. Each day is a new day, and the Lord gives us just enough grace to handle "today". How we use "today" is our choice.

There are three daily steps that can serve as a guide to strengthen and help you in your journey. This is a personal journey where there are no set rules. It is up to you and the leading of your own heart– in which the Holy Spirit resides. Christ is your Teacher, He is your Provider, and He is your Source to all Truth. Allow Him, through the Holy Spirit, to direct your Path.

The Bible

First, God gave us His word in the form of scripture from over 40 different divinely-inspired authors making up the Old and New Testament of the Holy Bible. The Bible is the verbally inspired Word of God, and without mistakes as originally written. It is the road map for life and the only unailing rule of faith



*The Bible is the one
book that has withstood
the test of time.*



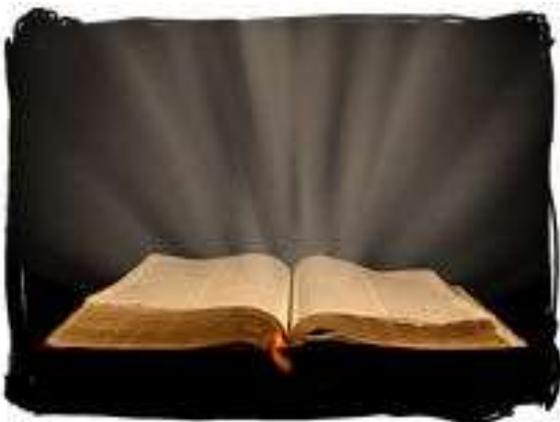
and practice for Christian life, and the Lord's purpose for all creation. There is no other earthly resource than can compare to this book – God's diary, His instruction book, written by man. This one book -- the Bible – has withstood the test of time.

The word bible simply means books,

what makes it the Holy Bible is the divinely inspired words.

The Bible contains 66 books written by over 40 different authors and was completed over 1500 years ago. The Bible was originally made up of books written in three languages: Hebrew, Aramaic and Koine Greek. It is divided into two main sections called the Old Testament and the New Testament. The term *testament* means something that serves as proof.

Reading and studying the Bible teaches us using various stories, parables, histories, and prophecies that are important to understanding God's word. However, when **read and led** by the Holy Spirit, this book transcends human knowledge and understanding. The answers to life's questions are within its pages. The verses that lie within present us with insightful validation into who we really are and the very purpose of our existence.



This most holy of books is multidimensional, meaning that the words are God-inspired – they transcend both time and space. You may read one thing in the Bible at one point in your spiritual evolution and come back to the same scripture, and with guidance from the Holy Spirit you can receive another deeper revelation. It becomes what it is: a living Word, a life application, a time-tested guidepost for mankind.



We are so fortunate today to have the Bible! Picture the early Christians following Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. They had no Bible, as we have today, to refer to with each other. There were Jewish Scriptures of the Old Testament, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ in written form was not yet formulated like today. Individuals became believers through the power of the Holy Spirit being preached by "word-of-mouth" from Christ's followers.

The Holy Spirit provided the Apostles and the Disciples of Christ with all the power needed to spread the good news (gospel) of Jesus Christ for many generations to come. This same power many years later provided the inspiration to bring the various books together to form what we now know as the Holy Bible. That power of the Holy Spirit was no different then from what it is today.

So while the Bible today provides us with the foundation and the infrastructure, it is Christ is the cornerstone Who brings all the pieces together. And His Holy Spirit guides us in our part of the building of God's Kingdom here on earth and in heaven.

Romanian Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, founder of *The Voice of the Martyrs* and tortured as prisoner for his belief in Christ for fourteen years in Communist prisons, shares the following truth:

God is "the Truth." The Bible is the "truth about the Truth." Theology is the "truth about the truth about the Truth." Christian people live in these many truths about the Truth, and because of them, have not "the Truth." Hungry, beaten, and drugged, we had forgotten theology and the Bible. We had forgotten the "truth about the Truth," therefore we lived in "the Truth."⁷

Many have studied the Bible and claim complete knowledge, but even Satan knows the Bible word-for-word. So do not be deceived, guidance from the Holy Spirit is just as crucial in our own times. Bible revelation is a life-long process that, when guided by the Holy Spirit, causes knowledge and wisdom come together in the Truth. It is not just in the words from



the Bible, but the Word. This means that Jesus Christ comes into our being by the power of the Holy Spirit bringing Truth in us and through us – the Bible comes alive in us and we can see our story written within its pages. By meditating, in this case meaning saying the Scriptures out loud each day, you will renew your mind and rewire your brain. Our brain responds to the words spoken from our mouth and can literally change our thought patterns and how our body responds. Allowing the words from the Bible to “sink in” will heal you mentally, physically, emotional and spiritually. There is power in The Word.

Ask the Holy Spirit during your prayer time to guide you through the Bible. You might find a Bible study group that can assist in your growth if you are just beginning and not yet confident in moving through the Bible. Just remember to discern whatever you hear by bringing it to Christ and asking Him to lead you and guide you. The idea is to get confident with your relationship with Christ, so always come back to Him as the Teacher. Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be opened unto you. If so led, research the various groups available in your local church community then watch how He will lead you to the right one.

Bible study groups also provide an excellent opportunity to begin to fellowship with other believers. By openly sharing your questions and concerns, you will gain insightful information into other believers’ journeys as well as your own. These groups usually meet once a week and normally include daily reading assignments.

There are numerous online Bible study courses, daily devotional readings and more intense topic-specific courses available. Check out the resource material provided at the end of this book for further reference.

“A God Experience”: **Job’s friends.** *When I was spending time at my parents’ home in the Texas hill country, I had an opportunity to really listen to God’s voice. The peace that was accessible in the scenery fell into my heart and the clearness of his voice gave me no doubt that I was being instructed in the way I should go.*



Despite my dire situation at that time– I had lost my family, my marriage, my home, my business, my finances and mostly my pride– I remained faithful to reading the Bible and trying to hear Christ. The Lord had 100% of my attention at this point. So as I would go through different parables in the Bible, the stories seem to be coming alive in my own life. Then I came to the story of Job and thought this was my story– I had lost almost everything so I could really relate to Job. But it was not “Job” that the Lord pointed out to me, it was Job’s friends!

For as I read the story of Job, it was the portion about his friend’s where I felt the prodding – conviction from the Holy Spirit. Very clearly, without any room for doubt, I began to see my part in playing each role of Job’s three friends. I had been judgmental in thinking; I knew all of God’s ways that I could figure out all my problems and other people’s problems as well. It was somehow my responsibility to give them solutions, and if they refused to listen they were sinners with no hope.

God showed me that I was not Job, but Job’s friends! The story of Job struck me like a thump on the head and I could see my part. I was convicted! I had tried to “play God” and thought I had him all figured out in my own situation as well as others. It took complete devastation and humiliation to get my undivided attention.

*Once I came to this realization, and immediately asked for forgiveness, my burden seemed to lift off my shoulders. A quiet peace enveloped my being and I knew God’s grace had set me free in that area of my life. I came to the understanding that I did not have to “understand,” but **trust** in him no matter what my circumstances looked like. I did not have to re-create others in my own image, but could allow God full reign over my situation as well as others’. My personal intimate relationship with God was beginning to blossom, but it had taken unconditional surrender.*



The Inner Chamber

Secondly, in your daily walk with the Lord it is most essential to find a quiet place – a solitary spot where you can be alone. Present yourself in every way in the “Inner Chamber” to the kingdom of God that lies within you– the Kingdom of God being the sphere of Truth through the power of the Holy Spirit who indwelt you the moment you believed.



But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thine inner chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret shall recompense thee.

Matthew 6:6 (KJV)

“...Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 21:17-21 (NIV)

In the Inner Chamber, you are in the presence of God the Father, God the Son and the God Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid. As a child of God you are worthy to speak to your Heavenly Father. Pour out your heart to him. He wants you to come to him with all your needs and desires, your hurts and disappointments, your thoughts and prayers. This is your opportunity to talk to him about anything. He knows everything about you already. He just wants you to come to him to develop the most intimate relationship of your life.

We all have God-given desires and needs. It is when we fall into unbelief in God as our only source of meeting these needs and desires and rely upon our own power that these desires and needs can turn into lusts and obsessions. It is these very obsessions that can destroy everything in our lives and in the lives of those around us. God can and will provide all your needs to abundance if you will but trust and delight in him.



As you become more confident with coming to him, you will find yourself talking with him more and more throughout the entire day. You are becoming “God-centered” instead of “self-centered”. Your path is becoming clearer and your choices more God-directed. Life for you is becoming more peaceful, more joyful, and full of abundance and favor.

The Realm of Imagination

Every great invention, masterful artwork, creative literary piece or advanced technology was conceived in the realm of imagination. Mankind has progressed to the point we are at today by the use of imagination. It is not a term to be played with or taken lightly. God gave mankind imagination. And it is with this imagination that we have obtained the power to bring about our total destruction or our total good.

***Where there is no vision, the people perish: but he that keepeth the law,
happy is he.***

Proverbs 29:19 (KJV)

Where there is no vision, man will perish. God created us with imagination (vision, revelation, awareness, insight) that we might go beyond our current reality into the dimension where dreams, ideas and desires are conceived. This is God’s place where He can show us things we have never seen before; where He can energize our thoughts to create in our earthly reality what was never before. Imagination is a whole new world going beyond the idols of this world and looking to the heavens. Bringing this imagination into spiritual captivity to the obedience of Jesus Christ is the test.

Since this realm does exist and is within our grasp it should not be ventured without direction and guidance from the Holy Spirit. Taking our imagination into discernment by the Holy Spirit is necessary to keep within God’s purpose and plan. Since the term “imagination” often conjures up negative or dismissive connotations, take the term imagination and turn it to

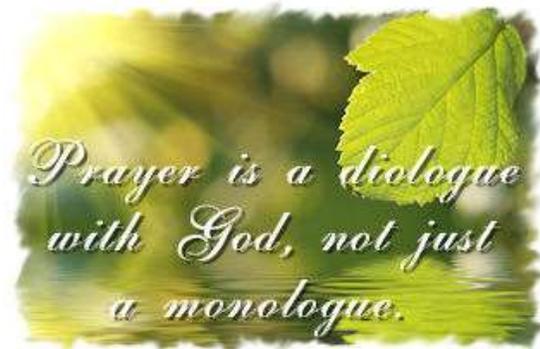


visualization. Now as you surrender your mind, will, and emotions to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, surrender your ability to visualize, also.

In your quiet time with the Lord as you go to the Inner Chamber release your ability to visualize your presence with Jesus. Talk with Christ, listen to him, and ask Him to teach you what to do in your life or how to do what He puts on your heart to do. Ask him for healing in your life or the lives of others, and learn to dialogue with Christ. He already knows everything on your heart, but the point is to learn to be sensitive and discerning to *His voice*, so that we can learn to hear hHim at all times. This is the quality of Prayer with visualization.

Power of Prayer

Thirdly, within the Inner Chamber – or at any time when prayer is spoken – is the very essence of fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Prayer is not just a monologue – the act of making a reverent petition to God or repeating formalized prayer. It is a dialogue the actual two-way communication with God through the Holy Spirit and us.



Two-way communications is vital in your daily walk with God, the Son. It is where any intimate relationship begins. Visualize (for a moment) Christ as your Teacher just as he taught the Apostles and the Disciples in the mountains, by the water, in the crowds. He is with you now every moment in the form of the Holy Spirit. He is your greatest Teacher, your wisest Counselor, your most gentle Comforter, and your Best Friend. This relationship with Him should be the very foundation for all decisions in your life.



Be specific in your prayer requests, and expect your Father in heaven to answer you as soon as you make your request. He wants to answer your request. Sometimes the answer comes immediately; sometimes the answer may be delayed.

In our times of waiting on God for answers to our prayers, if you patiently persist and do not give up – stand firm – it will be the most profound part of your journey. For during this time, you will see Him work with you and for you. It is in these times when you will learn to take heed of His voice and begin to understand Faith.

You will come to know yourself and others better than ever before, because you will begin to understand human nature from God's perspective. Here is where the light will begin to shine on true wisdom. Understanding and expecting answers to our prayers is essential to our experiencing faith in God.

Prayer is a process that refines us, refines our petitions, and produces more blessings than we can imagine. This is where the deeper walk with our Lord takes place. It is where Truth begins to reveal itself in our lives and our surroundings. It brings his supernatural realm into the natural realm intersecting in the dimension of imagination.

There may come a time in your life where you sense that you need to make an important decision, choose a path, or answer a calling. The very first and most important step is to take it to your Best Friend, Jesus. Talk to Him as though He is sitting right next to you and give Him every detail in your heart. He knows it already, but remember – by sharing the details as you see it, you are building a relationship with the most important person in your life. Ask Him to give you the answer you need for direction, and then wait for the answer.

The answer may come right away, or you may have to wait for some time until it becomes clear. Because the answer may come from different sources, here is where discernment is important. Reading and studying the Bible along with a consistent prayer life will help you to be able to discern the truth from a lie. Trust in Christ, that He will lead you and protect you.



You may get off path every now and then, but Christ will gently redirect your path if you trust in Him and receive His guidance. If you do not agree with an answer you receive, then again take it to Christ and ask Him for direction, or for the means to be able to accept the answer you are given– even if the answer is “No”.



“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened”

Luke 11:9, 10 (NIV)

You can count on fear always entering into the picture, especially with very important decisions. The ***test is in the trying***, “Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.” (Psalm 34:8) If you do not try, you will never learn; if you try but find no answer and just quit, you will be missing the best part of the journey. If fear rules your thoughts, then at that point take it again to Christ in prayer. You will be given an answer, a direction, a resource that God has directed for your life. God will always honor your faith in him. He will never leave you, nor forsake you!

Word of Warning (WOW): Along the journey there comes sensitivity to not just areas where we ourselves fall short, but where others may fall short. As the Holy Spirit guides and teaches us in our lives, we are also given insight into the lives of others. But oftentimes this gift of insight can fall into the hands of the enemy in the form of gossip. Gossip is really misdirected prayer. This is where intercessory prayer comes into play. Intercessory prayer, which hinges on the ability to know how to pray for others, is a powerful blessing that will open up the doors of insight into God’s master plan.

Remember: The one thing both non-believer and some believers have in common that they underestimate is the Power of Prayer!



Your Purpose

In the infinite scheme of things, we are but dust in the wind – here for a very brief moment in time. We are all searching for our purpose in life, but many of us sadly fall short of discovering why we exist.

There is a greater purpose beyond our day-to-day existence that not only can affect our lives, but those around us, and those who are to come after us. To determine this greater purpose requires simple submission to Christ and the prodding of the Holy Spirit during this day-to-day existence.

Discovering your intimate personal relationship with Christ is your ultimate purpose, and you will find that everything else will fall into order. A whole new perspective of the world is opened through this relationship. Gifts and talents you never knew you had will begin to rise to the surface. Your life takes on new meaning – without struggle, without anxiety, but with peace, joy and complete satisfaction.

Your life does make a difference! Think of a pebble being thrown into a still, quiet pond. That one pebble creates a *ripple effect* that expands across the quiet pond. You, like the pebble, by your choices and actions cause a ripple effect. By making your ripple effect God-directed you can affect many lives in the most profound way. Now think of many God-directed pebbles being thrown into this pond – and the ripple effect that can change the world.

God knows you better than you know yourself. He knew you before you were born, and He knows what you will do next. This concept does not prevent our free will. It means that we are limited in our understanding of God's ways and his timing. He knew you would come to a point in your life such as this where you were searching. It is no coincidence that you are where you are at this very moment in time.



You are God's child and he wants not just the best, but the very best for you and all his children. You are included in his ultimate plan, but you always have the choice to participate or not. Hold on, follow the directions of the Holy Spirit, and never quit; for the benefits and blessing are unimaginable.



*Your life does
make a difference.*





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Six: One Day at a Time

In personal journal or notebook:

1. As you read the Bible, or participate in a Bible study, does the word come alive in your life, or does it seem to be a distant story not relevant to your personal circumstances?
2. Does the idea of using your imagination or visualizing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit concern or even frighten you at this time? If yes, simply ask God the Father if this is his will in your life at this time and then wait for his answer.
3. What is your current understanding of prayer?
4. Do you believe that there might be untapped and unexplored gifts and talents within you that have not yet been revealed? List your talents and gifts that you are currently aware of.
5. Do you believe that your life could make a difference?



Biblical references: 2 Corinthians 2:17; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11;
Romans 8:17; Colossians 3:2.



Chapter Seven: It is a Matter of Focus

“During the fourth watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. ‘It’s a ghost,’ they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: ‘Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.’

‘Lord, if it’s you,’ Peter replied, ‘tell me to come to you on the water.’

‘Come,’ he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, ‘Lord, save me’

Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. ‘You of little faith,’ he said, ‘why did you doubt?’”

Matthew 14: 25-31 (NIV)

As a born-again believer in Jesus Christ, for many years I was under the assumption that since I was saved, I was going to heaven and everything would be just fine. Life was not perfect, but God was in control and I could glide along on easy street until He called me



home. Well, there came a point in my life when Christ called me out of that “comfort boat” and my life turned inside out and upside down– it was my time to walk on water.

I had experienced problem times in my life before, but this was different. This time I was given grace to see a whole new perspective on life— life through the mind of Jesus Christ. Christ called me out of the boat, but to **survive** meant a **complete focus on Him**.

During this season in my life, I initially began to either play the blame game or divert my attention to the problems of others. I did everything to find answers, but not get honest with myself. Christ was looking for a relationship with me and I was too busy trying to find a solution in the natural via my own limited resources.

I was guilty of staying in this situation for quite some time. After all, I thought I was a smart individual with all the possible resources available to assist me in figuring out the best possible strategy to get me out of this mess. I was out of the boat, filled with fear, looking at the waves and the wind, and beginning to sink!

The problem with using this self-reliant methodology as a cure was that the solutions were only temporary and I never really felt complete; I could not get to the “root” cause of the pain and truly get healed. What resulted were numerous broken relationships and a severe case of the “paralysis of analysis”.

The “paralysis of analysis” described earlier as being so caught up in the worldly classification of the possible maladies and suggested remedies that total confusion sets in, you become paralyzed with fear of making the wrong decisions and you end up doing nothing – you are in limbo!

The first clue that something was amiss in this situation was in knowing clearly that the Lord is not the author of confusion. He does not rush us into making quick decisions based on our limited understanding or impulsive emotions. Through trial and error, Christ has taught me



that whenever confusion or haste comes into the picture, a red flag naturally comes into my mind and I know it is time to take it immediately to God in prayer. This is where the gift of discernment (ability to tell the Truth from deception) is most necessary.

I have learned that in faith and trust, He always brings me to the best solution for all those concerned. I am a witness to the many blessings that come from taking everything to Christ through the Holy Spirit. Over and over again, I have come to experience complete peace and even joy at the opportunity to make decisions based on the Holy Spirit's prodding. There are no words that would adequately describe the benefits (fruits) of walking this way in life.

Thus began my lessons in faith. I could see the Master's face and hear His voice, and when I focused on Him I could take another step – make a Christ-centered decision. As I took a step focusing on Him, I would get the sensation of a stone being placed under my foot – I was supported in my decision. I would not see the stone nor feel it until I took the step of faith, and at the very last moment the stone would meet my step; I experienced the result of trusting in Him.

Whenever my attention turned to the waves crashing around me my circumstances, or when I would turn to listen to the advice of the the others still back in the boat who were too afraid themselves to step out, I would begin to sink. Each time I was given the grace to hear Him gently call my name, my focus would immediately turn back to Him and I would to dare take yet another step. Every feeling and worry imaginable would enter into my thoughts, but despite the sometimes overwhelming fear, the glimpse of His face and sound of His voice gave me the courage to try again and keep going.

I began to understand that faith with action behind it would result in movement toward His will. The more I took each step in complete faith, the more I could believe and trust that He was always right there meeting my next step, providing all my needs and building my pathway out of the Pit. Although He delivered me out of the Pit, it was a team effort; I had to



do my part. Sometimes that part meant moving in a direction out of my comfort zone (area of familiarity), while other times it meant simply waiting on Him in complete trust.

It was in these periods of waiting, which some describe as the “wilderness,” that He was usually showing me something about my own character that needed refining. Oftentimes overwhelming doubt would creep into my mind during these dry periods. Yet God would bring me to Bible stories that spoke of long periods of waiting time – like the many years Abraham and Sarah had to wait for a child (Genesis 17:16-18). It was so many years that the dream of having a child at such an old age looked absolutely impossible from the natural perspective. Or the length of time Moses spent in his first “wilderness” period before he was called by the Lord to approach Pharaoh about setting the Israelites free (Exodus 2:23), not to mention the forty years with the Israelites in the desert before reaching the promise land (Numbers 32:13).

In story after story in the Old Testament each character went through a desolate refining period in order to achieve an undeniable relationship with God – a relationship filled with accomplished faith. In the New Testament, Christ sent us the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us to all Truth. For those who seek after Christ with their whole heart, the time of refining becomes a renewal of the mind. We are the ones who oftentimes make it so long, so hard or so complicated.

Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is our Teacher, and I have come to understand that, with each step of faith, the reward – not just for me but also for all those around me – is immeasurable. When the revelation came that this journey was not just about me, that we are all part of a picture much bigger than ourselves, I broke down and sorely lamented, “How could I be so self-centered and deceived?” God in his great compassion for me poured into my spirit a sense of complete acceptance and unconditional love that gave an even clearer understanding of His purpose. It is not about our circumstances or even our causes, but about our relationship with Him, period. And from this relationship we see a bond revealed with our brothers and sisters. We can love them as we



love ourselves because we truly understand the connection we all have to each other — Jesus Christ.

Sitting on Duplicity's Fence

Are you sitting on “Duplicity’s Fence?” Have you opened your heart to God, made genuine promises and plans only to fail when the seduction of this world crosses your path? I admit a great deal of my life has been spent sitting on the fence between walking with Christ and His purpose for my life, and walking in the world. Not really making a commitment to either side has kept me duplicitous on both sides. So I confess to you I have been a coward. By allowing the waves of my relationships, my desires, my needs and my own sense of self-worth to sway me, I could never really make a stand. This is the age old conflict of the two natures, spirit (the inner man) and flesh (the carnal man).

“Be in the world, but not of the world.” These words are much easier said than done. I have a willing spirit, and my heart is in it, but my flesh betrays me more times than I am willing to admit. In fact, on my own I cannot do it. Our human nature coupled with the lure and seduction of this world in which we live in nowadays is overwhelming. Consequently the probability of success in making *right choices* (for the good of all concerned) is rather slim given the number of “life” variables, both known and unknown, that affect our decisions. But take heart, because as believers we are given: first, the ability to recognize duplicity, and secondly, the means to overcome (be delivered) by the power of the Holy Spirit. Even Paul shared his quandary with this conflict:

We know that the Law is spiritual; but I am a creature of the flesh [carnal, unspiritual], having been sold into slavery under [the control of] sin.

For I do not understand my own actions [I am baffled, bewildered]. I do not practice or accomplish what I wish, but I do the very thing that I loathe [which my moral instinct condemns].

Now if I do [habitually] what is contrary to my desire, [that means that] I acknowledge and agree that the Law is good (morally excellent) and that I take sides with it.



However, it is no longer I who do the deed, but the sin [principle] which is at home in me and has possession of me.

For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.]

For I fail to practice the good deeds I desire to do, but the evil deeds that I do not desire to do are what I am [ever] doing.

Now if I do what I do not desire to do, it is no longer I doing it [it is not myself that acts], but the sin [principle] which dwells within me [fixed and operating in my soul].

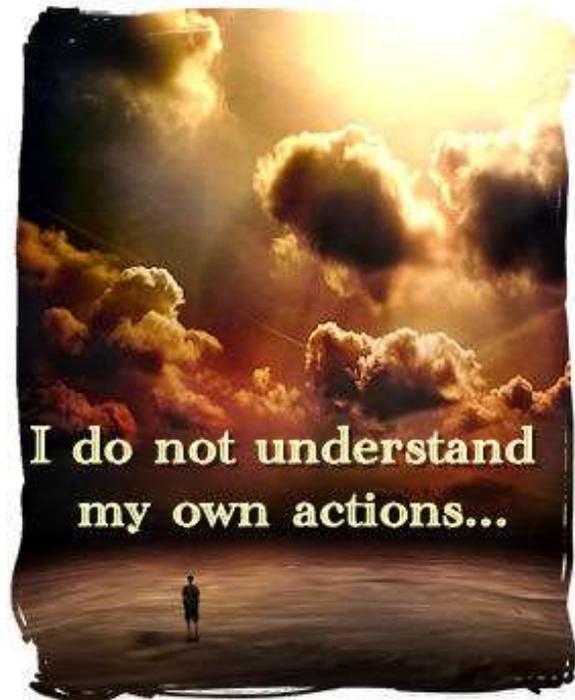
So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands.

For I endorse and delight in the Law of God in my inmost self [with my new nature]

But I discern in my bodily members [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh] a different law (rule of action) at war against the law of my mind (my reason) and making me a prisoner to the law of sin that dwells in my bodily organs [in the sensitive appetites and wills of the flesh].

O unhappy and pitiable and wretched man that I am! Who will release and deliver me from [the shackles of] this body of death?

O thank God! [He will!] through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One) our Lord! So then indeed I, of myself with the mind and heart, serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.

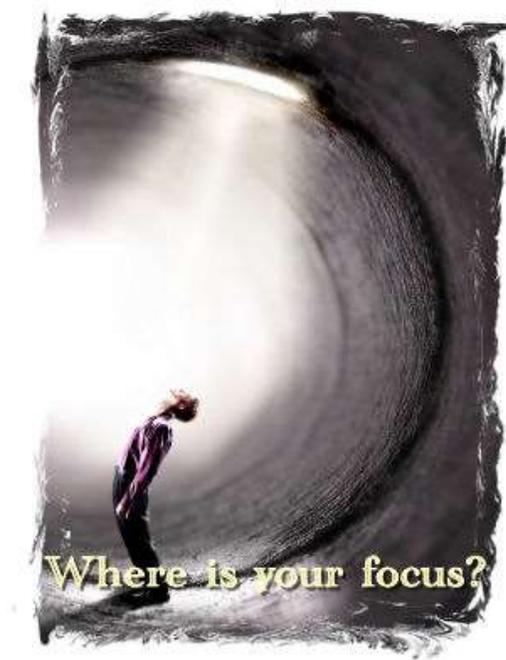


Romans 7:14-25 (Amp)

Grasping the meaning of these verses may be difficult at first but the further along you are on your journey the more the Truth is revealed in them. This is a battle of which we must all



become aware, realizing that sitting on duplicity's fence is the conflict. Focusing on Jesus Christ and trusting in His Holy Spirit that resides within us is the answer.



Where Is Your Focus?

Right now in this moment in time, where is your focus? Is it on a spouse, a love interest, a job (or even a ministry), a child, your health, your finances, some material item, some problem in your life, or any combination thereof? Wherever your focus is in life, everything else in your life is organized around that focus. The wrong focus can quickly become your idol and lead you to lose true perspective. This is where we can get into trouble, and where obsessions and addictions begin, thus allowing strongholds to take control of our lives.

When we become Christ-focused we allow the Holy Spirit to filter everything in our life through the mind of Christ. We become more and more sensitive to His prodding and trust His guidance. Then our choices and decisions in life become firmly planted in seeds of truth. Worry, the worship of fear, is no longer an aspect of our decision-making because we can trust God and leave the consequences to Him.

Even when doubt enters our thoughts because events do not seem to be working out like we expect, we quickly find peace in knowing that God is in control and He knows what is the very best for all concerned. It is at these times when our faith gets tested and our focus requires complete trust in Christ. We walk on water!

The desires of our heart is not what is at issue, because God wants to give us the true desires of our heart that He placed there. What is at issue is where we place God in our list



of priorities. Our focus must be on God through his Son, Jesus Christ. And with God at the center, we can love our neighbor as ourselves, understanding we are all part of each other. Anything else is deception and will never fill the void.

The Faith Walk

“You of little faith, why are you so afraid?”(Matthew 8:26 NIV) “Take heart, daughter,” he said, “your faith has healed you.” (Matthew 9:22 NIV) “According to your faith will it be done to you” (Matthew 9:29 NIV). He replied, “Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17:20 NIV) Over and over, the question of faith was presented to us in the Bible by Christ as He healed, as He taught, as He performed miracles, as He won over death and as He rose again. Faith is still the issue. Our faith – our trust – will be put on trial. And faith is achieved by focus – focus on Christ and the prodding of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

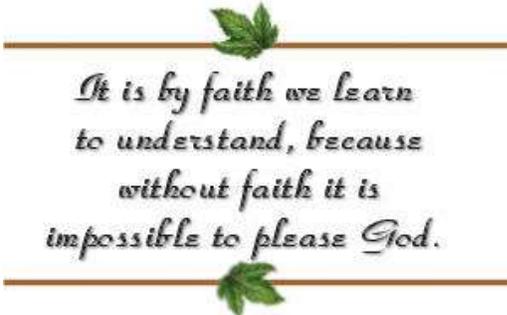
Each and every day there will be decisions, temptations, desires, worries, and unresolved situations in some form or another – most of which seem to be totally out of our control. However, we have an Advocate Who is always in our corner, and Who walks us through anything life may throw our way. We can maintain peace within our inner being no matter what the situation may look like – good or bad. This is because our main focus is not on the situation, but on Christ. He teaches us the meaning of faith.

Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. Without warning, a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. The disciples went and woke him, saying, “Lord, save us! We’re going to drown!”

He replied, “You of little faith, why are you so afraid?” Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

The men were amazed and asked, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!”

Matthew 8:23-27 (NIV)



*It is by faith we learn
to understand, because
without faith it is
impossible to please God.*

It is by faith we learn to understand, because without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6). He wants our complete trust. It is by faith that we come to know God, experience His power in our lives, learn to trust in Him and knowing that He is ready, willing and able to do what He promises to do, no matter what the circumstances.

The Bible is based on faith; all of the stories within it are stories of faith. It is not faith in what we see, or in our own abilities, but faith in our Creator. And we are not alone in learning faith. We have Christ through the Holy Spirit to walk with us every step of the way. We have fellow believers on their path of faith who encourage us and grow with us as we come together in unity of purpose.

As we walk through our daily lives with our focus on faith in God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) we are given everything we need to overcome:

Faith in God provides supernatural confidence. To rest in the fact that God will see us through any and all difficult times, as well as bless us abundantly on our journey, establishes a confidence that no one or nothing can hinder. When called to perform what looks like the impossible, we now have the resource within us to achieve the impossible. When we think that we are not able to do something on our own, we know that the Holy Spirit within us can!

Faith in God establishes enduring peace. We are not in control of life, but the power of faith in God provides us with complete trust that everything will work out for the good of all concerned. We can rest in the peace that surpasses all understanding.

Step by step on the path we learn trust in our Heavenly Father Who not only knows us better than we know ourselves, but knows what pieces of the puzzle need to go where in the right



timing to bring about the completed picture – His master plan. He knows the end at the beginning; we are limited by our own time continuum, but He is not.

Faith in God is our foundation. *By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.* (Hebrews 11:3 NIV) The very foundation of our existence, believer or not, is based on faith. Scientists can only speculate, theorize and hypothesize on the creation of the universe, but even they have faith as to a beginning. Whereas for believers, simply stated, faith in God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) as the Creator is *our foundation* on which everything else is built.

Faith in God teaches us Truth. Our belief and continued focus on Jesus Christ and the revelations we receive on our path opens the door to all Truth. Our path is made clear, our perception is refined, any untruth is revealed and lives are healed and restored.

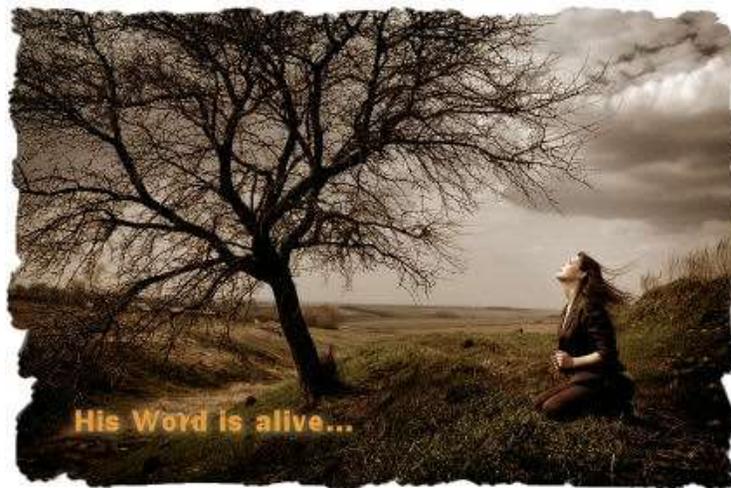
Faith in God provides complete victory. As in the past, the Bible shows us victory after victory both in the natural and supernatural realms. Based on these historical victories and personal victories in our own lives, we have the steady assurance that God will overcome what looks impossible in the natural. Most importantly, we have the ultimate victory over death through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the faith in this redemption that is the core Truth of mankind.

A Walk to Remember

The testing of my own faith is still a work in progress, and it is a new and exciting journey each day. I cannot predict what God has in store next, but I can say He never ceases to amaze me. I can testify to the fact that the stronger my faith becomes the more people it will affect around me. It does not require convincing others through my own intellect; it requires my steady, consistent submission to His will in my life. Many times I did not understand what He was doing or where he was taking me on this path, but from prior exercises in faith I began to trust that everything would come together in due time. And it always has!

This is not to say that I have reached perfection or that I am not afraid at times, because fear automatically enters into the formula. The difference is that whenever fear surfaces the Holy Spirit places in me a new found strength that overcomes doubt. Christ meets me exactly where I am at and walks me through uncharted territories in my life.

These profound experiences are ingrained into my being and could never have been achieved, let alone understood, had it not been for the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Now as I read Paul's letters in the Bible, I understand what He is talking about. So many times before the meaning of the words simply escaped my understanding. Now there is a new level of perception that brings the very words of the Bible alive in my own life.





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Seven: It is a Matter of Focus

In personal journal or notebook:

1. Where is your focus right now? (On a spouse or significant other, a difficult child, money or material items, a successful career, a worrisome parent, a difficult circumstance, a health issue, etc.) What percentage of your day is spent focused on this issue or person?
2. At this point in your life, can you honestly say that you trust God with everything in your life? List the areas where you do trust, then list the areas do not trust him.
3. What are the desires of your heart right now? List them.
4. Would you be willing to take these desires and leave all of them with Jesus Christ, then listen to what He has to teach you?



5. Do you trust God to give you the true desires of your heart?

Biblical references: Luke 24:38; Romans 8:5; Romans 8:27; Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:7; Psalms 37:4.



Chapter Eight: Breaking Footholds and Strongholds

“But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed and baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions).

Then the evil desire, when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death.

Do not be misled, my beloved brethren.”

James 1:14-16 (Amp.)

But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth].

James 1:22 (Amp.)

The pain, disappointment and anxiety associated with the Pit can only be described as overwhelming, gut-wrenching fear and sometimes completely devoid of God. The deception I was under kept me blinded for many years to not only my part but the part of those closest to me. I was a born-again Spirit-filled believer, but still clueless to what was going on all around me.

I shudder to think where I would be today if God had not called my number to see the Truth. God gives us the grace (meaning the freely given, unmerited favor and love of God, given not because we have earned it but because of His love for us) to get out of the Pit. I can now



honestly look back and rejoice because what the devil meant for my destruction God has turned into good.

The only way to comprehend just how I got into this slimy pit is to backtrack to the time when I was born again at age 12. Just like what Jesus said as to the meaning of the parable of the sower in the Bible:

“Listen then to what the parable of the sower means:



When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away.

The one who received the seed that fell among the thorns is the man who hears the word, but the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth choke it, making it unfruitful.

But the one who received the seed that fell on good soil is the man who hears the word and understands it. He produces a crop, yielding a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.”

Matthew 13:18-23 (NIV)

As I look at these verses, I can best describe my initial falling away as seed that fell on rocky places. I received so much joy for a few years at first, but I was not aware that I needed to get rooted into the Word. Because of my age and out of respect for my parents at the time, I was to follow a religion that did not provide me the opportunity to “get rooted in the Word.” I understood the traditions, grappled with intellectual theological opinions, and tried to follow



legalistic practices of this religion, but I was oblivious to the true power of the Holy Spirit and the continual intimacy that can only be found in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The joy of the Holy Spirit that I once felt seemed to gradually fade away with time, and I became fair game for the deception of the Enemy.

The era of my young adulthood was at the tail end of the baby-boomer “Free love/Free sex generation.” It was before AIDS; and at the time it was common practice to experiment sexually with whomever you pleased. It was the generation that opened the door to some of the most prolific strongholds of all time in our American society.

Although I can say I came from a religious family, attended a religious boarding school and graduated from a religious college, it had very little effect on my decision-making process once I got out into the secular world. I knew “religion,” which is defined as a fundamental set of beliefs and practices generally agreed upon by a number of persons or sects⁸, but I did not know Jesus Christ in a personal, intimate way.

Many a soul begins to come to God when he flings off being religious, because there is only one master of the human heart, and that is not religion but Jesus Christ.⁹

Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost For His Highest*

I did not have the spiritual perception that was needed to really understand what was going on all around me. I did not know I was in a spiritual war. I had structure, tradition, rules, and belonged to a pretty powerful religious “club” that gave me the false sense of security that everything would be just fine, but I always felt there was “something missing.” What should have taken root at age 12 turned into a powerful but distant memory. I was not properly equipped to handle what was coming up next in my life.

So yes, I was a Spirit-filled born-again believer who got off path for quite a number of years. Due to spiritual immaturity, the door began to open for the Enemy to establish what initially



began as little footholds which gradually grew to become “strongholds” in my life. Yet, it was as though deep down I knew the truth (by the way of the prodding of the Holy Spirit who had never really left me). However, I chose to sit on “duplicity’s fence” and test fate. By then I was a young adult free from parental grasp and I wanted to experiment with life.

Unconsciously, I abused my current religious belief system: I could go out and do just about anything I wanted, and then at some point confess my sins so that everything would be all right again.

The footholds that started this journey down into the depths of the Pit can be attributed to several factors – these were areas of my life (confusion, fear, depression, self-pity and self-preoccupation – see [“Example of The Pit”](#) graphic) which, when left wide open, became implanted with the Enemy’s seeds of deception. Even the “religious” college I attended opened the door to free thinking, which almost gave me permission to experiment with just about any option at my disposal to find the truth about ME. There were only three things that were important to me at this time and it wasn’t the Holy Trinity. It was the “me, myself and I” trinity.

The more I began following this path, the more deeply I began to believe so many lies, and the further I began to fall into the Pit, oblivious all along to what was really going on. I was having a “great time,” I thought, all the while totally unaware that these initial footholds of self-seeking pleasure were gradually becoming strongholds. The lies began dictating my thoughts and leading me wherever I could find pleasure. I was not looking for peace, only pleasure. I was fast becoming one of those lost sheep so often spoken about in church sermons.

All I knew at that time in my life was that I was the center of my world, and pleasure in any form was my goal. I was hooked, not on any one thing, but all of it. It was becoming a lonely life even though I had friends and acquaintances all around me. It gradually became so lonely that after many of my all night partying episodes, depression began to set a place in my heart. This depression was creating a deep dark cold empty void in my heart. So in



order to combat the depression I needed to keep “revved up.” Are you beginning to get the picture of the merry-go-round of self-absorption and delusion spinning faster and faster? I was spinning so fast that my life was getting out of control, and I was falling deeper into the Pit. Depression was turning into oppression, and thoughts of suicide began to creep into my mind –and I knew I needed to do something– anything– different. I grasped for help any way I thought I could get it, not knowing that the answer was with me all along.

My first marriage, which was one of many attempts to run away from my circumstances and to run away from “me,” failed miserably after only four short years. My eldest son, the product of my first marriage, was the most important thing in my life. But despite the love I had for him, my life had become so self-centered that I was immune to any effect that my lifestyle might be having on him and his life! A few years later, still grasping, I got married a second time.

I met my second husband, almost ten years my senior, while visiting an aunt in the next state on a motor home trip with my parents and my son. He swept me off my feet. And now situated in a second marriage, my desire and focus was to escape from my surroundings, my social influences, my problems, and myself. And, my husband provided the exciting change I had come to crave, as I chose to be blinded to what should have been the warning signs. My addiction to pleasure was kicking in and he could provide the much-needed “fix.”

This was the beginning of a marriage that produced three more children. Together with my son from my first marriage, his son from a prior marriage and our three children, we had five children between us– four of who grew up in our household. Yes, a yours, mine and ours of children. This family unit had “dysfunctional” written all over it right from the get go. I needed help from the very beginning, but I was too busy running from my past to even consider what the future might look like on the current course I was attempting to navigate.

From the very beginning I sensed the “White Elephant” of insecurity and fear. But it was easier to ignore it – just deny, deny, deny and “hope” it would get better. I did not have the



tools to get honest; I had only honed the tools to survive, even if it was an unfulfilling existence. Amazingly, throughout this time I attended church on a weekly basis — in order to ease my growing feelings of guilt. I followed the church rules where my children were concerned, but only felt temporary, superficial relief. Church attendance and structure gave me a sense of security, but just enough to get by. There was no real meaning or depth into the truth of life – something I had caught a brief glimpse of as a teenager, but somehow was slipping through my fingers.

With the passing of the years, what began as footholds were manifesting into full blown obsessions and strongholds in my life. The Enemy was wreaking havoc and had quite a few names on his “hit list.” My life was spinning out of control, the harder I tried to get my life back into control, the further it seemed to be out of my grasp. The Pit was only getting deeper, darker and completely devoid of real hope. Thus began a new deceptive remedy – the “blame game.”

This “blame game” served as a defense mechanism that kept me pointing critical fingers at others, at family members, or society in general, rather than looking honestly at myself. Eventually, as a result of the blame game, my husband and I split up, thinking that that would make things better. After all, the problems were only getting worse and it just “had to be” the other person’s fault! The divide-and-conquer strategy of the Enemy was growing in the midst of my own family and I had no knowledge of it let alone control over it. And, on top of all this an almost overwhelming spirit of pride was now in rule.

The Bridge of Divine Intervention

This particular split in our family (there had been others) only lasted a few months, but during this time something different started growing inside me. In my particular belief system I had tried every theological attempt at repairing my life and my family– everything, that is, except going directly to the





boss, God himself. I had become so beat up and broken by this point that I cried out in complete surrender asking my Heavenly Father to help me. I was willing to do anything to relieve this pain.

So, in the depth of the miry Pit, I declared to God with everything I had left in me that I would put him first in my life. I did not know at the time, but this was the very thing the Father was looking for in me – **surrender!**

***“He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay,
And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.”***

Psalm 40:2 (NAS)

This was my turning point. I was on my knees looking up and surrendering everything I had or had ever known to Him. As a result, the scales slowly began to fall off my eyes. It was to be an uphill battle, but this time I was not alone, and I was moving “up” and not “down.” The seed that had been planted almost thirty years before at the age of thirteen was beginning to sprout, simply because of His grace and my long-needed submission.

I was still in the Pit, but I was not alone. I finally became aware of Jesus in there with me, and He loved me despite where I had been or what I had done in the past. He began to instill within me a divine “hunger” which I had briefly experienced as a teenager but mistakenly never really felt that I had the freedom to pursue – until now. I wanted to know everything I could possibly learn about Him, about the Holy





Spirit, about God, and now about the Bible. He turned my world upside down and inside out, and instead of being self-centered I was becoming God-centered. It's funny, but what kept ringing in my ear during this period was Martin Luther King's famous words, "*Free at last, free at last, thank God Almighty, I am free at last.*" I now understood what that really meant.

The footholds that deceptively became strongholds were still in my life but no longer had control over it; deliverance was mine. Light was shining on the darkness and the scales were coming off the eyes of my heart, little by little. Christ took hold of my hand and I was back on His path after a long and painful detour. He was now my teacher and I could not wait to learn! He is a gentle loving teacher who gives me only what I have the grace to comprehend.

To say that I was completely delivered from all problems and self-delusions at this time would not be the truth. I have heard of, and even experienced, immediate deliverance in some areas of life, but this was not the case in every area of my life. My circumstances were still a mess, and had even gotten worse in some areas, but my perspective began to change. The change was coming from within me, and gradually the circumstances around began to change. This was a Path to the fullness of understanding and knowing Christ as my Savior in every aspect of my life on a **daily basis**. What I began to experience can only be explained as a peace that surpasses all understanding, and a love that knows no bounds. It filled up that void in my heart to overflowing abundance the more I followed him, the more I surrendered, the more I continued on the *Pathway Out of The Pit* and onto the lifelong *Personal Journey*.

The footholds and strongholds were being overcome, and now through the power of Christ's Holy Spirit I began walking out in victory, for the battle always belonged to Him. My part required and still requires submission of my will to Christ's leading, His teaching and His unconditional love. He gives me all the strength I need to accomplish whatever He puts in front of me. And now my radical obedience produces radical abundance. Once you have tasted and seen the goodness of the Lord there is no going back.



“A God Experience”: The Calling. *My professional background has been in business for many years and in the early 1990s it was the Internet technology industry that captured my attention. In 2000, I was at a point in my personal life and professional life where I needed to make a change. Researching my next career move, the Lord really put it on my heart to use the talents and professional experience I had accumulated on the Internet to champion His causes at that time. Without a doubt this new burgeoning global communication tool called the “Internet” was the perfect medium to not only “spread God’s Word” to all corners of the world, but also created the ability to speak any language to any part of the world. With the advent of the Internet, the tower of Babel is being rebuilt (Genesis 11:1-8).*

Since the middle 1990’s, I could see that the Internet was coming at us like a 1000 ft. high tsunami ready to hit the shores of business strategy, communication technology and mass media influence on a global scale. The impact of this information superhighway has leveled the playing field for any business, in any part of the world, to compete like never before. It was a business strategist’s dream come true!

Unfortunately for me, the call that was beckoning me to implement this powerful new tool for the Lord took a back seat for another five years of sitting on “duplicity’s fence.” I was involved in yet another ride on the merry-go-round. It landed me right back where I started when God first spoke to my heart about this very technology. I felt like Jonah in the belly of the whale (Jonah 1:1-4:10). So in 2005, I began a website addressing the newest wave of Internet technology to spread God’s Word globally. The website is positioned to include other multimedia avenues and any other current technological communication mediums for “spreading God’s Word.” The benefit of communicating the movement of the Holy Spirit around the world via Internet technology brings awareness to any user of the website of something far greater than just themselves. This in turn reveals the bringing together of the children of God all over the world into unity under the auspices of the Holy Spirit.

What this calling has done is awakened in me a much bigger picture of what is going on in world today. This movement of the Holy Spirit is producing testimony after testimony, from



Lima, Peru to Shenzhen, China, of God's ultimate purpose and master plan. The pieces are there; we are all hearing the same messages and we are coming together in unity under one cause. That cause is the return of Jesus Christ.

As a Business and Web Strategist, I worked with research from facts, trends, statistics and a little gut instinct to make an analysis of future events and strategic business directions. And as a Strategist, I could say with viable and explainable facts backed by statistics that the truth in Bible scriptures and prophesy to the return of Jesus Christ is sooner than we think. The videos presented through GNB.M.org (Good News Broadcasting & Multimedia) will give testimony over and over to this movement. The signs are really there, if we but choose to see.

This God experience has been the underlying drive I have felt since I was a young child. And the most amazing part of it is that so many are coming to the same conclusions – from prophets to scientists, to modern day mathematicians. From intellectual gurus to simple saints, the answer is all finally coming together in one final conclusion!

This may shake some to the very core, but take an honest, discerning look for yourself. Then ask the Holy Spirit to show you the Truth and give you the peace in knowing God has it all under control.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Eight: Breaking Footholds and Strongholds

In personal journal or notebook:

1. By now you may have spotted footholds in your life. Have these footholds turned into full blown strongholds? Are you ready to release them?
2. In order to receive healing and be delivered from the strongholds that have held you in the Pit, you must surrender to Jesus Christ and obey His commands. This can be the most difficult time in your life, but it will lead to the most rewarding life for you and all those around you. Are you ready to cross over the “Bridge of Divine Intervention”?
3. Crossing this bridge means getting totally honest with yourself. There are no blame games – no excuses, but rather full blown responsibility for your actions despite what may have happened to you in the past. Can you honestly look at yourself and take responsibility for your actions in the past? Can you forgive what was done to you in the past?
4. This is most often a gradual process, so to expect immediate deliverance is probable, but not always possible. In some areas you may receive immediate deliverance and in others it may linger. The point is that it is not the end result that matters the most

to God, it is the process itself. So write in your journal where the Lord is leading you at this moment.

5. Do you believe you have been called for this very moment? If so, what is God telling you?

6. In *The God Experience* is this chapter, does it make you feel afraid, excited, or even none of the above? Begin to discern for yourself, ask Jesus to show you what is going on in this world today and trust him to take care of you.

*And everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be **deliverance**, as the LORD has said, among the survivors whom the LORD calls.*

Joel 2:32 (NIV)

*“...Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the **deliverance** the LORD will bring you today.”*

Exodus 14:13 (NIV)



Chapter Nine: Walking Out the Victory

"He said: 'Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem!

This is what the LORD says to you:

'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's"

2 Chronicles 20:15 (NIV)

"You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem.

Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.

Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you."

2 Chronicles 20:17 (NIV)

"But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Corinthians 15:57 (NIV)

I can say that once I became saved I was justified (made right with God) by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. This redemption provided me with eternal life (Revelation 5:9-10); forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7); adoption into God's family (Galatians 4:5); righteousness (Romans 5:17); freedom from the law's curse (Galatians 3:13); deliverance from sin's hold (Titus 2:14); peace with God (Colossians 1:18-20); and the

indwelling of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 6:19-20).¹⁰ With all this I am victorious during this life in which I walk in victory through Jesus Christ.

So to presume that after my experience at age 12 and the following years of “detour” that it was because of the detour that I was no longer saved – or lost my salvation – is simply not true. The Holy Spirit was always there, but in my free will I chose not to listen. I therefore allowed deception into my life. For whatever reason– the Enemy’s deception or the lack of being rooted in the Word– I began a journey down the Pit that started with footholds. I was not bearing the “fruit” (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control– Galatians 5:22-23) of the Spirit and a period of pruning had to take place. I had lost the joy of my salvation, but not my salvation. But now I was back on the journey of restoration walking in the fullness of salvation.



From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

John 1:16-17 NIV

Yes, I was saved, but still susceptible to falling down into the Pit. I was saved, but not walking in the fullness of salvation– meaning the experiencing of every part of what Christ’s death and resurrection means to each one of us in our own individual life experiences in this life long journey. I do know now without a doubt that God was in control the whole time even with my detour. So to say that we are always in the throes of losing our salvation would discount God’s control and deny his very grace (God’s unmerited favor on us). Because he knows all the pieces to the puzzle and can put them together perfectly for all those concerned, I no longer need to question why. I only look to him to bring it together. The battle belongs to him and it has already been won by him at his resurrection.



The King Jehoshaphat Strategy

In the story of King Jehoshaphat, this Judean King in the Old Testament was being inundated from every side by numerous enemy nations ready to destroy him and the people of Judah. The Spirit of the Lord, the Holy Spirit, came upon the prophet Jahaziel who instructed King Jehoshaphat that he would not have to fight the battle, for the battle was not his, but the Lord's. King Jehoshaphat was counseled by the prophet to not be discouraged by the vast armies coming against them. Jehoshaphat and his people were to take up the battle position, which was to not be afraid or discouraged, but stand firm in praise and worship of the Lord and **see His deliverance**.

At first glance, the doubt and fear that must have initially filled their hearts and minds must have seemed overwhelming. The entire people fell down before the Lord obediently in praise and worship filling their hearts with faith.

***“...Give thanks to the Lord,
For his love endures forever.”***

2 Chronicles 20:21 (NIV)



This battle cry of the Lord's is echoed in complete surrender and harmonious faith lifting up to the Lord, God Almighty. How simple yet profound was this strategy! Is this a strategy that we have seen or used in our own world wars, or even our own simple individual life struggles? Rarely! How little faith we have these days! If we proclaim to really believe the Bible and completely trust Christ, then why would this strategy not apply to what we could accomplish today? Or could God's elect be coming together in unity now partaking in this very strategy? Are we going to witness the results of this strategy in the near future for all to see the glory of God? Can we witness this in our own lives today?

This battle cry of love and reverence for the Lord confused and caused self-annihilation of the defeating armies. In the confusion, they ended up destroying each other. Witnessing



this awesome event spoke volumes to the enemies of Judah about the Lord God of Israel whose victory brought about peace to all the surrounding areas of King Jehoshaphat's territory.

“A God Experience”: **King Jehoshaphat Strategy.** *There was a young man who was experiencing a painful divorce scenario that seemed to be overwhelming him. The fear this individual had conjured in his own mind about loss of finances and children was almost debilitating. Within a few days, the status of custody of the children would finally be determined after a long awaited two-year period. This pivotal event left him feeling like a deer caught in the headlights of an oncoming tractor trailer truck that was headed straight for him, moving at 90 miles an hour. “Hopeless and helpless” was his meditative mantra. This young man was looking for faith at the edge of his abyss.*

Something in his spirit gave him the foresight to call those whom he knew might give him some semblance of peace amidst this overwhelming storm, which was fabricated mostly in his own mind. Knowing I was just one on this individual's list of comfort bearers during this time, the Holy Spirit gave me the prodding to use this opportunity to show just how much God loves him and really is the one in control. Very clearly the Lord gave me the King Jehoshaphat strategy to share with him, that although he seemed helpless in this situation he was not without hope. God definitely could and most lovingly would bring victory to his case, if he would lean not on his own limited understanding, but indeed trust in God alone.

After two long years of humiliation and pain, victory was his. He received custodial privileges of his children and was once again able to be with them as a much needed father. His case melded together sweet defeat and calm reassurance that God is the one in control and the ultimate judge. This young man witnessed a glimpse of just how much he is loved by his creator and wants the best for all concerned. All my intellectual strategy and positive preaching could not have spoken to this young man's heart quite like this incredible testimony of faith in God and by God.



It's the Little Things That Count

In my case, deliverance began in the little things in life – the day-to-day circumstances and interactions with others that began to change as my heart was being changed. As my heart surrendered to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, my perception of life began to become clearer and made much more sense to the very reason for my existence.

The footholds I mentioned began as small areas of my life that were opened up to the Enemy because I was deceived and unaware of the truth in God's Word. I was unaware that I could lean on the Holy Spirit to guide me with my choices. I acted only upon the thoughts that came to my head. When they came I presumed they were all mine and figured if the thought was a bad thought, then maybe I might really be a bad person – and I did not want anybody to know. It was not until I completely surrendered to Jesus Christ that He began to teach me, little by little, everything I needed to know and did not realize on my own.

First of all, as the scales from my eyes and heart were lifted, I began to see just where I was really at – deep in this Pit that stank of despair, anger, fear, greed, envy, jealousy, arrogance, insecurity, pride and hatred. Secondly, I was not alone in this Pit, but loved ones and most everyone I knew around me were in it. Lastly, the only solution, and I had tried many others, to getting me and those around me out of this Pit was to turn completely and surrender to Jesus Christ. By God's grace, He has shown me continual surrender to the guidance of the Holy Spirit which brings me and others along on the path to the fullness of salvation.

Along the beginning of the journey, I came to discover that some of my thoughts were not actually mine. I learned that my mind could be easily influenced through my surroundings and by the Enemy. I began to understand that thoughts could be divided into three different categories: thoughts that would come either from my own fleshly (human) desires, thoughts that would come as a result of the enemy's influence, or thoughts that would come from the Holy Spirit intending to guide me. I did not recognize the battle that was going on in my mind and the power enabled me by the Holy Spirit to control it all along. Again, I was clueless.



After getting back on the path, I remember experiencing a burning hunger inside of me which prompted me to read every book I could find, listen to every sermon the television or the Internet had to offer, attend Bible study courses, and research every avenue for truth that was put in front of me. This I did for a number of years. While I began to understand the concepts of truth, and gained some practical knowledge, something was still missing. An inexplicable stirring deep inside of me led me to keep searching.

In my search for knowledge, I would come away from spiritual conferences, guidance programs, Bible study series, or self-help books totally motivated. It was a great escape and I just knew I could do whatever I was taught. Nevertheless, before long, as I began walking through my own personal circumstances, I would sink back into old habits and character flaws. I was back on the path, but did not seem to have the power to overcome or to be delivered of strongholds in certain areas of my life. The continued searching finally left me begging the question, “Lord, if I am saved, then why am I still sinning – why can’t I be delivered from myself or my circumstances?”

It was not in my own power to change, and no one in this world had all the answers for my own individual situation that could lead me to change. No one else walked in my shoes or knew the future. That is what makes us so unique to God and keeps us coming back to Him. I had to take my focus off the problems (which at that point were becoming my new idol) and focus on Christ alone. Lack of faith kept me searching for the one particular person, the one particular book, the one particular seminar, the one particular Bible study that would help me find all the answers. And from what I had learned, I found I was becoming very adept at defining not only my problems but others, also.

Discussing the problems and possible solutions with all those who would listen gave me some comfort, but at the same time kept me in the “paralysis of analysis” for a good while. My old friend “Ego” (Edging God Out) really got me going in circles over this one. Finally, by the grace of God through a series of major disappointments, a lot of tears and humiliation, the Lord showed me just how frail man really is and that Jesus Christ is the only answer. We



are all too ready to take the reins away from Him and try to do it on our own power, not realizing that given enough rope we may very well hang ourselves.

It was not until my focus turned away from all the motivational rhetoric (and sometimes just plain false teachings) and turned to Christ alone that I began to really change. My personal relationship with Christ through the Holy Spirit was the real power– the power to heal, the power to see clearly, the power to discern, the power to have true faith, the power to overcome, and the power to even experience miracles. My heart, where the very glory of God resides, spoke to my head and taught me that there was so much more. It was never supposed to be in my power or anyone else’s power, but in God’s power alone.

Christ began teaching me the walk of faith. Thus I began walking out my own life experiences in victory one day at a time. The glory was His and not my own, nor anyone else’s, for that matter. I learned that because of my surrender to Him I walk in righteousness and in victory over the Enemy and his cohorts in all their deception. I was finally given the grace to not only get “out of the boat,” but to begin walking “on the water.” Christ taught me to lean not on my own earthly understanding, but to trust in a limitless God (not a “God-in-a-box” that so many had presented to me based on their own limited understanding or lack of faith) but trust in God Almighty, the great I AM. Furthermore, I began to see clearly that all roads lead to His son, Jesus Christ. If anyone presented otherwise, a resounding spirit of discernment would rise up within me to really question their true motives. The real battle was beginning to become clear.

I learned about the Inner Chamber, the place I could go to turn to Christ, to talk with Him and as His disciple He would teach me whatever I needed to know. He was walking with me in every area of my life that needed healing. He helped me to discern the right Christian books to read, the sermons to listen to, or the studies to investigate. It was made very clear to me that it was not these tools that mattered, but the source of those tools. He showed me very clearly that He is the only true source and if anyone or anything tried to lead me otherwise, it was not from the Holy Spirit. The love that came from these close encounters was



manifesting into an awakening that I never knew or could possibly fully understand. It was simply trust!

Healing and Forgiveness

As I surrendered more and more, He began walking me through some pretty tough areas of my life that needed healing and forgiveness. These were areas that I just did not have the tools to either get honest about or find any type of complete healing. Some areas I did not even realize were there, but once discovered and healed a yoke seemed to be lifted from my shoulders.

The process of healing would most often begin with a conviction in my heart – a prodding from the Holy Spirit to deal with a certain area of my life. If I ignored it people with similar character defects managed to enter my life and my first reaction would usually be that of harsh “judgmentalism.” Since I had been through “judgmental hell” quite a few times before I began to understand what was really going on. He was bringing before me a mirror of my own flaws and a glimpse of just how I really appeared to others and especially to him.

As Christ began to show me character traits that needed refining, He would show me the root cause of problem areas in my life. As these were revealed, He would walk with me through the very experience in my life that caused the particular hurt or unforgiveness. Just like the Bible stories, He was performing miracles within me. The Bible and its stories were coming alive in my own life – a dimension of the Bible I never knew existed. The very traits, learned or inherited, that caused me to sink deeper and deeper into the Pit were now being healed little by little. The healing of the root cause of these character flaws was becoming the very stepping stone of faith by which, through the power of the Holy Spirit, I was being transformed into an “*Overcomer*” – walking my life out in continual victory. It was Christ's victory and I could take no credit, I knew exactly where it came from and was more than happy to receive complete healing.

The Waiting Times

Ah, the real test, the times of waiting. This was a time of silence, a time of unrelenting questions and doubt. Not seeing the Master, but knowing He is there. Not hearing from the teacher, but sensing His direction.

"Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

John 20:29 (NIV)



Waiting was by far the hardest part of my journey, at times something I could not understand but knew was part of the journey – a vital part. It was in these periods of waiting that I began to get totally honest with myself. I yearned to hear from the Lord again, and felt like he just left me wallowing in my messed-up life in this valley of the shadow of death. I needed His glory in my life again.

This was a time of completely leaning on the Lord; a complete surrender to His will which was my real lesson in faith. Faith could not be possible without my complete surrender, namely humility. Within this humility were true strength, true confidence and true faith. This was a time of turning my complete weakness to his complete strength forming an intimacy with Him that produced more faith than I could have ever imagined!

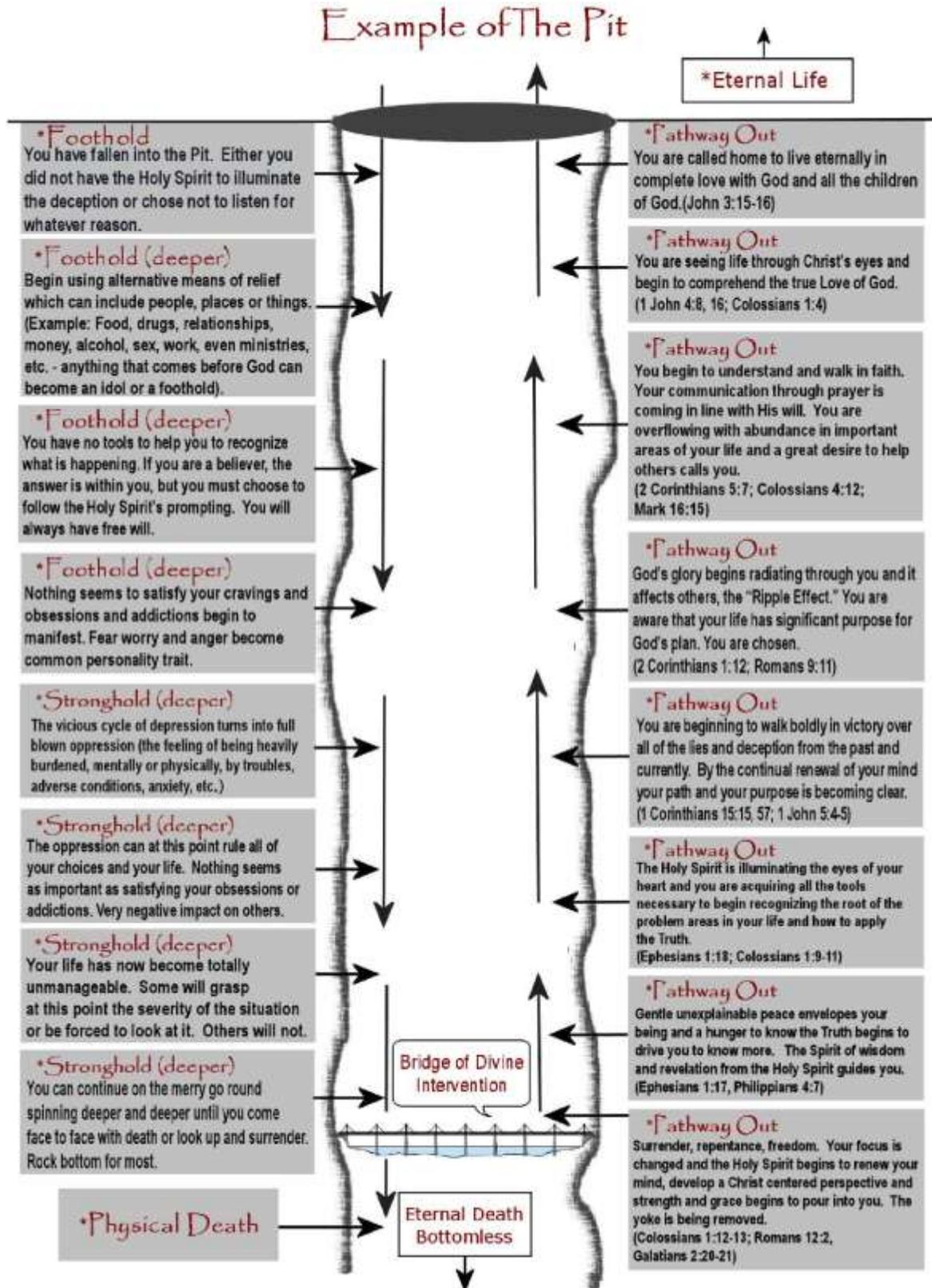
From these experiences, I now understand that the battle does belong to Him; that we are to take up our positions of surrender (humility) to Christ for He has already won the war. And the more we submit to Him the more we are victorious. This sounds like the very opposite of what we most naturally want to do. Our natural inclination is to be in control and figure out



the solution in our own strength, but any victory that might be achieved in our own strength is only short-lived and no true victory at all.

We are all too easily deceived and very vulnerable to getting deeper into the Pit long before we have even realized what has happened. That is the very reason we must have Christ in our life. Intellectually speaking, we would never be able to logically calculate all the possible variables involved in the solution to any one problem we have in our lives; there will always be room for probability of error, considering the manifold lives of those in our sphere of influence. On our own it is not possible, but with God nothing is impossible.

Walking out in Victory is walking out the daily life in and with Jesus Christ. He is the only one who can heal us and give us the strength we need to walk through the thick forest of lies and deception, as well as heartbreak and disappointment in the valley of the shadow of death, because only He has overcome death. Our battle belongs to God, because the war has already been won in the salvation of Jesus Christ. We need only walk out our victory in the fullness of salvation through Him.





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Nine: Walking Out the Victory

In personal journal or notebook:

1. For the next week, each day record your victory over the little things in your life.
2. At the end of the week as you review your journal, are you beginning to see a pattern or a direction into which the Lord may be leading you? Do you see God speaking to you through the words you have written?
3. Have you experienced or been witness to deliverance in some area of your life or another's life? Write down what you have experienced or witnessed.
4. Have you experienced times of waiting? If yes, what was your reaction when you seemed to be going nowhere?
5. Can you take these times of waiting with no end in sight to Christ and simply trust and lean into his direction? Pray for courage and strength, and then follow the prodding of the Holy Spirit.



In the times I have experienced waiting it seemed to be the hardest part of the journey, but each time the Holy Spirit would gently remind me of how long Christ had been waiting on me to come to him, to know him, to love him and to trust him. With that in mind, my doubt and complaining seemed so trivial.

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.
Galatians 5:22-23 (NIV)

*But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited **patience** as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.*
1 Timothy 1:16 (NIV)



Chapter Ten: The Stand For Family

“You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.”

2 Chronicles 20:17 (NIV)

When my turning point came and I declared God first and family second, I was committed to seeing one family make it in the era of destruction. I was sick and tired of seeing so many families being destroyed, and I was equally sickened by witnessing the consequences on our society as a result of this epidemic. While it remains an honorable goal, the desire to keep my family together at all cost was not in my physical, emotional or psychological ability to either obtain or maintain.

However, this very desire was what caused me to turn most intimately to the Lord. And while God does want to give us the desires of our heart, we must be careful not to put these desires before our relationship with Him.

During a time of family separation, I moved from the hustle and bustle of a pretentious Texas suburb to a small country town, living with my parents amidst rolling, treeless, pastures with



sunrises that seemed to reflect God's unsurpassable peace. Out in the middle of what seemed to be nowhere, gazing into the misty pastures with only the bellowing of Angus cows as the music to soothe my confused soul, the Lord spoke clearly to my heart about many things.

I had presumed that being in the "big city" meant that I had all the resources at my disposal to find the answers I needed. However, to my amazement I still seemed to remain in a state of constant confusion and turmoil. I had so much information that I was sinking into the paralysis of analysis. But out here in the countryside, where everything slowed down – a place that had previously made me somewhat bored and anxious – I now found an oasis from mayhem. And in this little town God gave me all the resources I needed to get a glimpse of His wisdom.

One of those resources was a little church with no more than a couple hundred hard-working, closely-knit members. I remember a very poignant sermon series the pastor preached during my brief attendance in his church. The series was about man's desires and God's place in relation to these desires. The pastor first proclaimed that we all have a certain number of instinctual desires – all God-given and nothing wrong with them. Yet the problem comes when we seek after these God-given desires without God. When we step in front of Him, not allowing our relationship with God to develop first, these desires can easily become obsessions and even addictions. Instead of us ruling our desires, our desires begin to rule us.

"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Matthew 6:33 (KJV)

God *wants* to give us the desires of our heart, but to obtain these desires we are not supposed to fret over them or allow them to become the center of our attention. No matter what the desire might be, anything that we might put before the Lord does have the potential to become an "idol." He wants us to know *Him* and delight in *Him*. In Psalms it says to,



***“Delight yourself also in the LORD,
And He shall give you the desires of your heart.”***

Psalm 37:4 (NIV)

In this little Texas town in the middle of nowhere I found a humble preacher with the simple, spirit-filled words that really struck home for me. That message spoke directly to my situation. It proved to me that the power of the Holy Spirit was moving everywhere. I did not need the paralysis of analysis of all the theories, the theological debates, the legalism, the psychoanalysis – in essence, ego. I needed God, period!

Then came my family, God was working on me; He was opening the eyes of my heart to my own brokenness, but I still had an Achilles’ heel– my family, the ones I loved the most, the ones to which I was most vulnerable. How could I explain to them what Christ was teaching me? I had to deal with the fact that the pressure from the enemy was on and it was coming from those closest to me. My own family and friends – like Job’s friends – had certain preconceived worldly notions as to the direction I should be taking at this time in my journey.

“A God Experience”: My **“Mary time.”** *It was during this time that God gave me the story of Martha and Mary. Within a short period of time, God confirmed the path he had me on by allowing me to discover of a book written about the story of Martha and Mary. I have never read the book, but I could probably tell you some of the contents. God revealed to me my need for “Mary time!”*



“As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!"

‘Martha, Martha,’” the Lord answered, ‘you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better and it will not be taken away from her.’

Luke 10:38-42 (NIV)



During this separation, it was clear I was going to have to find work to support myself and my children. I had worked off and on for a number of years, and figured it would not be that difficult to find a job. But at this particular time I could not get my heart into it. It was as though the Lord was calling me to the most important “job” of my life.

Despite all the pressures to perform according to worldly standards, Christ made it abundantly clear that this was my time to listen, to learn, and to love him. This was by far the most important season of my life – my “Mary time.” We are here on this earth for a very short period of time and there is a definite reason for this allotted time. I knew without a doubt that I had better listen to Him and not the world.

My personal situation was so upside down and confusing that turning to Christ became my only source of peace. He was the only light in my darkness. My future and the future of those around me – my loved ones and those within my spheres of influence– were involved. Christ was becoming the center of my world and it was becoming very clear that it was more than being just about me.

From this particular trial Christ showed me that all of us are very susceptible to being taken off the path; that we are most vulnerable with those closest to us. However, He also began to show me His perspective – the truth – of what was really happening. Like Martha, we are all busy trying to please, to improve our lives, to gain love and acceptance – but Mary chose the way of Christ. To Martha, and others, she looked lazy and uncaring, but to Christ she was accomplishing exactly what she was put on this earth to do – to know Him.

My fear of being able to provide for myself and my family yielded to His voice at this time. Putting fear aside and trusting Christ to take care of things while I sat at his feet listening to His voice during this season of learning came together with no effort on my part – only trust.



I am not saying that we neglect our duties to others and ourselves, but rather I am saying we are to put things in proper priority – placing our relationship with Christ, the Kingdom of God, first, and everything else will fall in order. When we do change our priorities, our perspective on everything in life begins to change. The transformation of our mind to the mind of Christ makes everything in life look much differently. You can delight yourself in the Lord in everything you experience. You can hold on to the peace that surpasses all understanding no matter what your circumstances might be. And what once looked like impossible situations are now perceived as incredible opportunities to share with others through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Although God had been working with me all along through books and teachings and personal experiences, it was not until this experience did I realize that **through the power of the Holy Spirit I have the means to do whatever the Lord calls me to do.** What initially moved my heart –the safety, welfare and love of my family; the very desire of my heart – was the hardest part of my journey. All I had at this time was their pity, their disappointment, their disapproval, and their “judgmentalism.” I loved them, but I could not get through to them.

Getting through to them meant taking a stand for Jesus Christ and everything He put on my heart to do. The stand for my family was the stand for Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. The words in the Bible are true – standing for his truth is not popular, especially according to our current worldly standards, but that is exactly what we are called to do — *to trust in God alone.*

Acres of Diamonds

First, let me clarify the definition of “my family.” I have learned that my family is not only those related to me by blood or marriage, but friends, acquaintances and mankind in general. But in order for me to really grasp the concept of “love thy neighbor,” my learning experience had to start with my most difficult challenge –my immediate family.



I had once read a story called, “Acres of Diamonds” by Russell Conwell. During his circuit of the world in 1870, Mr. Conwell, a correspondent from the New York Tribune, traveled to Baghdad and came across a story delivered by his Arab guide. He used this story in his speeches over 5,000 times between 1900 and 1925. It began:

The old guide told me that there once lived not far from the River Indus an ancient Persian by the name of Ali Hafed. He said that Ali Hafed owned a very large farm; that he had orchards, grain-fields, and gardens; that he had money at interest and was a wealthy and contented man. One day there visited that Old Persian farmer one of those ancient Buddhist priests, one of the wise men of the East. He sat down by the fire and told the old farmer how this old world of ours was made.

He said that this world was once a mere bank of fog, and that the Almighty thrust his finger into this bank of fog, and began slowly to move his finger around, increasing the speed until at last he whirled this bank of fog into a solid ball of fire. Then it went rolling through the universe, burning its way through other banks of fog, and condensed the moisture without, until it fell in floods of rain upon its hot surface, and cooled the outward crust. Then the internal fires bursting outward through the crust threw up the mountains and hills, the valleys, the plains and prairies of this wonderful world of ours. If this internal molten mass came bursting out and cooled very quickly, it became granite; less quickly copper, less quickly silver, less quickly gold, and, after gold, diamonds were made. Said the old priest, “A diamond is a congealed drop of sunlight.” Now that is scientifically true, because a diamond is an actual deposit of carbon from the sun.

The old priest told Ali Hafed that if he had one diamond the size of his thumb he could purchase the county, and if he had a mine of diamonds he could place his children upon thrones through the influence of their great wealth. Ali Hafed heard all about diamonds and how much they were worth, and went to his bed that night a poor man. He had not lost anything, but he was poor because he was discontented, and discontented because he feared he was poor. He said, “I want a mine of diamonds,”



and he lay awake all night. Early in the morning he sought out the priest. I know by experience that a priest is very cross when awakened early in the morning, and when he shook that old priest out of his dreams, Ali Hafed said to him:

"Will you tell me where I find diamonds?"

"Diamonds! What do you want with diamonds?"

"Why, I wish to be immensely rich."

"Well, then, go along and find them. That is all you have to do; go and find them, and then you have them."

"But I don't know where to go."

"Well, if you will find a river that runs through white sands, between high mountains, in those white sands you will always find diamonds."

"I don't believe there is any such river."

"Oh yes, there are plenty of them. All you have to do is to go and find them, and then you have them."

Said Ali Hafed, "I will go."

So he sold his farm, collected his money, left his family in charge of a neighbor, and away he went in search of diamonds. He began his search, very properly to my mind, at the Mountains of the Moon. Afterward he came around into Palestine, and then wandered on into Europe. At last when his money was all spent and he was in rags, wretchedness, and poverty, he stood on the shore of that bay at Barcelona, in Spain. When a great tidal wave came rolling in between the pillars of Hercules, and the poor, afflicted, suffering, dying man could not resist the awful temptation to cast himself into



that incoming tide, and he sank beneath its foaming crest, never to rise in this life again.

Then after that old guide had told me that awfully sad story, he stopped the camel I was riding on and went back to fix the baggage that was coming off another camel, and I had an opportunity to muse over his story while he was gone. I remember saying to myself, "Why did he reserve that story for his 'particular friends'?" There seemed to be no beginning, no middle, and no end, nothing to it.

That was the first story I had ever heard told in my life, and the first one I ever read, in which the hero was killed in the first chapter. I had but one chapter of that story, and the hero was dead. When the guide came back and took up the halter of my camel, he went right ahead with the story, into the second chapter, just as though there had been no break.

The man who purchased Ali Hafed's farm one day led his camel into the garden to drink, and as that camel put its nose into the shallow water of that garden brook, Ali Hafed's successor noticed a curious flash of light from the white sands of the stream. He pulled out a black stone having an eye of light reflecting all the hues of the rainbow. He took the pebble into the house and put it on the mantel which covers the central fires, and forgot all about it.

A few days later this same old priest came in to visit Ali Hafed's successor, and the moment he opened that drawing-room door he saw that flash of light on the mantel, and he rushed up to it, and shouted:

"Here is a diamond! Has Ali Hafed returned?"

"Oh no, Ali Hafed has not returned, and that is not a diamond. That is nothing but a stone we found right out here in our own garden."

"But," said the priest, "I tell you I know a diamond when I see it. I know positively that is a diamond."



Then together they rushed out into that old garden and stirred up the white sands with their fingers, and lo! There came up other more beautiful and valuable gems than the first. "Thus," said the guide to me, "was discovered the diamond-mine of Golconda, the most magnificent diamond-mine in all the history of mankind, excelling the Kimberly itself. The Kohinoor, and the Orloff of the crown jewels of England and Russia, the largest on earth, came from that mine."

When that old Arab guide told me the second chapter of his story, he then took off his Turkish cap and swung it around in the air again to get my attention to the moral. Those Arab guides have morals to their stories, although they are not always moral. As he swung his hat, he said to me, "Had Ali Hafed remained at home and dug in his own cellar, or underneath his own wheat fields or in his own garden, instead of wretchedness, starvation, and death by suicide in a strange land, he would have had 'acres of diamonds.' For every acre of that old farm, yes, every shovelful, afterward revealed gems which since have decorated the crowns of monarchs."¹¹

When I had initially read this story quite a number of years ago, I was immersed in the business world. This story spoke to my own search for worldly success, and indeed this story was used for many college graduates and future entrepreneurs throughout the years.

However, after all this time and through my own personal experiences in search of "acres of diamonds," I propose an addition of the moral of this story. It is not about money, nor possessions, nor power; it is about what you are really made of. It is about your focus, your motives, your priorities and your choices. True riches can only be found through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Everything else in this world and the next will come together once we choose to allow our focus to come in line with him. And these "diamonds" – these treasures– are within all those who trust in Jesus Christ.

Riches to one person may be quite different than riches to another person. So what are riches, really? When asked by God what the desire of his heart was, King Solomon, the richest man who ever lived asked for wisdom. God gave him the desire of his heart, and



from that desire he produced the greatest “earthly riches” of all time. But what do riches achieve, that we think we truly desire them? Could it be love masked in power, fame and prestige? Do such riches truly satisfy that overwhelming need for love? Or do riches fall short, simply deceiving us into following a different path?



The riches I had always thought I wanted were within me and right in front of me all along. In order for me to discover my own riches, I ended right where I had begun– the very situations and experiences I had wanted to avoid turned out to be where I was to learn that the true riches are revealed through the fullness of salvation in Jesus Christ.

Christ gradually opened my eyes to see that my “Acres of Diamonds” were right there before me. The more I began to trust in Him, the more my eyes were opened. And the more my eyes were open, the more I found the words from the Bible coming alive in my own life. It was not a matter of trying to make myself “do” the right things so I could ultimately “get” what I wanted. It was a matter of experiencing Christ’s love – a love so complete that my desires changed along with my thoughts and my perception of life and relationships.

Our heavenly Father can impart to us more treasures than we could have ever imagined – riches in pearls of wisdom, diamonds of truth, rubies of restored relationships, sapphires of serenity and a heart refined like gold.

These priceless treasures were right before my eyes, but **I could not see until God gave me this amazing grace.** My most cherished earthly desire was the well-being of my family,



but the Lord showed me even more. He showed me that the stand for my family began with the change within me.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Ten: The Stand for Family

In personal journal or notebook:

1. In this particular moment in time, what is your list of priorities? What is your number one priority?
2. Does your life currently revolve around one particular priority? If so, has this brought you peace and filled your void?
3. For the next 40 days would you be willing to set aside a certain amount of time (Mary time) each day in a quiet secluded area with just you and the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. During this 40 days talk with Jesus about everything that is on your heart and in your mind, but also give equal time to just listening (meditating). Include your Bible in these meetings as a source of reference and/or revelation. Remember this is the most important “job” of your life.
5. After the 40 days, describe your “acres of diamonds.”



Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Matthew 6:19-21 (NIV)



Chapter Eleven: Coming Out of The Pit

***“Trust in the LORD with all your heart
and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make your paths straight.”***

Proverbs 3: 5-6 (NIV)

The following chapter is being presented as an invitation to join in the fullness of the salvation of Jesus Christ and to join others who have found their way out of the Pit. This is not for the faint of heart, because the challenge will test our faith beyond anything we have known before. These tests of faith reach into the very core of our being only as far as we allow or trust Christ to take us.

This was my journey as I submitted to the direction of the Holy Spirit moving in my life, understanding that the very words of the Bible came alive in my circumstances. As I moved further along I found so many others on the same path receiving the same revelations tailored by the Holy Spirit for their unique set of circumstances. Even more enlightening, I have discovered movements all over the world in some of the most remote and oppressed regions of the world getting the same message from the Holy Spirit. Christ is alive through His Spirit in the hearts of man today!



And now, this is your opportunity to experience the power of the Holy Spirit Whom you have invited into your life. Are you ready to develop an intimate, personal relationship with Jesus Christ that will make a difference not only in your life but in the lives of others? Then take a deep breath and hold on to your seat. You are in for the journey of a lifetime!

Before you can reach others, especially the ones you care about the most, you will have to get honest with yourself – no blaming, no deflecting, no justifying, no analyzing, and no quitting. Once you start on this path, totally leaning on Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, your world will be turned inside out and upside down. Trust in Jesus Christ alone is the only way through.

Think about Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3 of the Bible. As the story goes, these three Israelites refused to worship the golden idol and gods of King Nebuchadnezzar, and for this defiance they were literally thrown into a blazing furnace. This furnace was so hot that the soldiers that threw the Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego into the fire were instantly killed by the flames. Yet much to the amazement of Nebuchadnezzar there suddenly appeared a fourth figure walking with them, bringing them safely through what was impossible by earthly laws. They came through the blazing fire of that furnace completely unharmed, unsinged, with no smell of fire on them. Could it be that Jesus Christ was the fourth figure who walked them through the fire? Do you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ enough to walk through the fire of your life with Him?

There are numerous programs and even Bible studies available to help walk you through this process (References to programs are available at the end of the book). But remember it is not the program, the structure, or the even the end result itself that provides healing – it is the building of your personal relationship with and trust in Jesus Christ. The program or process is only as effective as the amount of faith in Jesus Christ you are given. But all you need to do is ask and you shall receive.



This personal journey with Christ will bring you beyond anything you have ever known before. **Warning:** This journey will take you out of your “comfort zone” – the zone of familiarity which is not necessarily comfortable and, for some, may well actually be their “Pit.”

Most people, out of fear, will not journey beyond their comfort zone, but keep in mind that *perfect love casts out all fear*. Perfect love is a type of “unconditional love” that can only be found in a relationship with Christ and observed in those who share the common bond of perfect love. You must trust in Jesus Christ, and He will bring you everything you need to help you through this journey in the fullness of His salvation.

The Freedom Challenge

First and foremost, you must come to the realization that God is in control of everything. He is the Alpha (the beginning) and the Omega (the end), and His love for you is beyond anything you can ever imagine. Secondly, Jesus Christ is the only Truth, the only Life, and the only Way to God. Thirdly, if you believe this, and have genuinely asked the Lord to guide you through the power of the Holy Spirit Whom you have invited into your heart, then you have all that is needed to walk in victory in Christ.

Despite where you have been or what you have done, He loves you and will take you the whole way. Now, and for as long as it takes for His trust to reach the very core of your being, rest in these truths. You *will* know when He touches your soul.

Do not worry if at first you do not sense anything, but be patient, because He has been waiting patiently for you for a long time. If you are unsure in any of these areas, then ask God to reveal Himself to you. Take your Bible and simply ask Him to reveal his love for you; then listen with your ears, your eyes, your mind, and your heart. The answer may come to you in an audible voice, a still quiet voice within you, a message from someone else, a Bible verse, or a change in your circumstances. The Lord will answer. He may even confirm His answer to you, should you still remain unsure.



Ask and you shall receive, seek and you shall find, knock and the door will be open unto you.

Matthew 7:7

When you sense his touch, you will have reached what some have called the “Inner Chamber.” This is the ultimate safe place –the “Tent of Meeting.” No matter where you might go or what your circumstances might be, nothing can separate you from the love of God found in this place – the Kingdom of God found within (Luke 17:21).

Sweet Surrender

You are safe, and as far as you are willing, it is time to let go and surrender. Let go of your control, or what you perceive as your control, to God. In every single aspect of your life, **let go**. Despite what you may be feeling at this time, or what you have believed in the past, or even what your flesh is saying – Surrender!

Surrender your relationships, surrender your possessions, surrender your health, surrender your career, surrender your goals and dreams in life, surrender your future, surrender your thoughts, and surrender even your own understanding of the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

As you do so, you will move from being self-centered to God-centered. Like the drowning person, mentioned in the earlier chapters, we may fling and flounder but we *cannot* be rescued until we finally **surrender**.



*Until you come to a point
of surrender and turn to Christ
himself on a daily basis you
will remain in the Pit.*

As opposite as all this may sound, the more you surrender to Christ and lean on the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the more freedom you will experience in all areas of your life.



Through the process of surrender by the help of the Holy Spirit, your life is now consciously committed to the care and control of Christ!

Telling Yourself the Truth

Now that you are committed to the care and control of Christ you can trust him to lead you through the healing and restoration of the root cause of problem areas in your life. In coming to the point of getting totally honest with yourself, Christ will bring you to examine painful, misunderstood, or even tragic areas of your life. These areas can neither be explored honestly and nor totally healed without the power of the Holy Spirit. Any hurt, no matter how painful; any misunderstanding, no matter how confusing; any tragic event that may have led to obsessions, addictions, depressions, and oppressions; anything that has previously molded and shaped your decisions, your relationships, your health and your destiny, **can be healed.**

In the secular world around us, there are methods of discovering and exploring these areas, or even medicating the effects (symptoms) of these experiences, but there is no true, lasting remedy that can totally heal other than Jesus Christ, period. Through simple trust in Him, you can be healed everywhere you hurt!

In the previous chapter you learned to spend time with Christ and to develop an intimate relationship with Him. You should have stepped into developing trust in your relationship with Him and in truly hearing His voice. Now is the time to surrender yourself over to Him for complete healing.

Step 1: *With the aid of the Holy Spirit through consistent prayer and meditation, allow the revelation of the root cause of the problem areas of your life to come to the surface. Start with the most obvious problem, the biggest thorn in your life. If this thorn involves someone else, take that person out of the picture (meaning out of your focus), leaving them and their issues with the Lord, and ask Him to show you your part alone. This most likely will not be*



instantaneous, but if you simply trust in Christ and remain open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, it will come.

As it comes, with simple trust visualize walking hand-in-hand with Christ through every sensation, every emotion, and every effect the experience(s) may have had on you. This will be painful, just like getting a thorn out of your flesh; this walk may spark long-suppressed feelings and disappointments. It's okay! Ask Jesus to heal every part of the memory, and with simple trust, receive the healing as you walk through this journey. From the pain will come the gain (healing), so trust Him. Keep in mind the many Bible stories of Christ's healing, and that each time He would tell the person that their faith has healed them.

Jesus turned and saw her. "Take heart, daughter," he said, "your faith has healed you." And the woman was healed from that moment.
Matthew 9:22 (NIV)

Then Jesus answered, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed from that very hour.
Matthew 15:28 (NIV)

He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."
Mark 5:34 (NIV)

"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.
Mark 10:52 (NIV)

Remember: take one step at a time. Take as long as you need and be patient. It took a lifetime to get where you are at now. Allow all the time you need to receive the healing. As a child of God you are worthy of **complete recovery**.

Some areas may be revealed and healed more quickly than others. God knows you better than you know yourself, so allow him to gently take you where you need to go – when you need to go. He will provide everything you need to overcome, which may at times include



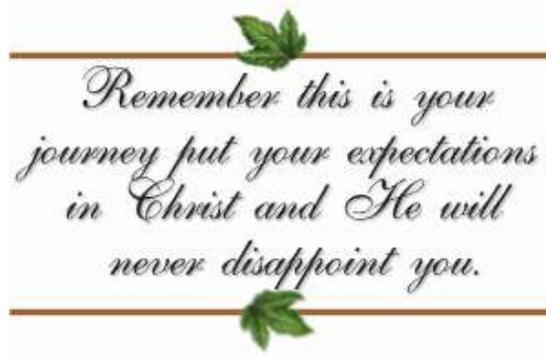
others in Christ who will walk with you as a means of physical, emotional, and spiritual encouragement and support.

Do not worry, because the more you walk through this process, the more the yoke of bondage is taken off you – and your whole perspective on life and others in life is changed. You are being healed and refined from the inside out, and **freedom** is yours. You are drinking from the spring of living waters, which is Christ Himself. And you are not alone!

Forgiveness of Others

As the yoke is being lifted and the taste of living water comes into your life, you will find what was once impossible is now possible; you can forgive and let go. Your perception of an event or a person will change, and you will see things from a different light – the light of Christ from within where **true forgiveness** is embraced. The enemy is losing hold on your life, and you are experiencing more freedom. **Warning:** It may get worse before it gets better, because the enemy does not give up without a fight. This is the point where you take authority as a child of God. As a child of God, you are an heir of God and co-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17), therefore you have the authority to stand in the name of Jesus Christ and in the power of the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. God will answer your prayers.

Step Two: *Consciously forgive all those who have hurt you in any way in the past. Make a list of your perceptions of the event, the person or persons involved, the effects it had on you, and your reactions. Now, take the list in its entirety and bring it to Christ. Turn all ownership of it to Him, and let go of it.*





However and wherever the Holy Spirit leads you in this part of the journey, you *must* obey. Even if you hold a grudge against God for allowing certain things in your life, turn it over to His sovereign control, and allow redemption to take place within your heart. Remember that you always have a “choice,” and if you “choose” not to obey you may end up right back where you started. You will keep going around on the merry-go-round, only to wonder why things in your life are not getting any better. You have prayed and God does not seem to answer. Well, He has answered, but now He may be waiting on you. When you finally get sick and tired of being sick and tired, it’s time to lean on Him in faith, and trust in His wisdom and understanding as you follow His guidance. Ask Him, and then trust in Christ the Holy Comforter, Counselor and Healer of all.

The Lord will give you the courage and the strength to do all that He asks you to do. If it requires confronting that someone in the form of a letter or maybe verbally and in person, pray for discernment and follow His guidance. **Warning:** Be careful when confronting. Really and truly allow Christ to lead you, and do not expect too much from the other person. Remember that this is your journey, so **put your expectations on Christ**. He will never disappoint you.

Now is the time to allow the burden (the yoke) to finally come off your shoulders and to receive healing from Christ.



*... And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.*

For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:12, 14-15 (NKJV)



Making Amends

Step Three: *Before God, yourself, and perhaps another person, whom you trust, confess what you have done to others that need forgiveness. Again, make a list of your perceptions about what was done, the people you may have harmed, and the effect it may have had on them and on you. Take the list to Christ, and open your heart to the direction of the Holy Spirit, receive His instruction, and just do it!*



This is the flip side of the coin, where *you* are making amends to those you have hurt, offended, disappointed, or neglected. It is time to confess your part to yourself, to God, and perhaps to someone you can trust. The yoke is getting lighter, so don't give up now! Here, in this step lies the power of prayer, once again. Pray for the willingness and even the desire to get honest. God already knows exactly what, when, where and how, so this is your time with Him to come clean and get honest with yourself.

Now is the time to make amends in the manner in which the Holy Spirit puts it on your heart. This could mean a phone call, a letter or a meeting. But, if making amends in certain cases will cause even more harm, then bring it to the Lord for restitution. Trust Christ, because He will take you every step of the way. If you stumble, He will pick you up. If you forget or ignore something, He will remind you or wait for you. Or, if you physically cannot do it alone, He will bring someone in to help you.

It is true that some individuals to whom you try to make amends will respond with forgiveness, even comfort, acceptance, or love – but others may not. People will disappoint you, but God will not. The key is to be honest and take responsibility for your own actions. Through Christ our past debts are paid, and a new life lies ahead! Are you ready?



The Reward

To put into words the rewards that we receive in forming this relationship with the Lord is but a glimpse of the whole picture. This is the most intimate of relationships you could ever possibly hope to obtain. A relationship with the Divine Being Who knows you better than you know yourself and loves you unconditionally. The closer you come to Christ, the closer He will come to you, and He will never cease to amaze you!

What springs forth in this relationship is the unfolding of your new life in Christ. Your perception of people, places, and things are being changed. Freedom and the power of God's Holy Spirit are upon you. You have no need to be afraid anymore. You now have a safe haven and the source to confront any of life's challenges. The pieces of the puzzle of your life are coming together, and it all begins to make sense. Wisdom and understanding pour into your consciousness, revealing a much bigger picture of a purpose beyond yourself alone.

Talents and gifts that you may have never realized as being within you are being revealed. Relationships are being restored, and everything you may have lost is being replaced with more freedom, peace, and abundance that you can fathom. You are making a difference in the world and your life now has true meaning.

As you journey on this lifelong path, you begin to desire to share Good News of Jesus Christ with others – especially those closest to you. You begin touching the lives of others in the most positive of ways with only one motive in mind – unselfish love. You begin to understand that a common bond with God, shared with another individual, creates an unshakeable, unbreakable, and unstoppable bond of unity. Christ's bride, the Church, is coming together and you play an important role.

***Let us rejoice and be glad
and give him glory!
For the wedding of the Lamb has come,
and his bride has made herself ready.***

Revelation 19:7 (NIV)





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Eleven: Coming Out of The Pit

This is the part of the journey that most people will avoid. In fact, many have spent their whole lives avoiding, denying and masking their emotions, only to find it spilling out into the lives of others, and for many generations. This is one of the most important parts of the journey and will require childlike faith to accomplish. **Remember:** God loves you unconditionally – the good, the bad and the ugly. He wants you to be free from bondage of any type and will walk with you every step of the way.

In personal journal or notebook:

The chapter itself is the exercise, so allow the time needed to walk this journey. To reiterate the steps:

1. With the aid of the Holy Spirit, allow the revelation of the root cause of the problem areas of your life to come to the surface. Start with the most obvious problem, the biggest thorn in your life. If this thorn involves someone else, take that person out of the picture, leave them with the Lord, and ask Him to show you your part alone. This most likely will not be instantaneous, but if you trust the Holy Spirit it will come.

Then as it comes, with simple trust, walk hand-in-hand with Christ through every sensation, every emotion, and every effect the experience(s) has had on you. This

will be painful, just like getting a thorn out of your flesh; this walk may spark long suppressed feelings and disappointments. It's okay! From the pain will come the gain, trust him.

Ask Christ to heal every part of the memory, and with simple trust, receive the healing as you walk through this journey. Keep in mind the many Bible stories of Christ's healing and each time He would say your faith has healed you.

2. Consciously forgive all those who have hurt you in any way in the past. Make a list of your perceptions of the event, the person or persons involved, the effects it had on you, and your reactions. Now, take the list in its entirety and bring it to Christ. Turn all ownership of it to him, and let go of it.

3. Before God, yourself, and perhaps another person, in whom you trust, confess what you have done to others that need forgiveness. Again, make a list of your perceptions about what was done, the people you may have harmed, and the effect it may have had on them and on you. Take the list to Christ, and open your heart to the direction of the Holy Spirit, receive His instruction, and just do it!



Chapter Twelve: Relationship Recovery

***For the whole Law [concerning human relationships] is complied with in the one precept,
You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself.***

Galatians 5:4 (Amplified)

“Relationship” is defined as a particular type of connection existing between people related to, or having dealings with, each other. Relationships, however informal or personal, are part of everyday life. There are numerous types of significant relationships – relationships with God, parents, siblings, spouses, children, relatives, friends, acquaintances, co-workers, or man in general.

Loving God is easy, but loving one another can be the biggest challenge we face in life. Yet God commands that we love one another as we love ourselves. But how can we love those who continually hurt us and themselves, who disappoint us, or who seem to not care about anyone but themselves? How do we get beyond not wanting or acting upon revenge? Or how do we mend broken relationships that seem impossible to restore?

First and foremost, we have no real control over one another. As disappointing and frightening as this might be, we cannot make someone love us. We can try to persuade or even manipulate them, but these attempts are only short-lived and never truly fulfilling.



Yet we do have freedom over our choices, and no one can stop us from loving them with a type of love for others that does not have some selfish motive at heart, but rather a love with no conditions. Feelings come and go, but this love is a decision – a choice we make that cannot be taken away from us no matter what. *And that is what God has called us to do, to love one another as He has loved us (John 13:34).*

With this being said, how is it possible to recover relationships that look impossible? Is it our responsibility to fix every relationship that needs mending? Can we even “fix” relationships when “free will” is thrown into the mixture? What it all boils down to yet again is our focus. If we focus on the relationship, the problem, the person or our desire, we invariably will find disappointment and heartache.

Remember, the one relationship that not only heals and restores, but fills us to overflowing abundance, is our relationship with God. Yet man needs physical touch, companionship, and earthly love. God knows our needs, and He created us this way. It is when we try to take things out of His control that we always get into trouble. If we but seek Him first, all things come together for the good of all concerned.

“A God Experience”: The Church Widow. *There was a woman who for most of her marriage had been a “church widow,” meaning she went to church without her spouse. Her husband was adamant about not attending church with her and the children, and unfortunately he blamed her for his decision at the time.*

While she prayed for restoration in this area of her life, many times it was difficult to see other families complete in their worship of God. So on one Saturday evening; she really prayed that God would give her the words to reach her husband’s heart to convince him to go to church with her and the children on Sunday.



She began to imagine the steps leading to the words she would say to convince him to go. She felt that God gave her one particular point that she just knew would convince him. So that Sunday morning as she was getting ready, leading up to the point where she would speak the words that would surely convince him, she came right to the point of uttering her case, and became literally speechless. The Holy Spirit flooded her with an overwhelming sense to leave it alone and let God be in control. So again she again went to church without her husband.

She thought the event was over and victory would never be possible. However, that Sunday evening she was lying in bed watching a particular Christian counseling program that she had brought home from her church. Out of the blue, her husband came in the bedroom and lay down on the bed and began watching this Christian counselor speak. This was not his normal behavior when Christian programs were showing.

In total amazement she listened as this Christian counselor spoke on the very issue that God had put on her heart that her husband needed to hear, but did not allow her to speak. Within an instant of hearing the words, very clearly and distinctly she heard within her spirit, "See, I am the one in control, trust me!"

This spoke volumes to her and made her realize that God was meeting her husband right where he was at and she needed to back off and really trust that God was in control.

This story spoke to me in realizing that I do not have control over my circumstances – the Lord is absolutely the one in control. I do not have to worry about my marriage, my children, my family, my friends, and my world. As impossible as this might be to accomplish by my own might, IT IS possible through surrender to Jesus Christ. All that is my concern is to learn to trust God to bring everything together for the good of all concerned. He could see the whole picture – I could not, nor could anyone else in this world. I have to depend on him and His control. As time has passed, I have come to a point of no longer feeling the need to be in control of other people – especially family members. Now even when disappointment



or hurt comes, the blows heal much quicker and forgiveness becomes easier. I call that FREEDOM!

Really Let Go!

By seeking God first, we are saying that we trust Him enough to really “let go,” and for many, if not most, this is the hardest test of all. Turning our choices over to God, following the guidance of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit, and trusting that He will make everything turn out the best for those who love him is the synopsis of this entire book and the answer to all life’s situations.

This means turning over to Him all those we love, all those who do not love us in return, and all those who do love us but may have strayed beyond our grasp. While this can be the hardest test of all, it is the most fulfilling if we carry it through to completion. Turning to God for the answers, then trusting him to bring everything together when it looks impossible, is the greatest witness to His glory and His love for us.

Unfortunately, our society today wants the “quick fix,” and if the “quick fix” does not happen on our timetable, or if it means sacrifice, then we have become conditioned to move on and find something easier, although not necessarily better. If the next “something better” does not work out, then we try it once again, and on and on— another ride on the old merry-go-round spinning everyone involved out of control again. We convince ourselves that we are free to do whatever we want whenever we want. We do not have to put up with anything we do not like or that makes us feel uncomfortable. This current feel-good philosophy has created a culture of lackadaisical, powerless individuals who make life-changing decisions based on current emotions. Just look at the statistics of the steadily rising percentage of divorce. This speaks volumes as to the escalation of our own self-centered behavior.

Choices based on self-centeredness affect not only our lives but the lives of our children, their self-worth and need for parental guidance, their understanding of unity, and their future



choices. The foundation of the family is crumbling and the enemy is winning in his best strategy: divide and conquer. His strategy is to deceive, to keep us from knowing the awesome power that God is waiting to bless us with at our moment of affirmation. Yet what the devil means for our destruction, God can and will turn into good for those who love Him. So close for some, yet so far for others.

By really *letting go* combined with intercessory prayer we are saying “God we trust you no matter what our situation may look like at the moment.” Our faith that God has it all under control, and the fact that He knows all the pieces to this dynamic, multidimensional puzzle brings complete peace and rest on this lifelong journey.

God’s Will and God’s Timing

God’s will and timing for us is always perfect. Although we rarely agree, we must learn to have the confidence, the trust that **He can** and **He will** bring everything together for the good of all concerned. As much as our flesh cries out for relief, we need only change our focus, surrender our desires, and delight in Him – knowing without a doubt He can bring everything together in an instant.

Our desires, whatever they might be, are the very catalyst by which we grow into knowing Him intimately and personally – discovering His great love for us – and coming to understand His plan for our life. These very simple words are sometimes the most difficult to really comprehend until we have actually experienced them. And it cannot be truly experienced until we walk hand-in-hand with Jesus Christ on the Path.

Relationships with our family and relationships with our friends are training grounds for our relationship with all of mankind, and ultimately the relationship between mankind and God. On our own, we would never be able to figure out all of the dynamics of any one relationship, but God knows the very heart of man. He knows the past, the present and the future. It is all by His very design. So why would we ever trust anything else or anyone but God?



Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.

Psalm 37:4 (NIV)



This is the most comforting and joyful of truths – that we can relax, we can delight in Him and that despite what our circumstances may look like at the moment, He will give us the true desires of our heart. When our circumstances start dictating our attitudes and our joy begins to cease, it is then we must believe without seeing. Believe that He

is in control and He is the true source of all joy. We are to look at the unseen – the eternal things of God. As we reach out to Christ, He meets us right where we are at, and the experience of the peace that surpasses all understanding and the joy that knows no bounds is ours. What we formerly thought impossible now becomes possible. That is faith.



And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (renewed hearts and minds).

Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

As others begin to see the fruit of our labor, which results in patience and perseverance, they too begin to recognize truth and the glory of God. Relationships, wherever they might have been, seem to come together and mend without any of our own manipulation or control. An example might be the miraculous turn of events that brings a broken family back together because one individual within the family stood in faith, knowing the God plus one is the majority, no matter how bad the situation(s) might have appeared in the past. The



relationships come back together stronger than ever before, because God becomes the common bond. In this spiritual classroom of faith, our own healing creates the setting for forgiveness. We learn the true meaning of forgiveness as it now comes much easier, for we can see and make the distinction between the sins and the sinner. We learn not to judge because of our own lack of judgment for only our Lord sees all. And we learn to love unconditionally because God love us unconditionally. The burden of sin is gradually lifted, and true healthy relationships become automatically established and grounded without fear. This is the only way to true relationship recovery.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

1 John 4:18 (NKJV)



Respecting Someone Else's Journey

In man's estimation, the shortest distance between two points is a straight line. In God's dimension, the distance between two points is relative to all other points in between. In other words, I cannot tell someone that my journey is their journey, or that the shortest way for them to get from point A to point B is to follow my path but without my mistakes! What makes each person's journey personal is the fact that no one can tell someone else what God is going to do next on their own journey. God does not fit in a box!

I cannot say, "You will be automatically delivered in one area of your life in this amount of time, or if you followw this formula these are the results."

However, I can share my *testimony* of what Christ has done in my life (and the lives of fellow believers). I show my trust in God by respecting another person's journey with Jesus Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in their life. And I can pray for them through the gift of intercessory prayer.



*I trust in God by
respecting another person's
journey with Jesus Christ*





If I did have the all the answers, then a truly personal journey with Christ would never be necessary. Furthermore, if someone did have all the answers then they could pretty much define a god-in-a-box methodology and take complete control of their destiny and the destiny of others. That is exactly what is taking place in our society today. We want control of our own destiny but with very little, if any, regard for others. We can try all we want to be in control, but that has never been possible and will never be reality. God created us for a relationship with Him, and He loves us enough to give us the freedom of choice, but ultimately He is the one in control. Only He has the Master Plan.

The overwhelming need to love and be loved in this world is our driving force. We need love, in the form of relationships, for our very existence on this earth, beginning at birth and lasting until the day we die. It is when we allow the fear of not getting this love to creep into our hearts that we begin to try to take control of people and circumstances. We try to achieve love by manipulating others, or we attempt to suppress love altogether out of fear of rejection. The facades and the walls come up. “As hard as I am trying to control my own life, I will try to control others to get what I want or what think I need.” But we must realize that relationships built on “trying to control” others are doomed from the start.

We try so hard to achieve what is right in front of us and available just for the asking— our acres of diamonds! Once we experience a taste of the limitless supply of love from our Creator, all other love in the form of earthly relationships becomes completely fulfilling, because we have tapped into the spring of living waters and love is coming from the inside – not the outside. Others become attracted to this love they see within us, because they too are seeking that same love. And, we grow to share a common bond that transcends anything we have ever known here on this earth! Relationships built on this kind of love cannot be broken. This is perfect love and “perfect love cast out all fear.” Control no longer becomes an issue, because trust replaces our fears.



Imagine for a moment, you are in the presence of Jesus in the most beautiful and tranquil of sceneries, and it is just you and Him. He gently tells you *“Give me your cares and your burdens, all of them.”* And as you slowly begin to release each one you feel this weight of a heavy yoke beginning to come off your shoulders. The more you give to him the lighter the yoke becomes and the more freedom you experience. Then he says, *“Take my yoke upon you, for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* You heed his words and immediately you sense this overwhelming, indescribable feeling of complete love – so complete it fills you to overflowing!

You sense a type of love that fills your void and completely changes your perspective on everything in life. Rather than being needy to find love, you cannot help but give unconditional love to others. Your direction and purpose in life becomes crystal clear and you “hunger” to know more of Christ.

Does this scenario sound impossible for you right now? If so, you may be accepting the lie the enemy would have you believe. As a child of God, with the Holy Spirit living within you – **YOU ARE WORTHY** of this love. You are worthy of God’s love. You are worthy of man’s love. And you are worthy of complete freedom from any type of bondage, obsession or addiction that has stolen your freedom and your abundant life. It is yours for the asking; it is that simple!

From Control to Freedom

In my days of trying to be in control, godly virtues like patience, perseverance, humility, obedience, forgiveness, submission, and self-discipline tweaked my flesh. I had no desire to understand, let alone obtain, these character traits. And the longer I submitted to my flesh and its solutions, the harder it became to believe that any of these were even possible to obtain. Left to my own devices, I would never have come to realize the true power in these “gifts.” It was not until I just surrendered to the love Jesus offers us that I could begin to understand this natural evolution of divine love.



In order to maintain our lifelong relationship with God and others, these character traits are necessary. And the only way to obtain these attributes is our **continued** surrender to Christ love as He walks with us through our daily lives. The love that results from this harmonious relationship with Christ gives us the understanding, and even the desire, to reach for these qualities. A few short years ago, I would have never believed that this was true. But as each layer of the “onion was peeled off” in my life, the more I came to realize these truths and the more I surrendered to the possibilities. The control over people, places and things that I thought I had to have in order to be happy is being replaced with complete freedom and trust that God has it all in control. I have tested this revelation over and over again only to be utterly amazed at just how great He really is. He never ceases to amaze me!



The Ripple Effect

The act of really letting go produced the “ripple effect” in my relationships. Rather than trying to manipulate and control others in my life, I learned to lean on divine intercession and the power of prayer.

“A God Experience”: **Lesson in Trust.** *One example is in what happened with my two oldest children. My eldest son, through a series of unforeseeable events, was stationed in Baghdad in 2003 with the First Armored Division after the initial strike on Iraq. While times like these are difficult for any parent to endure, I still felt a modicum of refuge in my growing relationship with the Lord (at that time). This relationship with the Lord was to be tested in April of 2004. My son’s unit was scheduled to return to Germany and out of harm’s way, but in the last minutes before departure, they were extended another 90 days! My flesh wanted to scream, and I thought I would explode from the potent emotional mixture of panic, anger, fear, and helplessness. There was nothing I could physically do to help my child and keep him safe. I had to totally lean on the Lord for help.*



So out of fear and frustration I surrendered my understanding of control and went to the only Source I knew who could give me relief – God. With tears rolling down my cheek, in the midst of my prayers, I remember very clearly the Lord saying in a powerful inner voice, “That is MY CHILD, and I love him even more than you do, I will take care of him, TRUST ME!” Three months later, my son came home safely!

During the same time this was happening with my son, my teenage daughter was in a battle of her own. But this time the battle was right in front of my eyes –she was seriously into drugs, alcohol and living on the streets with the wrong crowd. As a result of several incidents of family upheaval, we all seem to be reacting strictly on emotions. The enemy was having a field day with us all. She appeared to be hell-bent on showing us just how much she hurt by completely destroying her life! Her loss of trust in both her father and me made it impossible to reach her. Nothing I did or could do physically at this time would help and things seemed to spiral completely out of control.

It was one thing to have a son in a war for our country, but to have my daughter in a self-made war right in front of my eyes was almost unbearable. And to top it all off, numerous other things in our lives seem to be falling drastically apart – “when it rains it pours.” The merry-go-round was spinning out of control and I could not get off. I needed help and I needed it badly!

Again, I went to the Lord about my daughter, and again, the Lord said, “That is MY CHILD, and I love her more than you do, I will take care of her, TRUST ME!” It was so clear that both times it stopped me in my tracks, and I instinctively just let go. The more I surrendered the more the fear was replaced with trust, and whenever doubt would try to rear its ugly head I would lean into those words, again.

Months went by, and things got even worse. My personal life was falling apart in almost every way imaginable from health and finances to home and relationships. The black cloud of destruction seemed to sitting right over our heads. But even though the fear factor was



now beyond brutal, my oasis of hope was His words and this relationship with Christ that seemed to be growing in the midst of all the turmoil. I could not understand why we had to go through all of this but deep down I sensed there was meaning.

Finally, I came to a breaking point and I decided to pack up and head for the hills – my parent's farm in the country. The evening before I was ready to leave, I was visiting a pastor friend and his wife to try to find some semblance of solace in this miry pit my entire family was in. I spoke with the pastor's wife about my daughter, whose situation she knew from the past. She reminded me that we, as parents, have authority over the enemy concerning our children. So we prayed together and took authority over my daughter's life against anything that was coming against her.

The very next morning, out the blue, my daughter called me and said she was leaving her boyfriend and coming with me to my parent's home. Now for her to come with me to a town that she had no desire to visit – let alone live there with my parents, for whom she had very little affection at this time– was a major turn of events. Trembling with a wicked concoction of disgust, fear, anger, and confusion, she later explained to me that she had reached her breaking point after experiencing serious bouts of depression and oppression. So bad was it that she began seeing things that sounded very much like a taste of hell to me.

I knew at once, she was being freed and put right into my lap. She was so afraid and confused that for the first time she was willing to listen to my appeal for her salvation. Where before I would get nothing from her but sarcastic remarks and foul language, she was now so broken she was finally ready to receive.

My parents were gone during our first week there, so it gave me the perfect opportunity to share with my daughter a relationship that she could always depend on – that would never leave her nor forsake her. She embraced her salvation and invitation of the Holy Spirit with such a trembling heart, so ready for true love, that my heart leapt with unspeakable joy as I could feel all the angels in heaven giving her a standing ovation. Next to the physical birth of my daughter, this rebirth filled me with an indescribable love I had never known, a glimpse of



God's own love. My daughter was SAVED, and her journey of healing and coming out of the Pit had begun!

From these events and numerous others, God gives me courage and strength in knowing that He really IS THERE working on my behalf and in the things I hold most dear. He is answering my prayers. I can, without a shadow of doubt, trust Him!

With this trust came a true serenity that spoke volumes to others without saying one word. My demeanor was changing; my reaction to life's circumstances was poised with a sort of quiet confidence – and people noticed. This opened the door for others who were struggling to share their own experiences. From these shared experiences came an affirmation of victory through the power of the Holy Spirit in their own lives. These life ripples were getting wider and crossing into other life ripples. The ripples of the Holy Spirit are becoming waves and the waves are becoming tidal waves reaching every corner of the world today. Look for yourself.

Even in my marriage, when I had thought there was no hope the more I surrendered to what Christ put on my heart to do, the more I felt the burden of false control lift off my shoulders. This sparked a level of trust that let me know God would act on behalf of us both, because He loved my spouse just as much as He loved me.

Christ began to show me a perception of life quite different from what I had known before – especially concerning other people. He showed me the “sin” apart from the “sinner.” I am to hate the sin, but love the sinner. On my own that was not possible, but when He would show me through His eyes it would become clear. And an overwhelming love and compassion would envelope my being. A sense that we are all being deceived in one way or another here on this earth was being made clear to me, and that my fight was not with flesh and blood.

I also learned that I had no real understanding of how God would move in my spouse's life, and that this lack of understanding on my part was infringing on his relationship with God. I



discovered that although the shortest distance between point A and point B may very well have been a straight line, it was not necessarily the best path for God's purposes – and was not something for me to decide. So while we are now both on the path to recovery, both of us have a day-to-day personal journey with Jesus Christ.

There are times on this path with Christ I have to walk through tests of faith that build one upon the other in order to encourage me to keep moving forward – despite the many times I have wanted to give up. This ongoing process of surrender to His control and love has given me the serenity and the trust that He can and will bring everything together for the good of all concerned. It has taught me that He is always there, especially when I need him most. This is THE relationship that brings restoration and recovery to all other relationships. I am coming out of the Pit and my family and friends, brothers and sisters are coming with me.

For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it.

Matthew 16:25 (NIV)



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Twelve: Relationship Recovery

In personal journal or notebook:

1. Are you currently struggling with a particular relationship(s)? List them by name and your relationship.
2. Would you be willing to really “let go and let God” of these relationships, no matter what that entailed?
3. If you answered yes to the previous question, take the name(s) to Jesus, ask what he would have you do? You may have prayed many times for the individual(s) this time really listen to your part even if it is to do nothing, but TRUST HIM!
4. Record your journey the good, the bad, and the ugly. This is your opportunity see Christ in your life and in the lives you love.
5. Don't give up! Just keep standing FIRM in Jesus Christ and your trust in him. Watch for the ripple effect.



Chapter Thirteen: The Power of True Fellowship

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone. A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

I know that after I leave savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”

Acts 20:28-31(NIV)

Paul’s message from Acts 20 to believers still rings true, especially in the era of deception in which we find ourselves in these days. The power to be able to discern truth from non-truth, however cleverly contrived that non-truth may be, has become even more vital to the stability of believers. It takes each member of the Church to do his part, for each member is a vital part of the whole body of Christ. *We are to be on our guard, stand firm in the faith, be men and women of courage, be strong and do everything in love* (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NIV).



Take a look at Jesus and the apostles. Private, intimate time with our Lord is absolutely vital to our spiritual growth, yet nowhere in the New Testament did Jesus or his apostles remain in complete solitude. Even after Christ's departure, when the day of Pentecost came, the apostles, disciples and Mary, His mother, were gathered all together in one place when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in tongues of fire (Acts 2:1, NIV). We have it straight from Christ's own words, "*For where two or three come together in My name, there I am with them*" (Matthew 18:20, NIV).

During the years following Christ's death, resurrection and return to His Father in heaven, people met in each other's homes or in secret locations to share information, to learn, and to pray. Since there were no Bibles as we have today, communication was strictly by word of mouth or letters written by those who could read and write. Fellowship was absolutely necessary to the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. So what if today we were suddenly cut off from all communications – no post office, no television, no radio, no telephone, and no Internet? What if even the Bible became outlawed, as it already is in some countries nowadays, and we were considered enemies of the state if we believed in Jesus Christ? At that point would we not have to resort back to early Christian times and come together in underground fellowship as our source of support and unity, power and strength? Fellowship with Holy Spirit-filled believers has been the very backbone of the Christian movement all throughout history and is still "key" today in this new spiritual, moral, and psychological tribulation we are experiencing.



"Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching"

Hebrews 10:2 (NIV)

There is a lot to be said about the old adage, "No man is an island." If we get totally off to ourselves and within ourselves, we can only learn to serve ourselves. The enemy wants nothing better than to keep us in the dark, and alone with our fears. Confessing, declaring,



and sharing the movement of the Holy Spirit with other believers brings light into the darkness and the enemy must flee. And, he will do anything he can to prevent God's light from coming into his darkness.

“A God Experience”: True Fellowship. *There came a time in my journey when I was being led to get back into a group atmosphere with others, though not necessarily all believers. The group that came into my life was a diverse group of individuals with one common theme. We all had some particular issue(s) that seem to be ruling our lives and there seemed to be sense of desperation to get out anyway we could. We were all at the bottom of the Pit and our only choice was surrender.*

“I have been here before – at the bottom of the Pit – so God, why are you leading me back to where I thought I had been led out,?” was my internal rhetoric at the beginning of this period. Although by then, I had come to understand that if the Lord was taking me somewhere I had better just trust Him and He would eventually show me the answers.

It took quite a few months as the pieces began to come together and the direction was being made clear. First, I needed more “peeling of the onion” in my own character-tuning. There were steps I thought I had overcome, but it was time to go even deeper. Christ knew that I needed help, physical accompaniment, to walk through some pretty tough areas of my life. I had to get completely honest in every area of my life that the Holy Spirit was showing me before I could go any further.





Secondly, since it was not all just about me, He began to open my eyes to the sheer volume of individuals experiencing similar lies, but different circumstances. I could not get over the fact that so many people were being overwhelmed with a sense of feeling unworthy. This was the one lie from the enemy that had me and so many others hiding alone in the darkness. So many, me included, were experiencing this feeling of being “beat up” – bBeat up and tormented with overpowering circumstances, by the actions other unknowing individuals in our lives, and mostly by our own false convictions (lies we had come to believe).

Thirdly, and the most important revelation Christ began to show me, was the power of True fellowship. WOW! The continual coming together under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and really “confessing” or “getting honest” was the most powerful tool in bringing light into the darkness. Isolation was no longer going to keep us alone with our sins.

More pieces of the puzzle were coming together for me, and more revelations were being confirmed in the Bible. Indeed, our lives are written in the Bible. This brings Spiritual sense into common sense. Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’(Luke 10:27) I was witnessing and experiencing for myself the power of this True fellowship. No one sat in judgment of another, because we all shared in imperfection – we all had sins to confess. The more we moved in honesty, the more we saw the deception uncovered and the more we came together in compassion and love. All of this is bringing together Christ’s two commands and making ready His bride, the church.

True Fellowship

To understand the true meaning of Christian fellowship, we first must realize that it is not just small talk over coffee and doughnuts, but an honest relationship built on a foundation in Christ that we all share. The façade must be surrendered. This group of fellow Disciples of Christ humble themselves before God and each other by sharing their trials and tribulations, humbly confessing the areas of their lives where they have missed the mark. Thus we can



come together in prayer for healing of ourselves and others. Just as important, together they discover that while their own circumstances may be different from one another, the Holy Spirit moves similarly in their personal lives.

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)



This recognition of shared life experiences serves as confirmation among one another as to how the Holy Spirit is personally working in each of their lives. In this Holy Spirit-charged fellowship group, the desire is to edify and build up, to share and heal, and to learn and lovingly hold accountable the current issues in each other's lives. The result is the forming of a solid foundation for unity as members of the body of Christ. Each extraordinary group of friends and Disciples in Christ establishes a bond of unity that nothing can destroy.

The power and strength in the Holy Spirit that arises from such meetings gives each member the validation needed in order to continue week to week, and day by day, and sometimes even moment by moment throughout their personal journey.

Unity, Accountability and Confession

Fellowship Brings Agreement (Unity). True fellowship serves as a means to come together in agreement where each individual has a voice to speak, or confess issues within their lives that may need prayer and healing. We come to realize that we are not singled out, we are not unworthy, we are not helpless, we are not hopeless, and we are not alone.

The deception of the enemy is exposed because as we come together in honesty and unity led by the Holy Spirit. The strategy of the master deceiver, Satan –*to divide and conquer*– is



broken and replaced with **unity** for fellow believers, **unity** for their families, **unity** in the churches and **unity** in the world.

Fellowship Strengthens Resolve (Accountability). The willingness of each individual to humbly come before God and each other in fellowship serves to strengthen our resolve, and our understanding of the movement of the Holy Spirit in our own personal lives. When we share with each other the direction that the Holy Spirit is personally leading us in our individual situation, an unspoken and non-condemning form of accountability speaks to our heart to urge us to follow through with the direction in which we are being led.

True fellowship builds and develops boldness in speaking out the Word of God to others in our community and in our world. Earlier fears are replaced with awareness and humbled confidence. Doubt is now replaced with trust and support. And loneliness is overshadowed with sense of unconditional love.

Fellowship Brings Light into the Darkness (Confession). Hearing God's Word through sermons, Bible study, and meditative prayer through the Holy Spirit helps each of us discern areas of our life that need attention. However, in fellowship when we declare areas of our life that fall short of the mark, sharing our burdens among our brothers and sisters, light is immediately brought into the darkness and the enemy loses his grasp. For in this confession, we realize that in light of the Holy Spirit we are not alone in our sins, we are truly forgiven, and we are not judged but loved unconditionally. The light of Christ becomes brighter, burdens are lifted, and we move forward in our Path of spiritual evolution.



“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.”

James 5:15-17 (NIV)



“A God Experience”: **The Power of True Confession.** *In the particular religious denomination I was affiliated with in my earlier years we practiced confession with our religious leaders and frankly it did give me a sense of “paying my dues” for improper actions and sin on my part. The problem was I never experienced change in my personal life. I remained stagnant in my spiritual life, just using this practice to find relief, not maturity.*

So when I moved from this particular denomination into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ I found myself really missing this opportunity to relieve my conscience.. So I immediately took it to the Lord ask him “what about this rite of confession, what is its true purpose.” Sure enough, within a relatively short period of time and during the journey of learning about true fellowship He showed me the true power of confession.

When we are one on one, or in a group setting of believers, and we are “getting honest” with each other about areas of our lives where we fall short, we are truly confessing and light is brought into the darkness. In other words, as I began to share and confess issues in my life to my brothers and sisters in Christ, they would invariably recognize a similar issue in their own lives and we would all immediately realize that we are not alone in this journey. We began to realize that the enemy would like nothing better than to keep us sheltered, feeding us lies about being the only one to suffer these problems. Inevitably we would become so wrapped up in ourselves and our problems that we could not see truth even if it was right before our eyes. Even more deceptive is the thought that we would be far too embarrassed, or appear less than perfect, if we were to reveal the truth about our circumstances and ourselves.

The more we confess in an atmosphere of non-judgmentalism and unconditional love of fellow believers, the more the light will come into the darkness and the enemy will lose his hold on each of us. Rather than a one-way confession just for my own benefit, we all began experiencing incredible healing, powerful renewed inner strength and combined faith in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit that currently is changing our world!



I could see each individual within these groups come together on a similar journey of the identifying and confirming the power of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the lives of others. The merry-go-round of confusion just stopped and the Holy Spirit ripple-effect begins. That was the true power of confession!

Fellowship Brings Power. *We are in a war, not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 6:12, NIV).* The enemy wants us to stay hidden, to keep up our facades, to feel alone, and to dwell in our worry and fear – rather than coming together and exposing the darkness with truth. Satan’s power is lost when exposed to the light – when we come together in unity of love for Christ and for one another. Satanic footholds are recognized and strongholds are broken, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit is achieved.

Fellowship groups in no way diminish the need or the power of the corporate body found in our Sunday services. Fellowship in no way replaces Bible studies groups or other study groups, for their dynamics are different. True fellowship is honest and personal communication with each other in an atmosphere led by the Holy Spirit and grounded in Biblical teachings and prayer. It brings unity and solidarity among fellow believers, and thus brings unity and solidarity for Christ’s body the Church.

Complete surrender to the will of God through Jesus Christ will get you out of the Pit. Coming together in true fellowship in His name brings unity, strength, light, and power in getting out of and remaining out of the Pit. It is up to you to decide to take the step in finding a “True Fellowship” group through your local church.

As of to date the number of small true fellowship groups and “house churches” globally is growing exponentially, the Holy Spirit ripple-effect is currently reshaping our world. **To find a group in your own church community visit Good News Broadcasting & Multimedia (www.GNBM.org –R&R link) for a group nearest you.** Or if you are so guided by the Holy

Spirit, begin one on your own. Trust in your relationship with Jesus Christ and follow the leading of His Holy Spirit.





THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Thirteen: The Power of True Fellowship

In personal journal or notebook:

1. Are you, or you and another individual, living on your own self-serving island? If so, is it becoming stagnant?
2. Does the idea of confessing your “issues” before a group of fellow believers bother you? Explain.
3. Have you come to the point of being sick and tired of being sick and tired?
4. Are you ready for rest and recovery followed by an abundant life? If no, what are you afraid of at this time? If yes, what is your next step?
5. Step out, find a group of true believers in Jesus Christ guided by the Holy Spirit or if you feel the prodding of the Holy Spirit start one on your own.



Chapter Fourteen: The Armor & Battle Position

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

Ephesians 6:10-18 (NIV)

Whether you agree or not, or whether you are even aware of it or not, we are in a war in the spiritual realms – and the battle is for our very souls. This is a daily individual battle, a daily family battle, a daily community battle, a daily national battle, and a daily global battle. We



are both the potential victims and the unstated heroes in this spiritual dilemma. The overwhelming danger is that many do not believe this is really happening because they cannot see it going on in front of their eyes. However, most will agree that we are seeing the aftermath of this warfare and its effective destruction in our society on a global scale. The sad fact is that this is a result of our complacency and unbelief; we do not realize that each individual CAN make a difference. *For greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world* (1 John 4:4).

What many still do not realize is that the entire battle has already been won through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And God will move heaven and earth so that we can become very aware of this fact. In the book of Revelations we have the end of the story: Satan and his cohorts are defeated, thrown into the lake of fire, and eternally punished for their rebellion against God (Revelation 20:10).

As believers in the truth of God's Word, we can overcome whatever the enemy has in store. The power of the Holy Spirit in one individual believer can overcome the entire forces of Hell. The Holy Spirit leads and guides any individual who chooses to trust in the Word of God, and to stand in faith in that trust.

While this may sound far-fetched or even too mystical for some, others recognize the reality of the effects of this battle on our society and culture throughout the world. The first line of defense, as mentioned in a prior chapter, is to "know thy enemy." If you do not believe an enemy even exists, then you are subject to his deception and his will – placing your life here on earth and your eternal life in great jeopardy. If you do not know the truth, you will follow the lies and be fair game for his delusions and deceptions.

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8 (NIV)





The Snake

The enemy Satan and his cohorts begin their attack by injecting incorrect or sinful thoughts into your mind. At this point, you have a choice to either accept or reject these thoughts. These thoughts can be unrelenting and sometimes overwhelming in their frequency and duration for both believer and non-believer alike. As the Enemy, Satan knows your weak points, and the best line of attack suited for you— he has spent your lifetime observing you. These attacks of his can come when we least expect them, and can even come through those who are closest to us. Satan’s double “D’s” – Division and Deception -- are used on a daily basis to get us off path and keep us there if possible. His unrelenting, very seductive and strategic arsenal of personal attacks has taken down many strong-willed individuals throughout the centuries. So what makes us think we can stand up alone (in our own will) against this master of deception?

Take note of the many serious crimes we experience nowadays. These crimes are committed by people who oftentimes report hearing voices (demonic) –voices that become so unrelenting and tormenting that they feel they have no other choice but to act upon the voices’ commands in order to get any kind of relief. These individuals are totally unaware and defenseless simply due to lack of knowledge as to what exactly it is they are dealing with.

Take a good look at dealing with an individual who has a severe addiction and/or obsession, and try looking at the situation from a different angle. If you separate the sin from the sinner, you will see that whenever you try to reason with that person, you are actually trying to reason with “the enemy” within. It is almost impossible!

Imagine for a moment, an individual with an addiction/obsession holding a hand puppet, a “snake” for example. The “snake” represents the deception that is causing the addiction/obsession. Whenever you try to argue with the person, you are in essence arguing with the “snake” instead. The “snake” is all that the person is able to focus on and hear at this time. Trying to cajole, reason or dispute with them is almost impossible because they



are focused upon and listening to the “snake.” Realize that at this point that you are only trying to fight with the “snake.” The fight is not *against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms* (the snake).

So where should our focus be? Should it be on the snake? Definitely not, though most of us dealing with a loved one under addiction and/or obsession do spend our time, energy and money doing just that –trying to overcome this entity of iniquity– only to sink our own boat. Many have become co-dependent when dealing with loved ones struggling with addictions or obsessions. Co-dependency is defined as *relating to a relationship in which one person is psychologically dependent in an unhealthy way on someone who is addicted to a drug or self-destructive behavior, such as chronic gambling.*¹²

The enemy loves nothing better than to take down as many as He can by destroying our relationship with God, our marriages, our finances, our children, and our health. Out of desperation, we become so busy “strategizing” and grasping for help anywhere we can find it, that we can miss the very answer right in front of us –and within us –as believers in Jesus Christ.

The answer always boils down to faith – faith in God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Faith can be a very scary proposition, especially when your trust in Him has yet to be tested and refined. For this reason, fellowship with true believers as a basis for support and encouragement **is** essential. The power to overcome the “snake” comes through Jesus Christ and lived out in the power of the Holy Spirit. So step aside from the situation and the circumstances and really surrender to the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life – trust Christ. If you lack faith, then pray for it. God will answer. Our part as true believers consists of intercessory (interceding for others) prayer and standing in faith in accordance with Scripture and in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide us every step of the way.



Like the story of David and Goliath (Samuel 17: 1-54), it took the building up of David's faith to accomplish the defeat of Goliath using a mere sling shot. Prior to his victory, David had tended his father's sheep alone, and had to protect them from any marauder. He honed his skills against various wildlife predators, including lions and bears. By the time he was confronted with a man named Goliath, as large as he was, the confidence and trust that God had instilled within him was all the strength he needed to overcome the giant and walk in victory. It is our day-to-day walk with Christ that hones our character and builds our faith to walk in victory by the power of the Holy Spirit whenever we are confronted with any "Goliath" that may come into our life.

The Land of Illusion

Each one of us, every day of our lives is susceptible to the enemy's seduction in any form. By the most powerful of deceptions, the spirit of pride, man has been duped into believing that he has control over his own life –and sometimes the lives of others. This very well may "appear" to be the case at first, but truth be known this so-called control is short-lived, and eventually brings many to the bottom of the Pit – clueless as to how they got there.

Numerous modern day cults and movements are guilty of bringing many to perdition through the most seductive of deceptions: man's own ego. These lucrative organizations, using lies as their foundation and deception as their basis of operation, make false promises of power, wealth, and fame that are "ours" just for the taking. And from what many of us see on the surface, they look like they deliver what they promise. But look a little closer, and watch the promises dissolve into confusion and delusion, into life-altering obsessions, and finally devastation.

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

1Timothy 6:3-5 (NIV)



Just like Adam and Eve in the garden, the snake used the suggestion that should they eat the apple they would be “just like God.” But guess what, we are not God. We are God’s creation, and part of God, but we will never be God. He is our Heavenly Father and only He is in control.

God always has His children’s best interest at heart. He can accomplish what we could never even imagine, and our part is to have faith in Him and to trust in His purpose and plan for our life and the lives of others. This is the very foundation of Truth that cannot be moved, no matter what transpires in this land of illusion.

Daily Victory

The tests will come; they always come, because the enemy is always at work in our day-to-day circumstances. The only opportunity he has to gain our souls is in the short period of time we spend here on earth – so he will be relentless. Whereas the enemy views such opportunities as “temptations” to cause us to stumble, fall and become ensnared, the Lord allows these same opportunities as “tests” in order to test and approve our faith and trust in Him. Standing in faith is where we get our “stripes” so to speak. The more “stripes” we get, the more the scales come off of our eyes and truth is revealed. The battle is daily and it begins with us, and is about our focus on the Lord Jesus.

As born-again believers, we have the whole Armor of God at our disposal. This armor is spiritual in nature and always victorious in reality. To begin applying this armor, we are to put on the:

1. **Belt of Truth** – stand firm *with the belt of truth buckled around your waist*. The simple truth being **Jesus Christ is the way the truth and the life, there is no other way to God accept through him (John 14:16)**. As we progress in our journey and truth in our life is being revealed, we are to stand firm in the Truth that is being imparted to us through the grace of God. If we do not cling to the truth, we



can very easily fall prey to duplicity (or double-mindedness), allowing the waves of our circumstances or the waves of worldly events to sway our stand in Truth. Always remain aware that we so easily would prefer to be people-pleasers rather than God-pleasers due to our own self-interests. Fellowship with other believers is therefore vital when double-mindedness tempts our resolve.

As we surrender to Christ and our perspectives change, we begin to see more of the whole picture, and the lessons of truth in our personal lives bring it all together. Healing and deliverance become manifested in us, and our circumstances. We see that the belt of Truth is the very center of what holds the entire armor together.

2. **Breastplate of righteousness** *in place* - The breastplate of righteousness declares the belief that Christ, the Righteousness of God in the form of the Holy Spirit, lives within us – that is our breastplate. Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus (Romans 7:12-14). The Holy Spirit provides the discernment needed to protect our hearts –thus our minds –from the constant attack of deception. We have the righteousness of Jesus Christ in the form of the Holy Spirit living within us, thus we are worthy! We are co-heirs with Christ to the inheritance that was prepared for us since the creation of the world.

Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Romans 8:17 (NIV)

Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.

Matthew 25:34 (NIV)

Our heart is protected even when we get off path. We are not perfect and may wander off path many times, but Jesus always gathers back his sheep with his rod



and his staff. This Breastplate of Christ's Righteousness protects us and makes clear our path.

3. **Feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace** - We walk in the gospel of Jesus Christ – having opened our hearts to his teaching as we study the Bible and apply his teaching to our own life we are ready. We are ready to:

- a. Humbly and consistently submit to His leading as we walk through life's circumstances and relationships. We know from both Christ's biblical teachings and our submission to his Spirit's guidance in our life, that we can overcome any obstacle. It is not in our own power, but in Christ's power that He enables us to walk victoriously.
- b. Spread the gospel of peace to all of God's children. The natural process of receiving this abundance not only fills our void, but fills it to overflowing, meaning we are compelled to share the Truth with others.

We are prepared, and wherever we go the gospel of peace resides.

4. **Shield of Faith** - we are *to take up the shield of faith to quench the fiery darts of the adversary*. Each and every day there will be "fiery darts" – meaning words or actions by others that serve as a means to take us off the path. Sometimes, without warning, due to our lack of surrendering to the Lord and/or coupled with illness, weakness, stress, fear, or doubt, we can succumb to these attacks. Nevertheless, turning to Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit is always the way to keep on path or set us back on the path when led astray.

Fiery darts oftentimes will come through the ones we love and trust the most. Think about when Jesus was speaking to the apostles in the garden about His death and resurrection, and:



Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!"

Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Matthew 16:22-23 (NIV)

Jesus loved and trusted Peter, but Peter spoke these fiery darts because he was without understanding of God's ways. Peter was not Satan, but the words he spoke that had come through his thoughts were Satan's.

Each time we overcome these attacks we are building faith. Each victory, no matter how small or large, will build a shield. Despite how things may appear, we know victory is just around the corner. The Holy Spirit is always with us recalling each victory, each blessing, and each step in faith.

5. **Helmet of Salvation** - we are to *take the helmet of salvation* – the renewing of our mind as we follow Christ on the path in the fullness of salvation. As we continue on the path, the Holy Spirit illuminates the eyes of our heart and we begin to see life from a different perspective – Christ's perspective.

Just like the phrase, "*W.W.J.D., What Would Jesus Do?*" we begin to feel a prodding within our spirit in everything we do in life. We find that we have a Holy Spirit filter, if you will, that drives us to make the best choices in each and everyday life decisions. This change of our perspective to Christ's point-of-view guarantees victory not just in our lives, but in the lives of others. Even when attacks do come in the form of relentless thoughts that we know in our heart are not from God, we can "***take every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ***" (2 Corinthians 10.5), and victory is ours.

6. **Sword of the Spirit** - *And the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God.*



The Sword of the Spirit which is the **Word of God** is our only **offensive weapon**. The Word of God, **meaning Scriptures**, are effective in **tearing down** the works of the enemy and driving him away. Yet there are two key things we need to remember:

1. All our **defensive armor** should be in place when wielding the sword, because the enemy has weapons of his own.
2. The Sword should be sharpened, meaning we should mediate and know Scriptures in order to **wield** them.

When Jesus was in the desert fasting for forty days and forty nights while being tempted by Satan, His weapon was the sword of the Spirit –the word of God from Scriptures. The same word of God is our defense; we have the sword of God's Word that will defeat the enemy every time.

For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NIV)

On many occasions, when I have been confronted with temptation or debate with some individual I would recall a Scriptural verse and with an almost instantaneous result the temptation or the individual goes completely silent. The word of God speaks to the very core of our being, slicing through like a double-edged sword the facades, the confusion, and the deceptions.

Word of Warning (WOW): This is not something to be taken lightly. The Bible has been used as a weapon for spiritual abuse, especially in these days. For this reason, studying the Bible and being led by the Holy Spirit in the gift of discernment go hand-in-hand. In one case, Biblical knowledge can be used to confuse and deceive, while the other produces divine Godly wisdom when led by the Holy Spirit. Remember, Satan believes in God and he knows the words of the Bible cover-to-cover.



Jesus is also **the Word** as mentioned in the book of John:

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1:14 (NIV)

***In the beginning the Word already existed.
The Word was with God,
and the Word was God.
He existed in the beginning with God.
God created everything through him,
and nothing was created except through him.
The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.
The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it.***

John 1:1-5 (NLT)

Remember it is very simple and very basic – all roads lead to Jesus Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit you are becoming sensitive to Jesus' voice to lead you and guide you on this journey. He is always the Answer!

7. **PRAYER** -In addition, *praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints (intercessory prayer)*. This is clearly a powerful statement and insight, for Paul, the writer of these words, knew full well the strategy of the enemy. We are to continually, day by day and sometimes moment by moment, come to the Lord with our prayers and request for our own lives and the lives of others. This continual communion with Christ through prayer, along with consistent Spirit-led Bible study, serves to sharpen our ability to hear and discern His voice. Being watchful of these things and keeping alert to the enemy's strategy will bring awareness to the real fight:



For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)

Now think of yourself fully armored in spiritual regalia ready to face the day with any frontal attack. The question still begs, “Who is watching your back?” The person who fulfills that role is Jesus, through His Spirit, present in the body of believers whom you meet in *true fellowship*. The “*saints*” are fellow believers who stand with you in unity of prayer, unity of faith, accountability, and unconditional love in our mutual purpose in Jesus Christ.

Having done everything, we are to still stand firm...

The Battle Position

In the story of King Jehoshaphat, a great battle was about to ensue with his enemies from across the sea in Syria. Jehoshaphat was deeply afraid and went to the Lord in fasting and prayer along with his people. He cried out before the assembly of his people to God that they were defenseless against such a multitude of armies, that they did not know what to do –yet their eyes were upon him (2 Chronicles 20:12).

And God answered them:

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly.



And he said, “Listen, all you of Judah and you inhabitants of Jerusalem, and you, King Jehoshaphat! Thus says the LORD to you: ‘Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for **the battle is not yours, but God’s.**

Tomorrow go down against them. They will surely come up by the Ascent of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the brook before the Wilderness of Jeruel.

You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the LORD, who is with you, O Judah and Jerusalem!’ Do not fear or be dismayed; tomorrow go out against them, for the LORD is with you.”

2 Chronicles 20:14-17 (NKJV)

Believing in the power of the Lord, the people went out the next morning into the wilderness of Tekoa. And as they went out King Jehoshaphat told them to believe in the Lord and His prophets, and they would prosper. They went out into the battlefield singing and praising God for His mercy which endures forever. As they began to sing, the Lord set up ambushes against the various armies in which they defeated themselves. The armies which had come against Jehoshaphat destroyed one another and no one escaped. King Jehoshaphat and his people profited greatly from the bounty they collected from this battle which was won by God (2 Chronicles 20:1-30).

How incredible is this? Just the opposite of what we are prone to do in any type battle we are faced with in this world. We naturally want to strategize and figure out the conclusion and hope God will bless this approach. But would not the entire battle being won by God alone give complete glory and witness to the awesome power and love of God for His chosen – those who choose to believe in Him?

We do not serve a “God-in-a-box” that so many would want us to believe, we serve a God of the **impossible**. The battle position is that of praise and worship. If our focus and devotion is on Him, He will overcome for our sake. The battles belong to Him – and war has already been won through his Son Jesus Christ. No matter what our individual or corporate battles might be, the fact is we are to stand firm in this truth, in our battle position of praise and worship.



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Fourteen: The Armor & Battle Position

In personal journal or notebook:

1. Do you believe that you are in a war (spiritual or not)? If you are in doubt, take it to Christ and ask him to show you.
2. Have you, or have you known anyone, who struggles with addictions or obsessions? Can you spot “The Snake?”
3. It is now time for intercessory prayer. As you become sensitive to what is really being fought, stand in full armor and in complete authority in Jesus Christ and speak deliverance and freedom from bondage either for yourself and/or someone else. Then stand firm in faith and do not move from this position.
4. Keep standing firm in faith as you turn the entire situation over to Jesus Christ in complete surrender and trust. Now follow through with the “*King Jehoshaphat*”



strategy’ of praise and worship. Then delight yourself in the Lord, for he will give you the desires of your heart.

Does this sound too simple, even childlike? Do not even allow doubt to enter your mind, just lean not on your own understanding but trust in God alone.



Chapter Fifteen: Love ~ The Sum of it All

“Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.

Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us:

He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.”
1 John 4:7-9 (NIV)

“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in him.”

1 John 4:16 (NIV)

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.”

1 Corinthians 13: 1-3 (NIV)

We are all born wanting and needing love, and we spend our entire lives in search of it. Have you ever really asked yourself, why? For many of us, we search and as a result of disappointments, rejections, fear, hurt and just plain “looking for love in all the wrong places,” we stop looking. We settle for less than the best by allowing our hearts to harden to any



kind of genuine love and just play the game of worldly love limited by our own understanding. At first, this worldly type of love can be pretty exciting, but eventually it always leaves us wanting more. Even when we think we have found “true” love it never seems to fill up the place in our heart that only God can fill and to which every other type of love pales in comparison. That empty place is called the void – the abyss that we try filling up with everything else, but God.

The concept of love has been debated and studied for generations. It is at the very core of our being. But can Love be defined? In the English language we have (and use) but one word for love –derived from the Germanic form of the Sanskrit word, *lubh* (desire), and within this word are several aspects or natures.

Koine Greek came into vogue about 300 years before the birth of Jesus, and it became an obsolete language about three centuries after the Lord’s death. It was the most precise instrument for the conveyance of human thought that the world has ever known. Without doubt, this language was providentially employed by God in giving the world the New Testament revelation of his Son.¹³

Koine Greek contains several words that refer to the different aspects of our word love:

1. **Eros** love refers to passionate, intense desire for something and is generally referred to as sexual love or desire – from which our English word “erotic” is derived.
2. **Storge** love is used as a noun and refers to family affection.
3. **Philia** love is the word for genuine affection or heart-felt love. Can be associated with not only friendship, but loyalties to family or community.
4. **Agape** love is the noblest form of the meaning of love, not simply an emotion stirred within our hearts, but a principle by which we live that is wholly selfless and spiritual in nature.

The early Christians in the New Testament referred to “agape” love as the paternal, unearned love that God has for humanity – so great a love that God sent His only Son to die and be resurrected on our behalf. For mankind, agape love grows as the consequence of



faith in God. It is considered the gift of loving – even to the point of loving the unlovely, for it goes beyond “self.” God’s agape love is an all-encompassing and sum total of love that goes beyond our limited ability to define as a choice, an emotion, a principle or a gift.



“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-8 (NIV)

From the standpoint of man’s knowledge, limited definitions can be made for the term, “love.” Yet from the standpoint of eternal wisdom, the dynamics of love transcends both time and space. “Love” is where we came from and where we are going. Therefore, truly defining love is like trying to define the full nature of God – which for man is impossible.

Nevertheless, God expresses His love to us through His commandments which can only be obeyed by our submission to that love. Both the natural and the supernatural revolve around love – love of God and love for mankind.

This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.

1 John 3:6 (NIV)

No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

1 John 4:11-13 (NIV)

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him.

1 John 4:15-17 (NIV)



The Bible is all about love; Christ is all about love, and God IS Love. We must view love from the standpoint of verse 8 in 1John 4, “*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*” Think about this: God’s nature does not simply “love,” He IS “love.” (1John 4:16) This concept boggles the mind and begs the need to know more.

From the moment we are born, love encompasses our entire make-up. As babies we seek, out of pure instinctual survival, the love of our parents or caregivers. As young children, we need love in order to grow and to develop mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. As teenagers, certain aspects of love beckon us to broaden our sphere of influence. We begin testing the waters in a world apart from our parents. Love takes on a new and very exciting meaning. From experimenting as teens through young adulthood, love encompasses our world— and we are driven by that aspect of love that creates an almost overwhelming emotion. Many of our decisions, including lifelong decisions are based on this most powerful of loves – “Eros” love. Eros, Storge, and Philia love usually begin to assimilate together in adulthood, shaping a more rounded understanding of love, but not yet the entire picture. It is not until we truly experience “Agape” love that we are able to find the true peace within our being that cries out the rest of our lives. Peace comes from knowing deep within us that this is the kind of love we came from – that runs through the very core of our being. Once we are given the taste of this Love, we must have it at all cost.

Since God is love, and we were created and come from God, then we come from love. When we die, we meet our maker, God, Who is love. God is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end; therefore, love is the beginning and the end. And everywhere in between, we are looking for love – thus really looking for God. The only way to get to God is through His Son, Jesus Christ – Love incarnate by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the true meaning of love that surpasses all human knowledge.

“...and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 3:19 (NIV)

On our own we would never be able to come close to comprehending this love that is God’s. Indeed, God loved us so much that he sent His only Son – the manifestation of his love and



the only way to comprehending the fullness of God's love. There is no person, nor anything in our makeup, that can teach us this love and can teach us God but Jesus Christ. And it is more than just Christ teaching us and our comprehending; it is surrender to Divine love that is only manifested by our submission to the Holy Spirit, fashioned in true humility. This humility is not meekness, but a surrender that amounts to a total confidence in God. Otherwise, what we all are looking for, true love, could never be found. This submission to true love is what changes us on the inside. It is what allows allowing the Holy Spirit to lead and guide our transformation and the renewal of our minds throughout this lifetime, where Christ, the Light of the world, becomes evident through our very own life. That is the test. The only way to know God, to experience true love, is to walk through the trials and tribulations in our own personal journey in total confidence in God, with Christ at the helm. Doing otherwise, is to fail miserably – still looking, still wanting, still needing, and never finding.

"Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with your entire mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment.

And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

Matthew 22:36-40 (NIV)



What did Jesus say was the most important commandment? Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments (Matthew 22:36-40). My question was always, "How do I love my neighbor as myself, when I can't even seem to find love for myself?" Since the answer is Jesus Christ – the Way, the Truth and the Light of the world – I must take my focus off of me and my world and turn my focus toward Him.



The Lesson

In past experience, if I could not find the love I thought I wanted I would settle for being content with the love I had – even if it was far from complete. Unfortunately, part of this love was dependent upon the ability of others to make me happy and to fill the void. But no one person or thing ever could – I was looking for God’s love in all the wrong places. By my very nature I would try to take matters into my own hands – trying to achieve a balance of happiness and contentment by attempting to control my life and the lives of others. This grandiose, egocentric scheme accomplished nothing but to drain every ounce of energy out of me, leaving me empty, dissatisfied and feeling totally incomplete. My “EGO”, my way of Edging God Out, resulted in pushing everyone away from me either by way of constant argument or a know-it-all attitude. “If I could just make them see it *my way*, then *everything* would be just fine,” became my oftentimes self-delusional inner rhetoric.

It was not until God moved me to go beyond myself (get to the end of myself), to go beyond my comfort zone, and out of the Pit, and into “His world,” that life took on a new meaning. And one of the most profound tasks He called me to do was to “love the unlovely!” The people in this “unlovely” category were not individuals that I had no real emotional attachment to, but the very individuals I sought to escape from– the very ones who had and were hurting me most! While everything in my flesh rose up and flatly stated, “NO,” my heart, which now belonged to Christ, was saying, “Let Me take you there on this road to the yet unknown areas of your heart.” It was akin to jumping off a cliff and having the faith that God would catch me. That total leap of faith!

Amidst my doubt, God showed me the story of Hosea and his wife Gomer (Hosea 1-14). God had put on Hosea’s heart to marry Gomer, an adulterous wife, who then continued in her faithless ways. Hosea was told by the Lord, *“Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes”* (Hosea 3:1). Hosea was asked to “love the unlovely,” just like God loved the Israelites even though they continued in their spiritual adultery, turning away from him in faithlessness and debauchery.



This cycle of unfaithfulness and sin, forgiveness and reconciliation was not once, but many times. Each successive time Hosea was told to take his wife back – just like the Lord forgave the Israelites and forgives us.

So the age old question remains, “How many times must we forgive?” When Peter posed this same question to Jesus, he said, “*Lord, how many times should I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?*” Jesus answered, “*I tell you, not seven times, but seventy times seven.*” (Matthew 18: 21-22). In my human condition I feel that I have limits, but in God’s realm there are no limits.

“A God Experience”: **Loving the Unlovely.** *From the moment this concept of “God is Love” came to me in revelation, I could only imagine what agape love (God’s love) must really be like. That is until the tests came, and they came with such ferocity that God gained my complete attention. This was a real test of the heart bringing the heavenly realm into the earthly plane to see but a glimpse of the love God has for us.*

There is a particular individual in my life to which God gave me a love for that defies all explanation. This individual has fallen into the deception of the enemy and has allowed some of the cruelest emotional darts I have ever experienced to be flung carelessly from an uncontrollable tongue. The words were so cruel and heartless that I begged to God to take this love away that I have for this individual. But God will not. Instead the Holy Spirit fills me with a perspective of Christ’s own mind and gives me glimpse of just how much this particular individual is loved by God. This is the Love that cannot be denied. Truly this Love conquers all.

For me it has been very much like the imprisoned Christians being tortured by their captors and only feeling love and compassion for them, thus experiencing the true nature of Jesus Christ. In essence, it is really learning to love the unlovely – those who hate you and want to see you harmed. A walk with the Holy Spirit through this kind of trial brings an awakening to the heavenly dimension and all of the pieces of the puzzle to your life begin to become very clear.



It is by far one of the most difficult trials to overcome, and only possible by the power of the Holy Spirit. Every fiber of your physical being is enmeshed with your spiritual persona and love takes on divine meaning. This love propels you into complete obedience and humbled confidence in God's purpose and plan for life.

This lesson of “loving the unlovely” called for the power and prerogative of not my own will, but Christ through the Holy Spirit within me. None of us are genuinely capable of walking this path on our own. And while my flesh screamed for mercy, my ego cried for justice, and my heart bemoaned relief, this one lesson took me beyond myself more than any other. It showed me just how long-suffering God had been with me all along. It spoke to me of my own self-centered nature, and showed me something much bigger than my own little world. This was not a quick process. I went through months and even years of doubt, questioning and reaffirming, and struggling beyond what I thought I was capable of mentally or physically.

Whenever I would question God as to the validity of this part of His calling for me, He would take me through another revelation which invariably would bring me back to the same answer, “Yes, my child, this is where I want you to be.” It was the place of my ultimate learning, because I had to lean on Him the whole way. My flesh would beckon me in other directions and I would attempt to compromise, but the Lord blocked all efforts for me to find my way out—on my own. I had to walk through the fire *with* Him and *in* Him.

Even friends and family, in their limited perception of the situation, would attempt to sway me into “settling” for something short of victory. Even the so-called “experts” in counseling and pastoral advice would only serve to cloud God's purpose, and expose their own limited understanding and lack of trust in God and his ways. This was not just a matter of my being stubborn, or rebellious, or living “in denial”—as others all too often tried to label trust in Christ. I had to go beyond my understanding and the understanding of my peers in order to trust wholly in God.



“All God's men are ordinary men made extraordinary by the matter He has given them.

Never choose to be a worker, but when God has put His call on you, woe be to you if you turn to the right hand or to the left. He will do with you what he never did with you before the call came; He will do with you what He is not doing with other people. Let Him have His way.”¹⁴

Oswald Chambers My Utmost For His Highest

Initially, I was stunned when quite by *accident* I came to these particular words from Oswald Chambers' daily devotional for October 25th. It was yet another confirmation that fell into my lap while writing this chapter and confirmed yet again that Christ had me on His path. I can testify to these words Mr. Chamber's wrote because I tried to turn to the right and to the left many times until God blocked my path. For instance, when I would try and take the reins and get back into the secular world, doing things the way everyone expected, I would just step back on that merry-go-round and end up right where I had left off.

This path the Holy Spirit had me on required a level of patience and perseverance that I was totally unfamiliar with – let alone possessed. The very words themselves along with the word “humility” sent chills up my spine and tweaked my flesh. I could picture Mother Theresa or some “Sainted” monk giving up everything and living in an old weather-beaten monastery in order to follow Christ. A very noble cause, but that was not me in my ignoble life. I could never do that, nor ever had the desire to. The only thing I knew was that I needed to get out of the Pit. So I had to surrender, and “*Let him have His way.*”

Yet what blossomed as Christ walked me through this lesson was some of the most incredible “fruits” I have ever experienced that prove ***without a shadow of doubt*** God's hand in my life and the lives of others. As a result, my perspective is changing and my mind is being renewed. None of this would have been possible without these events being wrapped up entirely in God's grace.



By His grace, God allowed me to get exactly where I needed to be – to the place of surrender! Then, He gave me the grace to find the truth and grasp a glimpse of the real power in humility – for *God resists the proud and gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5)– to discover that leaning on Him could take us, all of us, out of the Pit.

Getting Honest

Each of our paths is unique, and God's timing is quite different in each case. My personal clog in the wheel was trying to figure out why others in my life seem to be on different paths with very different timing. From my own perspective, my progress seemed to be much faster than theirs and I was frustrated that they did not even seem to be on the same path, let alone the same timing. This was one of my hardest fought lessons and taught me a lot about myself.

I experienced my era of being one of Job's friends, and putting God-in-a-box. And not just with my loved one's journey, but anyone who came into my path. The little bit of knowledge I gained became a dangerous thing when my old friend Ego would join the party. And along with pride came the yoke of judgmentalism.

From judgmentalism grew the paralysis of analysis which kept me busy looking at other's problems rather than getting honest with myself. God allowed me to remain on this plateau of judgmental hell for quite a while. Nevertheless, Christ gently began to increase my capacity to trust Him by these personalized lessons. It was only then that I was able to look not at others perceived faults, but look at myself honestly and the role I played. He gave me the freedom **not** to carry this yoke of condemnation around with me. As more of Him entered my life, the less I would see "EGO."

This is a lifelong journey, and now I have awareness that I never knew existed. So now, when the enemy attempts to steal victories from me and I am again revisited with pride and



judgmentalism, I recognize his strategy and have learned how to cut it off at the pass. I am learning to listen to that gentle nudge of the Holy Spirit to do **what is right** – even when the right things are not happening around me. I now **understand and remember** that a Spiritual war is going on and that Christ has already won this war, and I am to **walk it out with Him** and my fellow brothers and sister *in victory*.

I now recognize that God let me search the world over to find Him. But not until I came to the point of surrendering to Jesus directly through the power of His Holy Spirit did the “relationship” begin. Christ is really there– ready, willing, and able to take the lead. What stood in my way was me, and my lack of faith. So what I learned through each test of faith was that I was a step closer to God, a step closer to a love that has no boundaries and fills up the void to overflowing – true Agape love.

The faith walk with Christ at the helm, as a result of my continual surrender to him, gives me the truth about love. Now I walk day by day, and sometimes moment by moment, in that love. I relate to others by that love, because I see them through the eyes of a heart refined in love – only achieved through a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. I can now love my neighbor as myself and actually understand what that means. I can now not be afraid, because perfect love casts out all fear. I can now not take offense, not be jealous, not be envious, put money and material things in proper perspective, and not be arrogant, judgmental, or unforgiving.

My past has been forgiven and I am healed from all hurt, disappointments, condemnation, or guilt for I am worthy through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. I now trust that my future is in the best of hands and I do not have to worry anymore. My present day is filled with the grace of God’s love for me as I walk through each moment in intimate relationship with Him. As the day presents its challenges, my refined perspective now sees these as opportunities to discover more of Christ in my life and just how amazing God really is.



This sounds impossible to most as it once did to me, but now I know it is possible. I will never be perfect in this life and will continue to learn – especially through the mistakes – knowing that the perfection lies in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit as He guides me. And because I trust in Him and wait on Him, He gives me not just the best, but the very best.

All pathways out of the Pit lead to God by way of the manifestation of His pure love which is Jesus Christ, and by the power of His Holy Spirit guiding His children. The love I had been searching for all of my life was there all along.



***I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.***

Psalm 40:1-3 (NKJV)



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Chapter Fifteen: Love – the Sum of it All

In personal journal or notebook:

This book is not just about my journey, it is also about your journey with Christ. The Personal Journey:

- A journey of change...
- A journey of learning...
- A journey of renewal...
- A journey of true fellowship...
- A journey of unconditional love...

... which is through a personal intimate relationship with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now that you have come to the end of the book it is time for you to continue on the journey of a lifetime with Jesus Christ one day at a time. You are out of the Pit and on the Path, now is the time for you to write your own testimony.



Please share your testimony with others, spread the Word... [If you would like to share online please feel free to email me at \[regina@pathwayoutofthepit.com\]\(mailto:regina@pathwayoutofthepit.com\) or visit <http://www.gnbm.org/journey.html> .](#)



THE PERSONAL JOURNEY

Online

In partnership with **Good News Broadcasting & Multimedia (GNBM.org)**, *Pathway Out of The Pit: The Personal Journey* will offer online resources through live streaming, pre-recorded video series, audio podcasting and online webinar Recovery groups.

For more information or updates go to: www.gnbm.org/journey.html



Suggested Resources

Online Ministries

1. Dr. Charles Stanley – In Touch

This website offers a wealth of audio and visual sermons, online Bible studies, teaching and daily devotionals. You can also subscribe for free to the In Touch monthly magazine which is full of inspirational stories and a daily devotional called *Early Light*.

Dr. Stanley's sermons are also available on television.

<http://www.intouch.org>

In Touch Ministries
P.O. Box 7900
Atlanta, GA 30357
(800) 789-1479
(770) 451-1001

2. Joyce Meyer Ministries

This website also offers audio and visual sermons, teachings and studies. She holds live conferences throughout the year in various cities. In addition, Joyce Meyers is also available on television on a daily schedule at various times throughout the day.

<http://www.joycemeyer.org>

Joyce Meyer Ministries – Headquarters
P.O. Box 655



Fenton, MO 63026
(800) 727-9673
(636) 349-0303 (outside the US)

3. Rick Warren – Purpose Driven Life

This website offers excellent daily devotionals and Bible studies you can do online. Rick Warren is the author of “*Purpose Driven Life*,” a best-selling inspirational book that serves as a blueprint for Christian living. The website also offers links call “Free Tools” to free resources available, including a link to the Celebrate Recovery website, a 12-step Christ-centered recovery program.

<http://www.purposedrivenlife.com>

PurposeDrivenLife.com
1 Saddleback Parkway
Lake Forest, CA 92630

4. RBC Ministries – My Utmost For His Highest

This website offers a daily devotional from Oswald Chambers (1874-1917) book “*My Utmost for His Highest*”, providing powerful words of comfort and wisdom. In addition, the website serves as a research tool into the questions we most often ask ourselves.

<http://www.rbc.org/utmost/index.php>

RBC Ministries
P.O. Box 2222
Grand Rapids, MI 49501
(616) 974-2210

5. Got Questions Ministries

GotQuestions.org is a volunteer ministry of dedicated and trained servants who have a desire to assist others in their understanding of God, Scripture, salvation, and other spiritual topics. They are Christian, Protestant, conservative, evangelical, fundamental, and non-denominational. We view ourselves as a para-church ministry, coming alongside the church to help people find answers to their spiritually related questions.

<http://www.gotquestions.org/>

6. The Truth Project / Focus on the Family Ministries

Today's believers live very similarly to non-believers. A personal sense of significance is rarely experienced, we spend our money and time on things that fail to satisfy and



we begin to wonder what life's ultimate purpose really is. We are, in short, losing our bearings as a people and a nation.

To counter this slide within the body of Christ, Focus on the Family one of the most ambitious and powerful projects in the history of our ministry—Focus on the Family's The Truth Project.

<http://www.thetruthproject.org/>
<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/>
Focus on the Family
Colorado Springs, CO 80995
(800) 232-6459

Online Bibles

1. **International Bible Society**
Complete online Bible Studies and resources.
<http://www.ibs.org>
2. **BibleGateway.com**
Complete online Bible resource.
<http://www.Biblegateway.org>
3. **Bible.com**
Complete online Bible resource.
<http://www.Bible.com>

Online Audio Sermon

1. **OnePlace.com**
Complete online resource for audio sermons by various Ministers. Many sermons are free to listen and download, others will require a fee.
<http://www.oneplace.com>
2. **Preach It Audio**
Complete audio sermons from Preachers past and present. This site requires membership registration for a fee to access audios.



<http://www.preachitaudio.com>

3. SermonAudio.com

Free website that offers extensive list of audio sermons and .PDF (Portable Document Files) for viewing from Preachers past and present. An email address will be requested to listen to audios.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com>

Online TV or Video

1. Good New Broadcasting & Multimedia

Good News Broadcasting and Multimedia is a faith-based international non-profit organization dedicated to spreading the Good News of Jesus Christ throughout the world via modern multimedia technology. The intent is to produce, aggregate and distribute quality Christian content in a simple Holy Spirit-led format that reaches all ages throughout the world.

<http://www.gnbm.org>

2. Inspiration.Net

A resource for online television programming that includes numerous television sermons in video format from numerous Preachers on television today.

<http://www.inspiration.net>

Other Resources

1. Christianbooks.com

If finding a good Christian book is what you seek, try this fantastic online resource for any Christian book available in the market. Click on the Logo to take you to the website.



Christianbooks.com

2. Recovery Groups for anyone with a “Hurt, Habit, or Hang-up”



- Celebrate Recovery
(<http://www.celebraterecovery.com/>)
- Addictions Victorious
(<http://www.alcoholicsvictorious.org/meetings/>)
- Alcoholics Victorious
(<http://www.addvicinc.org/meetings.html>)
- Alcoholics for Christ
(<http://www.alcoholicsforchrist.com/meetings.htm>)
- Christians in Recovery
(<http://christians-in-recovery.org/>)
- Overcomers Outreach
(<http://www.overcomersoutreach.org/page3.html>)
- Turning Point Ministries
(<http://www.livingfree.org/>)



Endnotes

Chapter One: You Are Not Alone

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² *"God Meant it For Good,"* By J. T. Kendall, Morning Star Publications 1986, 33.

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³ *"Advice from Fiends,"* & *"Where Can Wisdom Be Found?"* Chart; Life Application Study Bible, New International Version; 847 & 875

⁴ *"Where Can Wisdom Be Found?"* Chart; Life Application Study Bible, New International Version; page 875

Chapter Four: The Salvation Journey

⁵ "Who is the Holy Spirit?" *Got Questions Ministries* - www.gotquestions.org - Bible Questions Answered (<http://www.gotquestions.org/about.html#Copyright>)

⁶ "How can I be filled with the Holy Spirit?" *Got Questions Ministries* - www.gotquestions.org - Bible Questions Answered (<http://www.gotquestions.org/about.html#Copyright>)

Chapter Six: One Day at a Time

⁷ *"Tortured for Christ,"* Richard Wurnbrand, Page 78. Voice of the Martyrs, Inc. 1967, 1998. Living Sacrafice Book Company, Bartlesille, OK 74005. Free copy available online:

http://www.torturedforchrist.com/?page_id=7

Chapter Eight: Breaking Footholds and Strongholds



⁸ Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com>, Lexico Publishing Group, LLC

⁹ “Taken from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, © 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co., renewed © 1963 by the Oswald Chambers Publications Assn., Ltd. Used by permission of Discovery House Publishers, Grand Rapids MI 49501. All rights reserved.
Rapids, MI 49501 <http://www.myutmost.org/07/0718.html> .

Chapter Nine: Walking Out the Victory

¹⁰ “What is the meaning of redemption?” Got Questions.org;
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Chapter Ten: The Stand For Family

¹¹ Conwell, Russell Herman. *Acres of Diamonds*. New York: Harper & Brothers 1915. Copyright status: Public Domain. Website:
<http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/rconwellacresofdiamonds.htm>

Chapter Thirteen: The Power of True Fellowship

¹² Dictionary.com, www.dictionary.com. The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition Copyright © 2006 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Published by Houghton Mifflin Company.

Chapter Fifteen: Love – The Sum of it All



¹³ *The Challenge of "Agape" Love*, by Wayne Jackson, June 10, 1999, ChristianCourier.com,
http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/read/the_challenge_of_agape_love

¹⁴ Taken from *My Utmost for His Highest* by Oswald Chambers, © 1935 by Dodd Mead & Co.,
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Rapids, MI 49501, <http://www.myutmost.org/10/1025.html>