

Victorious Living

AS YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN TAUGHT

Unmasking What Steals the Joy

and

Emotional

Mental

Physical

Financial

Relational

health

God Purchased for You

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**What hurts
hang-ups
habits
health problems
relationship heartaches
or financial headaches
would you like to
live *w i t h o u t*?**

ADD or ADHD	Acid reflux	Addiction	Alcohol compulsion
Allergies	Food allergy	Food intolerance	Approval addiction
Arrogance	Alzheimer's	Anger	Anorexia
Anxiety	Arthritic or Joint problem	Ashamed/shame	Autoimmune condition
Back problem	Bankrupt	Bitterness	Blaming
High or low blood pressure	High or low blood sugar	Breathing issue	Busy/preoccupied
Bulimia	Cancer	Codependent	Contentious
Cholesterol problem	Circulation issue	Condemnation	Crohn's or other Bowel issue(s)
Chronic constipation	Compulsion(s)	Controlling	Excessive debt
Dementia	Melancholy or Depression	Despair	Digestion issue
Doubt or Unbelief	Driven	Drug addiction	Prescription drug abuse
Eating disorder	Emptiness	Endometriosis	Erectile dysfunction
Exercise compulsion	Envy	Fear of abandonment	Fear of rejection
Fibromyalgia	Financial distress	Fixation(s)	Gambling compulsion
Glandular problem	Gluttony	Gossip	Greed
Gallbladder	Gut issue	Hatred	Hardened heart
Heart disease	Headaches	Heartbroken	Heartburn
Hoarding	Chemical hypersensitivity	Aroma hypersensitivity	Hormone issue
Immune system problem	Infertility or sterility	Inflammatory issue	Insecurity
Insomnia	Jealousy	Judgmental	Kidney stone or condition

What hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches,
or financial headaches would you like to live *without*?

Leukemia	Lewdness	Lonely	Low self-esteem
Lukewarm	Lupus	Lust compulsion	Materialistic
Migraines	Unsettled mind	Miscarriage(s)	Money obsession
Metabolic or weight problem	Negativity	Neurological problem(s)	Nicotine compulsion
OCD	Obesity	Obsession(s)	Oppression
Oppressive	Osteoporosis	Over or under-achiever	Oversensitive
Pain	Parkinson's	Passive	Lack of peace inside
Perfectionist	Personalize what's not personal	Fearful/Phobia(s)/phobic	Pornography compulsion
Poverty	Overspending	Pretentious	Pride
Prostate problem	Procrastination	PTSD	Resentment
Respiratory issue	Dysfunctional relationship(s)	Fractured relationship(s)	Painful relationship(s)
Religious righteousness	Inordinately quiet	Prolonged sadness	Scleroderma
Selfish	Self-abuse	Self-centered	Self-pity
Self-righteous	Self-unforgiveness	Meaningless sex	Shopping compulsion
Sinus issue	Skin condition	Sleep issue	Obsessive social media
Compulsive spending	Spiritually complacent/smug	Sports obsession	Stress
Stomach problem(s)	Stroke	Excessive talking	Thyroid issue
Tumor or cyst	TV Compulsion	Ulcer	Unforgiveness
Unteachable	Vain/vanity	Victim	Victimizing
Violent	Compulsive working	Worry	Any other _____

A Warm Welcome!

The warmest of welcomes to you and yours, sincerely. Realizing genuine joy and emotional, mental, physical, financial, and relational health & wellness is a challenging yet rewarding journey. May this Bible study richly bless you and those you love in this rich journey. As 3 John 1:2 proclaims, “I pray above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers!”

What You Are About to Receive

Be reminded that God graciously informs us at Hosea 4:6-8 NKJV, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...” Note that God did not say, “My people *were* destroyed for lack of knowledge...” Rather, God said, “My people *are* destroyed for lack knowledge.” God is referring to relational knowledge of Him, His ways, the ways of the opposition, and the ways of sin.

This Bible study unveils our Bible’s unique insight into how emotional, mental, physical, financial, and relational “issues” have developed in the lives of our generations—our family tree—as well as in our own lives. And as expected, it not only biblically establishes that no issue is irreversible but that that truth bears its fruit in your life. You can be a living blessing to others!

Start by Receiving Not Doing

Scripture is filled with exhortations to “set our minds on things above,” not on the negatives we see around us in the natural. God graciously informs us at John 3:17: “For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.” And He continues at 2 Corinthians 5:19 with, “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell and show others.” Without a doubt, this includes what He is helping us to believe about others as well as ourselves.

We can believe the best about ourselves when we believe the truth about who we are to Jesus.

If we try to believe our best based on sheer willpower, we will eventually come to the end of our own strength. If we come to God first and restore our souls in how He believes the best of us, then we will have an abundance of security, purpose, and goodness to give away.

Instead of 'believing our best' becoming a command that we feel the weight of keeping, our experience of God becomes a place of restoration—regardless of our situation. So consider taking these steps:

1. Read this Bible study about how God desires us to believe Him from a stance that He is going to be all these things to you first (Rom. 11:36; John 3:27; 1 John 4:16).

Start by receiving, not doing. From that place, allow this study to create a sense of anticipation for you, not apprehension that you can't live up to them (Eph. 2:8-9; Php. 3:9; Titus 3:4-5).

2. Ask God to enable you to see you as He does.

Look at yourself through His unconditionally loving, forgiving eyes and begin to think from that perspective; there is zero expectation to perform, as your faith is not in your works but in what Jesus has already done. (Eph. 1:4-11; Php. 3:9; Titus 3:4-5; Heb. 4:9-10).

3. God realizes there is no such thing as perfection in a descendant of Adam. "God showed His great love for you by sending Christ to die for you while you were still a sinner [at your worst]!" (Rom. 5:8; Eph. 2:1-9; 1 John 1:8).

God made you for relationship with Him, and with others (Gen. 3:8-9; Matt. 22:37-40; John 17; Eph. 1:5). And it is impossible to grow in relationship in an atmosphere of disapproval. That also applies to your 'believing the best about yourself' is not about ignoring faults, but about recognizing that we all hope to become more and more like Jesus, more and more free from hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches and financial headaches.

We are all a work-in-progress deserving of His mercy, grace and love! (Rom. 5:16; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; Heb 4:16; 1 Pet. 1:2-3.)

The Miracle of Adam's Creation

Personal Needs

We all have *needs*—emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial needs. Please consider that to enjoy the victorious, happy, joyful, and healthy fulfillment of the same we've got to briefly review the beginning.

The Breath of Life

Consider the unique and wonder-filled way in which Adam—the ancestor of our race—was created. In John 1:1–2, we discover that the actual agent in creation was not God the Father, but the divine Word who was with God from eternity—the Person who was later manifested in human history as Jesus of Nazareth: “All things were made through Him [the Word], and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3; see also Colossians 1:16).

Creation, as a whole, was brought about by the spoken word of God: “By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God” (Hebrews 11:3). “For He spoke and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalm 33:9). But as described in Genesis 2:7, the creation of Adam was uniquely different: “And the Lord God formed [molded] man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being [literally, a living soul].”

Picture the scene! The Lord didn't speak humankind into existence, rather He used His hands. He stooped down, took dust in His hands, mixed it with water, and molded it into the body of a man. So there it was—the most perfect piece of sculpture ever fashioned—more perfect than any masterpiece of Michelangelo. But it was lifeless! Then something marvelous happened. The Creator leaned forward, putting His divine lips against the lips of clay and His divine nostrils against the nostrils of clay. Then He breathed into those lips and nostrils. His breath penetrated the form of clay and transformed it into a living human being, with every organ of its body

functioning perfectly, and with all the marvelous spiritual, intellectual, and emotional responses of which a human being is capable. No other being has ever been created in such a way.

A Powerful Breath

The words used to describe this miracle are particularly vivid. Hebrew is one of those languages in which the sound of certain words is directly related to the action which they describe. The sound of the Hebrew word translated *breathed* can be rendered *yipakh*. It consists of a tiny internal “explosion,” followed by a forceful, ongoing release of air from the throat. Thus, it vividly represents the action which it describes.

As the Lord breathed into those lips and nostrils of clay, He did not let out a droopy sigh—He forcefully breathed *Himself* into that body of clay, which thus received a miraculous impartation of the very life of God!

Immediately, humankind became a triune being, composed of spirit, soul, and body (see 1 Thessalonians 5:23). The spirit came from the inbreathed breath of God transforming humankind’s body of clay into living, pulsating flesh. His soul, produced by the uniting of spirit and body, became a unique, individual personality, capable of making its own decisions—I will, or I will not.

“And the LORD God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make a helper for him.’ ...And the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the LORD God took a part of the man’s side and closed up the opening. Then the LORD God made a woman from the part of the man’s side [heart], and brought her to the man...” (Genesis 2:18-22)

Now Eve’s soul too, produced by the uniting of spirit and body, became a unique, individual personality, capable of making its own decisions—I will, or I will not. Woman is said not to have been taken out of man’s head to be lorded over by him, nor from his feet to be trampled on by him, but from his side to be equal with him, from

under his arm to be protected by him, and from his heart to be loved by him.

The Kingdom of God is universal—God is the Supreme Moral Governor of the universe, and everything was in harmony with His plan and “very good.” (Gen. 1; Job 38; Daniel 4; 1 John 4:8).

Secure Meaningful Identity

Adam and Eve knew their Maker and they knew their Maker’s delightful perception of them. They knew their value, that they were made in love, through love, and because of love; “God is love.” They knew that they were “made as God’s image and likeness (Gen. 1:26; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).” Adam & Eve truly felt secure.

They also enjoyed a meaningful purpose—Adam had already chosen names for all the other living creatures when God said to Adam & Eve, “be fruitful and multiply...have dominion over every living thing upon the earth (Gen. 1:28; 2:19, 20).” From the moment they were formed, their needs were already fully met in a personal relationship with God unmarred by sin. Zero stress, zero worries. Their value, their true *identity*—their maker’s perception of them, and who He was for them—was a quality already within their personalities, so they never needed to give it a second thought.

God’s Representatives

Together with his God-given mate, Adam was appointed to rule the earth as God’s representative (Genesis 1:26-2:15; Ps. 8:4-8; 115:16; Heb. 2:6-8). The triunity of his inner nature represented the likeness of the triune God. Both in his inward nature and his outward form, he uniquely re-presented God to the rest of earth’s creatures.

Furthermore, Adam and Eve enjoyed regular personal fellowship with the Lord. At the close of each day He came to spend time with them (Gen. 3:8). God’s will is always to live life *with* His kids. And who knows what revelations of Himself God shared with them!

In spite of this privileged relationship, the greatest tragedy of human history followed. Tricked by Satan's false accusations, Adam and Eve traded their God-given identity with its inheritance for a piece of fruit. This disobedience affected every part of Adam's triune nature. His spirit—now cut off from God—had instantly changed masters. In his soul he became a rebel, at war with his maker from that time onward. His body became subject to emotional, mental, and physical malady, aging, and ultimately death.

God had warned Adam concerning the tree of knowledge, "In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (Gen. 2:17)." It was Adam's spirit that "died"—changed masters—yet his body did not die for more than 900 years.

The First Con The First Coup

When Adam & Eve fell, the results were catastrophic. They, and therefore humankind, lost dominion of the earth realm and Satan gained it. This world changed governments—from God's Kingdom to Satan's kingdom. Utterly wicked. And as always, God was graciously truthful with Adam & Eve and with us: Doubting God's love, violating His word bears consequence—a separation from His blessings—a curse (Gen. 4:11; Deut. 28:15-67; Prov. 26:2; Jer. 11:3; 17:5; 1 Cor. 16:22; Gal. 1:8; 5:4).

"Cursed is the earth because of you, Adam" (Gen. 3:17)

"The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one [the devil]." (1 John 5:19)

Recorded at Luke 11:18, Jesus stipulates Satan's jurisdiction as a "kingdom." The original Greek word used is *basileia*, meaning "(through the notion of a foundation of power); a sovereign realm with rulership and reign;" *a government system*. (Author's emphasis throughout.)

"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood [ourselves, peoples], but...against the *spiritual forces of evil* in the heavenly realms (Eph. 6:12)."

Satan is by nature deceptive, often masquerading as a place of light, happiness, success, health, and healing. Second Corinthians 11:14-15 informs us that, "Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness."

"...*Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air*... is the spirit at work in the children of disobedience (Eph. 2:2)."

"...*The god of this age [the devil]* has blinded those who are perishing..." (2 Cor. 4:4)

"Make the most of every opportunity for doing good in *these evil days* (Eph. 5:16)."

"Be self-controlled and alert. *Your* enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour (1 Pet. 5:8 NIV)."

Revelations 12:8-10 also graciously informs Christians about the cunning Devil and his disciples:

"And the dragon...and his angels were forced out of heaven. This great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, the one deceiving the whole world... Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, 'It has come at last—salvation and power and the Kingdom of our God, and the authority of His Christ. For the *accuser of our brothers and sisters*...has been thrown down...the one who accuses them [our brothers and sisters] before our God *day and night*.'"

Evidently and experientially, our enemy accuses *us Christians*, continuously—"day and night." Please note that our enemy

accuses each of us in three ways: He accuses others to us so we blame others and not him. He accuses God to us so we blame God and not him. And he accuses us to ourselves so we blame ourselves and not him. (Gen. 3:1, 4, 5, 10-13; Eph. 6:12; Rom. 7:20-23; Rev. 12:9-10).

2 Timothy 2:16-26 also alerts Christians: “Herman and Phillip (Hymenaeus and Philetus) *have left* the path of truth...and they have *undermined the faith* of some... Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will come to their senses and *escape from the Devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do whatever he [the Devil] wants.*”

The Bible warns that the Devil's evil influence will reach new heights in the future (Mark 13:22; 2 Thess. 2:9; 1 Timothy 4:1).

Although God is totally in charge, God is graciously informing us that He is not in control. This is according to God's own words (quoted above). He (love) does not want to *control*.

Scripture also reveals that God sovereignly permits these evil spirits, their expression of sin and its devastating effects for only a finite time, until His coming judgment.

First Corinthians 10:13 confirms to us: “Remember...God is faithful. He will keep temptation from becoming so strong that you can't stand up against it. When you are tempted, *He will show you a way out* so that you will not give in to it.” (See also Psalms 11:4-7; 24:1; 89:33-34; 96:1-13; Romans 2:1-16.)

Please notice that our Bible graciously informs us that everything is spiritual. Religious traditions do not teach us this, but God's word does. “We do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Cor. 4:18; 5:16). Our adversary and his weapons are distinctly spiritual (Rom. 7:15-23; see also above passages). And our God, His weapons, His solutions, our weapons and remedies are “not carnal;

they are *spiritual*” (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Mk. 7:18-23; John 4:24; 6:63; 1 Cor. 2:4-5, 10-16; 2 Cor. 5:7; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:3; Heb. 1:3; 8:10; 10:16). This will be gently proven more and more in this study, for your benefit.

The Very First Stolen Identity

Adam & Eve's identity, formerly an attribute, now became a great need to be met. Even though God did not turn His back on them, leave them or reject them, Adam & Eve suddenly hid from God in fear of His rejection (Gen. 3:8-9). They both immediately blamed another for their sin. Fear suddenly came; they were now stressed; they immediately felt ashamed; they suddenly felt worthless, insecure (Gen. 3:10-13). And this negativity came immediately into their lives by Satan—unlearned—they *were not taught it*.

The earth realm was now cursed, and it was now necessary for Adam to “work by the sweat of his brow.” In addition to insecurity, Adam now was wrestling with the loss of meaningful purpose, significance. There was now a struggle between man and opposition (Gen. 3:17-19).

After the fall, Adam & Eve and therefore humanity, lost their innocence and gained shame. We lost our security—dependence on the length, width, height, and depth of God's love—and gained the insecurity of independence. We lost our meaningful purpose of serving God and became self-serving. After the fall, humanity lost our true identity and gained a self-reliant, self-serving mindset; an “orphan” identity.

Jesus directly connects *identity* with both the security and the meaningful purpose that it provides us at John 8:29: “*He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him.*”

And Jesus, our redeemer, is our pattern and our power in life. “He is the way [the *journey*], the truth, and the life.”

Fallout from The Fall

After the Fall, corruption, evil, suffering, dis-ease, and death now reigned in the earth realm (Romans 5:12). Adam & Eve were now under a sin-cursed, deviant government system. Satan's kingdom could not provide the needs of humanity. These needs included emotional, mental, physical, financial and relational health.

Stress (fear) had come (Gen. 3:10).

As we've clearly seen in the last section, this sin-cursed world system is still in effect today. Our emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial health is opposed because of this twisted kingdom. Naturally, wellness in these areas now requires labor—time, energy, and money. For some, physical health and wellness don't even exist at birth.

This warped system is what we have been raised in—it is “normal” for us. The self-reliant (orphan) mindset has been perpetuated in every one of Adam & Eve's descendants, deeply ingrained in each of us. It even operates beyond our conscious level. And because of this sin-cursed world system, stress (fear) is now “normal.” For example, the *U.S. National Institutes of Health* states that “75 – 90% of visits to the doctor are now related to stress.”

“When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned. (Rom. 5:12)” When Adam sinned, mental, emotional, physical, relational, and financial issues entered the world, and these issues spread to everyone. It seems “normal” for us to live with hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartache or financial headache. And sadly, we Christians bear the same ‘issues’ as non-Christians, and at the same rate of occurrence.

Satan continues to deceive each of us into living as an independent; he steals our identity; he cunningly convinces us that our identity is based on trying to live up to how God wants us to live, and our ability to please others. Satan's first target is us, followers of Jesus.

“This equation reflects Satan's primary lie:”

Identity = Performance [good works] + Others' opinions¹

In Christ, our works are not *for* God, but *of* God. And as you continue in this Bible study, you will realize that Romans 4--7 and Galatians 2--5 confirm that, "when we try to keep rules, law [behave right, perform], it condemns us" because we can never do, or not do, well enough. The devil's primary lie inevitably produces hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartache, and/or financial headache.

The enemy of your soul does not give you any freedom to fail. He wants you to live in relentless bondage to performance and hiding behind your fig leaf when you fall short. Every one of us, without exception, have experienced a level of inner pain, hurt, and disappointment in life—a type of wound which is very hard to bear. This is stated so succinctly in James 3:2, "For we all stumble in many things." And it is described quite accurately in Proverbs 18:14: "The spirit of a person can endure their infirmity, but a wounded spirit who can bear?" We, with an independent (orphan) mindset, suffer from just such a wound in our spirit. We may tolerate a lot of things, but a wounded spirit is an unbearable affliction. (Other common terms for this wound would be trauma, shock, humiliation, or heartbreak. See also Proverbs 15:4, 13)

That is a primary reason Jesus promises each of us at John 14:18: "I will not leave you as orphans [independents]." (Be reminded that He was encouraging His followers, not unbelievers. That is good news!)

Deeper Than We Realize

Scripture also says in 1 Corinthians 2, "For who knows the things of a person except their *own spirit* which is within them? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God" (verse 11). The spirit of a person is deeper than the mental understanding or the faculties of memory and reason, and that spirit is the only thing that knows all about you. Your mind doesn't know all about you. There are things about you that your mind hasn't yet discovered. It is very possible to carry wounds, trauma, for years that your mind never

knows about—deeper than the mind, deeper than reason, deeper than the memory. It is in the spirit.

The independent (orphan) attitude is in that deep area in our spirit. And often, *because it's so deep, we do not even realize our problem.*

This subtle independent (orphan) spirit can begin at any age, even before we are born. King David reminds us of our condition at Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity; sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

Vulnerable Targets

Again, this independent perspective can begin at any age. It may also come later in life. Like the woman we read about in Isaiah 54:6. This is a very poignant picture of a brokenhearted recently married woman: "'For the LORD has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife, when you were refused,' says your God." A wife may love her husband and have a picture in her mind of what married life should be. She imagines how her husband is going to love her, and how she'll be blessed with children. But somehow it turns out otherwise. Maybe the husband loves her for a little while, but then gets interested in another woman. Or he may be one of those men who just doesn't know how to show love. After a while this young woman feels, "My husband doesn't want me. He doesn't care for me. He doesn't devote time to me." Scripture describes her as "forsaken and grieved in *spirit*." "The spirit of a person will sustain their infirmity, but a wounded spirit [trauma] who can bear?"

This leads us to another example. All of us have known of a church pastor with a lovely wife and children, who got caught having an extramarital affair. Even our spiritual gifts do not free us from the independent drive. It drives many to become posers, looking for manhood in detrimental ways. And the independent outlook tempts many women to give their precious body away in hopes of feeling the love and intimacy an independent lacks. Some of us may cheat on a

committed romantic companion—even though we know it’s wrong, and even if the cheating is only emotional—*in order to feel worthwhile*.

As an early result of the independent (orphan) spirit, the co-author of this Bible study felt indifference. Outwardly I was very friendly. I talked to people, I joked a lot, but there was something inside me they—and I—could not get through. Not surprisingly, one of my main goals became to obtain acceptance, validation, recognition, and as a guy, especially from women. And these thoughts, feelings, and goals took place beyond my conscious level.

After indifference came rebellion. And rebellion led to what our Bible calls ‘witchcraft,’ which isn’t such an obvious connection, but is closely associated to rebellion in Scripture. 1 Samuel 15:23 states, “Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft.” When I say witchcraft, I mean the occult realm—including seeking false spiritual experiences (pursuing an identity). I didn’t consciously realize that this is really an expression of rebellion—turning from the true God to a false god (Exodus 20:3). Using Saul as an example, I now see that witchcraft also leads ultimately to spiritual and physical death (1 Chronicles 10:13–14). I was certainly spiritually dead. And seven times (according to medical professionals), I came as close to physical death as one can without actually dying.

So many of us have hearts of stone. We’re not born that way. Over time the adversary hardened our hearts by inflicting arrows of pain. Recall C.S. Lewis’ story about a lion named Aslan in the land of Narnia; four children find that many of the inhabitants of Narnia have been turned into stone. They are alive, but dead. It’s the same with so many people. We live, but our hearts are actually frozen-hard.

All of us have experienced a level of inner pain, hurt, and disappointment in life. For some of us, it could go back to unfortunate childhood experiences. For others, it may be a more recent event. And for many, it could be both. Regardless, these are wounds, small or large, that can affect us every day. They cloud our future, making it impossible to embrace who we are, embrace who God is for us, embrace God as Father, and live in His promises.

Getting to the Root

This study along with the Holy Spirit helps us discover that we engage in compulsive ways of living as a means of coping anesthesia for the powerful feelings of a loss of, stolen, or mistaken identity—living as a self-reliant, independent (orphan). And these feelings of loss and coping almost always happen beyond our conscious level.

With this study, in relationship with the Holy Spirit, we’ll understand that the freedom from the “normal” living with hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartache, or financial headache comes directly out of allowing the Holy Spirit to compassionately teach us His basis for our feeling worthwhile. And that feeling worthwhile comes directly out of *experiencing* His healing pathway to realizing our true identity in our heart of hearts. Fortunately, the problem is not resolved by trying to *behave* right. *A change in our thinking is required*. Some renew behavior. Some renew situations. Some renew feelings. Jesus renews minds. And then we behave right. Please consider these Spirit-empowered, flesh-opposed passages of truth:

“Set your *mind* on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God (Col. 3:1-3).”

“You [God] will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose *thoughts* are fixed on you (Isaiah 26:3)!”

“*Be renewed in the spirit of your mind...* (Eph. 4:23)”

“For, ‘who can know the LORD’s thoughts? Who knows enough to teach Him?’ But we understand these things, for *we have the mind of Christ!*” (*We mind the same things that Christ did; we have the same Spirit!*) (1 Corinthians 2:16)

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same *mind...*” (1 Pet. 4:1)

“Have this *mind* among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (Php. 2:5).

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a *sound mind* (2 Tim. 1:7).”

“For as man *thinks* in his heart, *so is he*... (Prov. 23:7 NKJV).”

“I see in my members another law *waging war against the law of my mind* and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ...Do not be conformed to this world, but *be transformed by the renewing of your mind*, that you may prove what is that *good* and acceptable and perfect will of God (Apostle Paul at Romans 7:23; 12:2).”

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 graciously instructs us: “We are human but the weapons we fight with are not mere worldly weapons. On the contrary, our weapons have divine power to demolish *enemy strongholds*, casting down *imaginations*, and every high thing that exalts itself *against the knowledge of God*, and bringing into captivity *every thought* to the obedience of Christ...”

The great conquest of *spiritual* weapons:

The Holy Spirit, in relationship, compassionately trains us to take every thought prisoner and lead it into captivity to obey the Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5). That includes negativity, reasonings, lusts, any system of philosophy, metaphysics, doctrines, ethics, mythology, and religion that defies the knowledge of God, as well as any thinking which is contrary to virtue, purity and righteousness-in-love. (See also Matt. 15:19; Mark 7:21-22; 1 Cor. 13:5; Gal. 5:19; Php. 4:8; Gen. 6:5; Prov. 15:26; Isa. 55:7; 59:7; Jer. 4:14.)

“Brothers and sisters, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—*think on these things* (Php. 4:8).”

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and *do not lean on your own understanding* (Prov. 3:5).”

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus* (Php. 4:6-7).”

Along the way, the New Way, of Jesus renewing our minds, we are released to receive His love and love ourselves, God, and others. We enjoy sublime relationship with God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and live for Him. Our desire to behave right is a fruit, not a goal (Eph. 5:9).

Many evangelical pulpits compound the problem by doing little more than listing the do's and don'ts of Christian responsibility. People who are afraid to live responsibly because they might fail are taught to feel guilty for their irresponsible behavior. That's an elemental aspect of the independent (orphan) mindset (the 'old self'), a primary stronghold from which Jesus came to deliver us. Biblical teaching must first communicate that the realization of the Christian individual's truest identity is what produces the responsible, obedient, Christ-pleasing behavior. This Christ-pleasing behavior is the glad *fruit* of the Christian coming to know that they know, that they know in their heart of hearts, their truest identity.

And please understand that it is not mere intellectual knowledge. This Bible study, in relationship with the Holy Spirit, helps us know that we know, that we know *in our heart of hearts*, our truest identity. Again, **everything is spiritual**. Religious traditions do not teach this but God's word does.

Apostle Paul at Ephesians 1:13-17 prays for us to receive *revelation*: “...I pray for you constantly, asking God...to give you spiritual wisdom and *revelation* so that you might grow in your knowledge of Him [*revelation*; know that you know in your heart of hearts]...” (See also Colossians 1:9-10.)

“I pray that from Father God's glorious, unlimited resources He will give you mighty *inner strength through His Holy*

Spirit. And I pray that Christ will be more and more at home in your *hearts* as you trust in Him. May your roots go down deep into the soil of God's marvelous love. And may you have the power to comprehend, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is. May you *experience the love of Christ—it is so great it passes knowledge*. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and *power* that comes from God. Now glory be to God! By His mighty power at work *within* us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope! (Eph. 3:16-20)

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. (1 Cor. 8:1 NIV)”

“God has revealed to us *through the [Holy] Spirit...so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us...We speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words* to explain spiritual truths. But people who aren't Christians can't understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means. We who have *the Spirit understand these things, but others can't understand us at all*. (1 Cor. 2:10-15)”

In this new covenant (New Testament), God has put His laws in your mind and *wrote them on your heart!* (Hebrews 8:10; 10:16)

“It is the [Holy] Spirit who gives life. Human effort accomplishes nothing. And the very words I have spoken to you are *spirit and life*. (Jesus at John 6:63)”

“...After starting your new lives *in the Spirit*, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort? (Gal. 3:3)”

“...It is not by [your] force nor by [your] strength, but *by my Spirit*, says the LORD Almighty! (Zechariah 4:6)”

“For all who are *led by the Spirit* of God are sons and daughters of God (Rom. 8:14).”

“Jesus replied, ‘You are blessed, Simon [Peter] son of John, because my *Father in heaven has revealed* this to you. *You did not learn this from any human being* (Matt. 16:17).’”

“And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God [who is spirit] (1 Cor. 2:4-5; John 4:24; 6:63).”

“Jesus prayed this prayer: “O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding the truth from those who think themselves so wise and clever, and *for revealing it to the childlike* (Matt. 11:25; Luke 10:21).”

“...Your *heart* affects everything you do (Prov. 4:23).” The most important priority of God is to heal your heart—the deepest seat of who you are—because you cannot engage with God without your heart. Broken heartedness is inevitably going to produce inconsistency.

I Will Not Leave You Self-Reliant

Be reminded that even though His disciples were never recorded as thinking they were orphans or self-reliant, Jesus promised them, and each of us: “I will not leave you as orphans [self-reliant independents]. (Jn. 14:18)” I would humbly submit that each of our self-reliant mindsets mostly reside beyond our conscious level. And I would also humbly submit that there is a spectrum of this independent, self-reliant (orphan) attitude ranging from low severity to high severity. This is only to help us get out of any denial and receive everything Jesus promises us.

Adam’s disobedience was terrible in its consequences, but it brought to light an aspect of God’s nature that would otherwise never have been fully revealed: the unfathomable depth of His love. God has never given up on Adam and his descendants. He longs to bring us back to Himself.

This is beautifully expressed in James 4:5: “He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us”—the Spirit that was breathed into Adam at his creation. Incredible though it may seem, God continues to long for the personal fellowship which He once enjoyed with Adam. This relationship was broken by Adam’s rebellion, a rebellion that has been perpetuated in every one of Adam’s descendants.

Furthermore, at infinite cost, God has made a way for each of us to be restored to Himself. It is always His will to live life *with* each of us. He sent Jesus “to seek and save those who are lost.” (Luke 19:10; see also Isaiah 9:6; 53:2-6). By His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, Jesus has made it possible for each of us to be forgiven and cleansed from sin and to become a son or daughter of God’s own family!

Your True Worth

Be reminded to read the following text from the stance that He is going to be all these things to you first. Enjoy simply *receiving*, *not doing*.

In Matthew 13:45–46, Jesus told a parable which beautifully describes the wonder of our redemption: “The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found

one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”

For many this depicts the redemption of a human soul. Jesus is the merchant—not a tourist or a sightseer—but a man who has dealt in pearls all his life. He knows the exact value of every pearl. The pearl that He has purchased is just one human soul—yours or mine. It cost Jesus all He had—everything He owned.

In contemporary terms, this is perhaps the scene when that merchant broke the news to his wife.

“Honey, I’ve sold our car.”

“You sold our car! Well, at least we still have a roof over our heads.”

“No, I sold our house, and liquidated our 401k too!”

“Whatever made you do all that?”

“I found the most beautiful pearl I’ve ever seen. I’ve been looking all my life for such a pearl. It cost everything we owned—but wait until you see it!”

“Oh, how I love beautiful pearls too!” she replied.

What does this mean to you and me? Each of us are to allow the Holy Spirit to train us in picturing ourselves as that one priceless pearl.

Your Redeemer

It cost Jesus everything He had to buy you and me back to Himself. Though He was Lord of the entire universe, He laid it all aside and died in absolute poverty. He owned nothing. The robe and the tomb in which He was buried were both borrowed. “Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

Perhaps you have never seen yourself as significant. Deep down, you may have insecurities or a poor self-image. The hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches, or financial headaches and your future may convey the same message: failure!

Not to Jesus! He loved you so much that He gave up everything to redeem you for Himself. In the words of the apostle Paul: “He loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20). It is now time to begin to allow the Holy Spirit to help you realize in your heart of hearts you are that pearl held in the nail-scarred hand of Jesus, to hear Him saying to *you*, “You are so beautiful! You cost Me everything I had, but I don’t regret it for a second. Now you’re Mine forever!”

You can’t do anything to earn this love and acceptance. You can never change yourself enough or make yourself good enough. All you can do is allow Him to help you realize in your heart of hearts what Jesus has done for you and thank Him! Because you belong to Him forever!

Most of us have an intellectual knowledge of Galatians 2:20 but this Bible study, in relationship with the Holy Spirit, will help you come to know that you know, that you know it in your heart of hearts, and therefore victoriously live out of this truth (Gal. 1:11-12; Eph. 3:16-19; Matt. 11:25; 16:17; Acts 28:27; Rom. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:19; Pr. 4:23). And as this is happening, all of your hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches, and financial headaches completely go back to Jesus. Jesus has paid the ultimate and full price for all of them; they all belong to Him now.

This study certainly provides the necessary biblical foundation of how to access the joy, and emotional, mental, physical, financial and relational health God purchased for you. And how to keep it! “Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all you ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within you!” (Eph. 3:20)

Orphan or Son or Daughter in Messiah Part I

From the moment Adam & Eve fell, the ultimate purpose of God in all His dealings with humanity is to bring us back to the place where we were before the fall—back to our truest identity—as His image and likeness—joyfully dependent—in abundance—and free of issues (Genesis 1:26; Romans 8:28, 29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Colossians 2:6-10; 3; 1 Thess. 5:10; 23-24; 1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 2:24; 2 Peter 1:3-11; 3 John 2).

A primary purpose of this Bible study is to help you experience in your heart of hearts your truest identity because the reversal and the prevention of your hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches and financial headaches are the fruit of that heart-experience. You will also come to know that fruit is rarely instantaneous, but a rich, worthwhile process of development (Deut. 7:22; 2 Cor. 3:18; Php. 2:12). That process is a glad, relational work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). And it is that process that makes you rich.

Be reminded to read the following text from the stance that He is going to be all these things to you first. Start by acceptance, not doing. From that place, allow the passages to create a sense of expectancy for you, not trepidation that you can't live up to them. *There is zero expectation to perform.*

The Benefits of Your Renewed Relationship

The equation below reflects God's primary definition of your truest *identity*:

True Identity = How you are known in heaven + who God is for you
(including what God wants to be for you in any situation)

Please consider that your truest identity is *relational*, as God always wants to walk through life *with* you, closely. And it also meets these two intrinsic human needs: the deep tranquility of *security*, and *meaningful purpose*.

The very first thing God reports about your truest identity—how you are known in heaven plus who God wants to be for you—begins as early as Genesis 1:26-28: “Then God said, ‘Let us make [____ your name] human beings *as our image, and as our likeness*. They will reign over the

fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, the livestock, all the wild animals on the earth, and the small animals that scurry along the ground. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.' So *God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them*; male and female He created them. Then God *blessed* them and said, 'Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it.'" And the second feature of your truest identity; who God wants to be for you. God wants to be your provider, meet your every need, and in every situation. Genesis 1:29 states, "Then God said, 'Look! I *have [already]* given you every seed-bearing plant throughout the earth and all the fruit trees for your food.'" (Genesis 9:3 also states, "All the animals...*have also [already]* been given for you to." (See also 1 Tim. 4:3-5; 1 Cor. 6:13.)) God had *already* freely provided everything else needed including authorization, work, companionship, and personal fellowship with God. The garden was *already* a five-star, all-inclusive accommodation! As we continue, we'll clearly understand that you really are a son or daughter of God and He provides *all* your needs *in advance* and in every situation. "Then God saw everything that He *had* made, and indeed it was *very good!*' (Gen. 1:31)"

Notice that this was all God's initiative in advance; your forebearers and you did nothing to earn this. God is love. You have a God-given identity and are made in love, through love, and because of love.

Psalms 8:4-6: *God thinks about you and cares for you continuously. He made you only a little lower than Himself and crowned you with glory, honor, and authority over & above everything He made!*

God upgraded Abram's identity—He changed his name to 'Abraham,' and his wife's name from Sarai, to 'Sarah' (Gen. 17:5, 15). Jacob's identity was revised by God—his name was changed to 'Israel' (Gen. 32:28). In the Bible, renaming people is a symbol of the truth for each of us presently who are born-again: "*The old life is gone. A new life has begun!*" (2 Corinthians 5:17)"

When God's people needed the freedom from slavery that their true identity compelled, God *first introduced Himself to them* through Moses with identity language, announcing how they are

known in heaven + who He is for them: "Say to them, 'The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, appeared to me, saying, '...I will bring you up out of the affliction of Egypt to...a land flowing with milk and honey [prolific blessing].' (Exodus 3:16-17)"

And the second thing God said to His people was also regarding their true identity: "I AM the LORD...*I will take you as My people, and I will be your God.* Then you shall know that I AM the LORD your God who brings you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. And I will bring you into the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; *and I will give it to you as a heritage:* I AM the LORD.'" (Ex. 6:6-8)" Although the Hebrews earnestly asked for help, they did nothing to earn this.

The following are God's very first words to doubting, fearing Gideon. They are regarding Gideon's true identity—how Gideon is known in heaven + who God is for him: "The Angel of the LORD came and sat under the terebinth tree...while...Gideon threshed wheat in the winepress in order to hide it from the Midianites. And the Angel of the LORD appeared to him and said to him, '*The LORD is with you, you mighty man of valor!*' (Judges 6)" Kindly note that Gideon had done absolutely nothing to earn his value—worth—his true identity.

Before he was born, Gideon already had a book in heaven with his name on it, complete with his specific calling, its gifting, and purpose. According to Psalms 139:1-18 and Eph. 1:3-5, 11, God saw Gideon and his role long before the foundation of the universe.

God cannot be partial to anyone (Acts 10:34); the only difference between you, me, and Gideon is our specific role and its gifting. God explains the following about you, Gideon, me, and each person at Psalms 139:16: "God saw you before you were born. Every day of your life was recorded in His book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed!"

Notice the identity language God used in His first words with the prophet Jeremiah; how Jeremiah is known in heaven + who God is for him. Beginning at 1:4, Jeremiah states: "The LORD gave me a message. He said, 'I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. *Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you...*' 'O

Sovereign LORD,' I said, 'I can't speak for you! I'm too young!' 'Don't say that,' the LORD replied, 'for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for *I will be with you and take care of you*. ...For see, today *I have made you immune* to attacks. *You are strong* like a fortified city that cannot be captured, like an iron pillar or a bronze wall. None of the kings, officials, priests, or people of Judah will be able to stand against you. They will try, but they will fail. *For I am with you, and I will take care of you*. I, the LORD, have spoken!' (Jeremiah 1:4-19)"

Note that Jeremiah had done absolutely nothing to earn his value—his true identity. God cannot be partial to Jeremiah, Gideon, Sarah, Abraham, Jonathan, etc. over you. You already have a book in heaven with your name on it as well, complete with your specific calling/gifting/purpose, and it is good—“For I know the plans I have for you,” says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope!’ (Jeremiah 29:11)"

And Jeremiah 32:38-41 is joyfully crystal clear to God’s children: “They will be *my people*, and *I will be their God*. And I will give them one heart and mind to worship me forever, *for their own good and for the good of all their descendants*. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, *promising not to stop doing good for them*. I will put a desire in their hearts to worship me, and they will never leave me. *I will rejoice in doing good to them and will faithfully and wholeheartedly replant [secure] them* in this land [of promises]!”

“I sing praises, for you, O God, are my refuge [my ____ perfect Father, friend, provider, helper, teacher, comforter, healer, peace, rest, deliverer, rewarder, holiness, preserver, salvation—anything I ever need, always] the God who shows me unfailing love! (Ps. 59:17)"

Second Thessalonians 2:13 declares, “You are loved because *God chose you from the beginning* to experience salvation, a *salvation that came through the Spirit who makes you holy* and by your belief on the truth.”

“So now *Jesus and you, who He makes holy, have the same Father*. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call you *His brother or sister!* (Heb. 2:11)"

“Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the LORD is the one *who goes before you*. He will be with you; He will neither fail you nor forsake you. (Deut. 31:8) "

Isaiah 41:8-14: “As for you, (____ insert your name), *I have called you...I have chosen you* and will not throw you away. Don’t be afraid, for I AM with you (not I *was* with you). Don’t be discouraged, for I AM your God. I will strengthen you and help you. I will hold you up with my victorious right hand. See, all your angry enemies lie there, confused and humiliated. ...For I hold you by your right hand—I, the Lord your God. And I say to you, ‘Don’t be afraid, ____ (your name)... *I AM here* to help you. ...Don’t be afraid for I will help you. I AM the Lord, your Redeemer. I AM the Holy One of Israel.”

The first time God audibly spoke recorded in the New Testament was about His son, Jesus’ true *identity*: “And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’ (Matthew 3:17; see also 2 Peter 1:17)" Note that Jesus hadn’t yet begun to do anything His ministry called Him to.

Please understand that when you were born again, God immediately placed Jesus in you, and placed you in Jesus. That means God is stating the same about *your* true identity: ‘*This is my beloved child, in whom I am well pleased!*’ (John 14:20; 17:26; Rom. 6:11; Gal. 3:26; 4:7; Col. 1:22)"

God may not have formally changed your name like Abraham, Sarah, and the others. However, His Holy Spirit pursued and initiated your salvation—your adoption as a son or daughter into His family (Eph. 1, 2). *He saved you* (you could not save yourself); He provided your Savior. He immediately put you in Christ and Christ in you, a gift prepared for you. And God did this when you were yet a sinner, at your worst (Rom. 5:6-8; Eph. 2:4,5; 1 John 4:10). “*You yourself [your ego] no longer lives, but Christ lives in you*. So you live your life in your earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, *who loved you and gave*

Himself for you!” (Gal. 2:20.) Like Abraham’s identity and experience, God is willing and able to meet all your needs in every situation.

Very early in Jesus’ ministry, it is written at Luke 4:17-19: “When Jesus came to the village of Nazareth, His boyhood home, He went as usual to the synagogue on the Sabbath and stood up to read the Scriptures. The scroll containing the messages of Isaiah the prophet was handed to Him, and He unrolled the scroll to the place where it says: ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for He has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor [afflicted]. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the brokenhearted will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord’s favor has come. (Isa. 61)’” Jesus was telling us His truest identity—*how He is known in heaven plus what He wants to be for you and me in its essence. All while you are in Him and He is in you!*

Jesus amended Simon’s identity—He changed his name to ‘Peter’ (Matt. 16:17,18). Joseph’s identity was revised by the apostles—his name was changed to ‘Barnabas’ (Acts 4:36). Saul conducted killings of Christians. His identity was amended—Saul’s name was changed to ‘Paul’ (Acts 13:9).

God chose “orphans” with a history of deficiency and who repeated their flaws. He always accepts orphans who require lots of training just to be steady, let alone flourishing. He chooses them because He wants to love us in such a way that we would always be safe and whole, whether we were strong or not (Micah 4:6-7; Ps. 34:18). And consider also that even God’s own, perfect son Jesus, “*grew in wisdom and in stature and in favor with God and all the people.*” (Lk. 2:52)”

Each of us are made for relationship with God, yet many of us feel distant and disconnected with Him. As if He’s more of an idea we believe in our head than a person we relate to. But be encouraged; God is not an abstraction, not an ‘entity,’ not just a supreme being. He is a real person who has a real name. God’s name is “Yahweh” (sometimes pronounced, “Yehovah,” often spelled, “Jehovah”).

God’s name is personal, unchanging, eternal, and heavenly. He graciously revealed it to us as early as Genesis 2:7-19 when He, as a personal God, made man, “Adam.” A personal God created a personal man. What for? For personal fellowship between the two.

God’s personal name, Yahweh, יְהוָה, and one aspect of His nature is connected with unchanging, eternal “covenant.” A primary aspect of Yahweh’s nature is that He is a covenant-making, and covenant-keeping God (e.g., Psalm 89:28,34). Above everything else His covenants mean *union*—two parties coming together functionally to make one (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:17). They are person-to-person, sacred, promissory, and unchanging.

God’s personal, unchanging, eternal name, Yahweh, is also directly linked to seventeen (17) specific names or titles representing seventeen aspects of His covenant-keeping faithful nature—*who He is for you—what He wants to be for you in any situation.* In the order of their occurrence, these seventeen names reveal Yahweh in the following remarkable aspects for you in every one of your life circumstances:

1. *The Eternal Creator* (“Jehovah-Elohiym;” * Gen. 2:4-25)
2. *The Lord our Sovereign Master* (“Adonai-Jehovah;” Gen. 15:2, 8)
3. *The one who sees* (to it) —*provides* (“Jehovah-Jireh;” Gen. 22:8-14) This is the basis of all God’s covenant commitment
4. *The one who is your victory banner* or victorious rallying, gathering point in battle (“Jehovah-Nissi;” * Ex. 17:15)
5. *The one who heals, cures* (“Jehovah-Rapha;” * Ex. 15:26)
6. *The Lord thy God* (“Jehovah-Eloheka;” * Ex. 20:2, 5, 7)
7. *The one who is your peace* (“Jehovah-Shalom;” * Judges 6:24)
8. *The one who is your righteousness* (“Jehovah-Tsidqenuw;” * Jer. 23:6; 33:16)
9. *The one who sanctifies you, sets you apart for God in love, who is holy through you* (“Jehovah-Mekaddishkem;” * Ex. 31:13; Lev. 20:8; 21:8; 22:9, 16, 32; Ezek. 20:12)
10. *The Lord of hosts (army)* (“Jehovah-Sabaoth;” * 1 Sam. 1:3)

11. *Lord of the breakthrough*; the one who breaks through your enemy opposition for you (2 Samuel 5:19-20; * “Baal-perazim”)
12. *The one who is there for you* (or *ever-present*) (“Jehovah-Shammah;” * Ezekiel 48:35)
13. *The LORD Most High* (“Jehovah-Elyown;” * Ps. 7:17; 47:2; 97:9)
14. *The one who is your shepherd*; you have everything you need (“Jehovah-Raah;” * Ps. 23)
15. *The LORD our Maker* (“Jehovah-Hoseenu;” * Ps. 95:6)
16. *The LORD our God* (“Jehovah-Eloheenu;” * Ps. 99:5, 8, 9)
17. *The LORD your God* (“Jehovah-Elohay;” * Zech. 14:5; Gen. 2:4)

“Those who know Your name will trust in You, for you, LORD [Yahweh, Jehovah], have never forsaken those who seek You (Ps. 9:10).” * Jesus Christ preincarnate (see also John 1:1-5, 14)

God is your Deliverer (Ps. 30:1), Healer (Ps. 30:2), Preserver (Ps. 30:3), Holiness (Ps. 30:4), Comforter (Ps. 30:5), Provider (Ps. 30:6), Protector (Ps. 30:7), Helper (Ps. 30:10).

The Holy Spirit, in relationship, is your Helper, Trainer, and Comforter (your ultimate “life coach” already paid-for in full) (Jn. 14:16-17, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15; 1 Cor. 12:3; Acts 9:31; Rom. 8:26; 1 Jn. 2:27).

Notice that God is the initiator, not us. We respond.

“No one can receive anything unless God gives it from heaven. (John 3:27)”

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. *All things were made through Him*, and without Him nothing was made that was made. *In Him was life*, and the life was the light of everyone. (John 1:1-4)”

After God promised Abraham (“Abram” at the time) land and countless descendants including you and me (Gen. 13:13-18; Gal. 3:29), God initiated the covenant—sacred union—with Abraham, the

human father of our faith. The formal covenant process was *done by God while Abram slept!* See Genesis 15.

“Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel *was sent by God* to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And having come in, the angel said to her, ‘Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women [notice that identity language]!’ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. Then the angel said to her, ‘...Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall *call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.* And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.’ ...Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! *Let it be to me according to your word.*’ (Luke 1:26-33, 38)”

God initiates, Jesus responds. John 17:1, 7 states, “Jesus looked up to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour has come. *Glorify your Son so He can give glory back to you...* Now they know that everything I have is a *gift* from you.’” God initiates, we respond. The onus to initiate is not on us; the onus to initiate is not on you or me!

“*You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you* to go and produce fruit that will last, so that the Father will *give you whatever you ask for*, using my name. (Jesus at John 15:16)”

“Jesus poured water into the basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” “Jesus said, ‘...For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many.’ (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:42-45; John 13:5; Php. 2:5-8)”

“Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If you hear me calling and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal as friends. (Rev. 3:20)”

“We love God because *He first loved us.* (1 John 4:16-19)”

“This is real love—not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. (1 John 4:10)”

“Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven's lights. Unlike them, He never changes or casts shifting shadows. (James 1:17)”

“For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. (Rom. 11:36)”

“Sharing in Christ’s death by our water baptism means that we were co-buried with Him, so that when the Father’s glory raised Christ from the dead, we were also raised with Him. We have been co-resurrected with Him so that we could be empowered to walk in the freshness of new life. For since we are permanently grafted into Him to experience a death like His, then we are permanently grafted into Him to experience a resurrection like His and the new life that it imparts. (Rom. 6:4-5 TPT)”

Second Peter 1:3-4 stunningly confirms this: *“By His divine power, God **has [already] given us everything we need for living a godly life.** We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the one who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence. And **because of His** glory and excellence, He **has given us** great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to **share His divine nature** and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires!”* *“For all of God's promises have [already] been fulfilled in Christ with a resounding ‘Yes!’ And through Christ, our ‘Amen’ (which means ‘Yes’) ascends to God for His glory! (2 Cor. 1:20)”*

First Corinthians 1:7: *“**Now you [already] have every spiritual gift you need** as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for He is faithful to do what He says, and He **has invited you into partnership with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord!**”*

*“All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who **has blessed us with every spiritual blessing** in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. Long ago, even before He made the*

world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave Him great pleasure. So we praise God for the wonderful kindness He has poured out on us because we belong to His dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that He [already] purchased our freedom through the blood of His Son, and our sins are forgiven. He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. God's hidden plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to His good pleasure. And this is His plan: At the right time He will bring everything together under the authority of Christ – everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because of Christ, we [already] have received an inheritance from God, for He chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as He decided long ago...And now you also have heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, He identified you as His own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom He promised long ago. The Spirit is God's guarantee that He will give us everything He promised and that He has purchased us to be His own people! (Eph. 1:3-14)”

“And by God’s will, you have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all! (Hebrews 10:7-18)”

“But for us, there is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live! (1 Cor. 8:6)”

“Hallelujah! Salvation is from our God. Glory and power belong to Him alone. (Rev. 19:1)”

Consider that you walk in favor, that the nature of God is *for you* not against you, and that your true identity is already nestled in the heart of God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

“God changes not. (Malakai 3:6)” And *“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! (Heb. 13:8)”*

Orphan or Son or Daughter in Messiah Part II

All of us have been shaped by somebody else's perception. Predictably, these ideas even humiliated, traumatized, or shocked us, leaving us feeling insecure and/or insignificant. Unfortunately, they can stay with us and hold us back from seeing ourselves the way God does (Pr. 18:14; 15:13; Jas. 3:2). These kinds of misconceptions will need to be replaced because they have no place in the measure of His grace and truth towards us!

And, be reminded to read the following text and scriptures from *understanding, not doing* (i.e., Prov. 2:10-11; 16:22; Hosea 4:6). Consider allowing this section to create a sense of expectancy, not discomfort that you're somehow in-lack. In a later section we will get to the intentional, personalized application of God's empowering Word.

God is love (1 John 4:7-8, 16). But not all love is God. God's love is best defined as: *The perfectly pure, immaculate and complete selfless disposition to do good; good will; kindness; charitableness; benevolence; the love of you (and me and all other persons), accompanied with a selfless desire to promote your happiness, and in eternity. And it is properly, whole, entire or perfect, and just in a moral sense.* Note that "selfless" needs nothing in return.

Additional characteristics of God's love include: "God's love is patient and kind. It is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. God's love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. God's love *never* gives up, *never* loses faith, is *always* hopeful, and endures through *every* circumstance. (1 Cor. 13; Lev. 19:18; Gal. 5:14, 22-23)"

God's primary personality traits are: Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and a grip for you that is firm.

"How precious is your lovingkindness, O God! All your sons and daughters take shelter in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house and you give them to drink of the river of your delights. (Psalms 36:7-8)" Kindly note that this is yet another sample of your true identity defined: How you are known in heaven plus what God is for you.

And “That Psalm 36:7–8 (above) is also a most beautiful picture of Father God’s goodness. First of all, we turn to Him out of our need. We come to Him for shelter because we’re oppressed, because we cannot handle our problems. We take shelter in the shadow of His wings, but when we get in there under the shadow of His wings, then we discover that He’s provided much more for us than mere shelter. He’s provided a feast. He’s provided abundance. We feast on the abundance of His house, and not only that, but He gives us to drink of the river of His delights. That’s staggering! God does not give us to drink of a river of our own delights, but of His delights. He shares with us the things that delight Him.

“There are so many things that we would naturally take pleasure in that are harmful. The difference with God’s pleasures is they are never harmful, and God wants to share with us His pleasures. He wants to give us to drink of the river of His pleasures, and not only are they pleasant but they are beneficial. They’re never harmful.” —Bible teacher, *Derek Prince*

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the person who takes shelter in Him. (Psalms 34:8)”

Quoting Bible teacher Derek Prince again, “Notice that first word, taste: ‘Taste and see that the Lord is good.’ You realize, of course, that we are endowed with five physical senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. What is it that’s distinctive about the sense of taste? One distinctive feature of taste: if we see something, it’s external to us. If we hear something, it’s external. If we touch something, it’s still outside us. If we smell something, it may be still far from us. But there’s one thing about taste: when we taste something, we take it right into us and it becomes part of us. And that’s why the Lord challenges us to ‘Taste and see.’ Don’t let the Lord remain external, don’t let Him remain something outside of you.

“Paul says in the New Testament, ‘*Christ in you*, the hope of glory.’ You’ll never really have that hope of glory until you’ve actually tasted of the Lord, till you’ve taken Him within you, and then you’ll know [that you know that you know] in your heart of hearts He is good. Not because the preacher says it, not because the radio evangelist declares it, but because you’ve proved it in your experience, you’ve tasted, you’ve invited the Lord to come in and be an integral part of your life. And when you do that, you’ll *know* He’s good.” (www.gotchoices.net/derekprince)

Once again, in an upcoming section, we will learn how to take God’s goodness within and come to know that we know, that we know it in our heart of hearts, and not merely intellectually.

“O give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever (1 Chronicles 16:34)!” “Every good thing I have comes from You! (Psalm 16:2)”

“The unfailing love of the LORD never ends! By His mercies we have been kept from destruction, they never cease. Great is His faithfulness; His mercies begin afresh each day! (Lam. 3:22-23)”

“Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God above, who created all heaven’s lights! Unlike them, He never changes or casts shifting shadows. (James 1:7)”

“I will tell of the LORD’s unfailing love. I will praise the LORD for all He has done. I will rejoice in His great goodness...which He has granted according to His mercy and love! (Isaiah 63:7)”

“The LORD is my shepherd; I have all that I need. He lets me rest in green meadows; He leads me beside peaceful streams. He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to His name. Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for You are close beside me. Your rod and Your staff protect and comfort me. You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. *Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life*, and I will live in the house of the

LORD forever! (Ps. 23:1-5)” Kindly note that this illustrious passage is yet another clear sample of your true identity defined: How you are known in heaven plus what God is for you in any situation:

Perfect God; unfailing perfect love, deliberately chosen desperately helpless and in need of supervision, your perfect keeper, perfect care-giver, perfect healer, perfect security, perfect fulfilment, perfect leader, perfect supply, perfect guidance, perfect peace, perfect restoration, perfect character, holiness, perfect purpose (‘honor to His name’), perfectly trustworthy, perfect protection, perfect companionship, perfect defense, perfect help, perfect solace, perfect provision, perfect food & drink, perfect presence, perfect safety, perfect anointing, perfect joy, perfect assurance, perfect benevolence, perfect compassion, perfect life, perfect home, perfect destiny.

“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. Then Jesus went around *doing good* and healing *all* who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him! (Acts 10:38)”

Ephesians 2:8-10 states: “By God’s grace you have been saved through faith. And you cannot take credit for this; it is a *gift* from God. ⁹Salvation is *not* a result of works, so that no one may boast about it. ¹⁰For you are God’s masterpiece; He has created you anew in Christ Jesus, so that you can do the good works He planned for you before the foundation of the world [long before you were born].” Ephesians 2:8 & 9 detail a loving reminder of the *security* from your true identity—God’s permanent unconditional love continually expressed for you and me. And “God demonstrates His own love toward you, in that while you were still a sinner [*at your worst*], Christ died for you.” (Rom. 5:6-8; see also Eph. 2:4,5; 1 John 4:10.)

And then Ephesians 2:10 proclaims how God has now met another major aspect of your true identity—meaningful purpose, significance: “For you are God’s masterpiece; He has created you anew *in Christ Jesus, so that you can do the good works He planned for you before the foundation of the world [before time began].*”

In Christ Jesus, our works are not *for* God, but *of* God.

Be encouraged to consider this paraphrase by husband, father, Christian Counselor and author, Larry Crabb, Ph.D. in his remarkable book entitled, *Effective Biblical Counseling*:

“My true identity demands that I be unconditionally loved and cared for, now and forever. God has seen me at my worst and still loved me to the point of giving His life for me. That kind of love I can never lose. I am completely loved by God regardless of my past, present, and future behavior. I am under no pressure to earn or to keep His love. My love from God depends only on the truth that *God is love*. God loves me one hundred percent, one hundred percent of the time; God is love. *My job first is to be loved by God.*”

“Now that I know *God’s* love I can rest, secure, regardless of what other jobs He has for me to do. I *rest* knowing that the eternal God of creation has pledged to use His infinite power and wisdom to ensure my welfare and my success. That’s the security of my true identity. I will experience nothing that my loving God will not empower me to handle. When problems mount and I feel alone, insecure, and afraid, I am to fill my mind with the security-building truth that at this moment a sovereign, loving, personal, infinite God is always and absolutely for my success. In this realization I *rest* secure in my true identity. [And this is not an intellectual-knowledge but a revelation, something the Holy Spirit helps me come to know that I know in my heart of hearts; Eph. 3:16-19; Matt. 11:25; 16:17; Acts 28:27; Rom. 10:10; 1 Cor. 1:19; Pr. 4:23.]]

“My true identity also depends upon a revelation in my heart of hearts of who I am in Christ, and that *Christ is in me*. [These truths are not mere head-knowledge also.] I will come to feel purposeful and significant as I have an eternal impact on people around me by blessing them or ministering to them. If I fail in business, if my spouse leaves

me, if my church rolls drop, if I work in a menial occupation, if I can afford only a small house and one used car, I can still enjoy the thrilling identity of belonging to the Ruler of the universe, who has had a meaningful purpose for me since the very beginning. He has equipped me for the job. As Christ-like traits develop in me, I enter more and more fully into the identity of belonging to and serving the Lord.” (See also Isa. 43:7; Mark 3:35.)

“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted; He rescues those whose spirits are crushed. (Psalms 34:18)”

“The sacrifice you desire is a broken spirit. You will not reject a broken and repentant heart, O God. (Psalms 51:17)”

Broken hearts do have to be healed before love can break through. “The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is upon me [Jesus], for the Lord has anointed me [Jesus] to bring good news to the poor [afflicted]. He has sent me [Jesus] to comfort [heal] the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. (Isaiah 61:1)”

All God wants for you is to draw near to Him, and in return, He draws near to you. When we think about being in a relationship, it’s normally a two-way street. It’s the same with God. He knew you before you were ever aware of Him, and now in response, He wants you to draw near to Him—to know Him too. The nearer you are, the more you discover who He is. In discovering who He is, you discover more of who you are—a masterpiece!

Your Truest Personal Identity

Your true identity is not found in your moral performance—what you do or don’t do. Your true identity is found in how you are known in heaven plus who God wants to be for you in any situation.

Jesus was intentionally led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the devil (Matt. 4:1-10). “For forty days and forty nights Jesus

fasted and became very hungry. During that time the devil came and said to Him, ‘*If you are the Son of God*, tell these stones to become loaves of bread.’” The devil first tempted Jesus in the area of Jesus’ truest identity. “But Jesus told him, ‘No! The Scriptures say, ‘*People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.*’” Clearly, the devil tempted Jesus in the area where you and I are most tempted—identity. In response, Jesus, our pattern, declared truth—something God is for Him (and us) when the opposition tempted Him.

“As many as received Jesus, He gave to them *power* to become the sons [and daughters] of God...to them who believe on His name. (John 1:12 KJV)” You or I cannot become a son or daughter of God’s without His benevolent *power* granted to us. We cannot do even this without Him.

“I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:18).” You are never an orphan.

1 John 3:1-2 declares: “*What marvelous love the Father has extended to you! Just look at it—you’re called a child of God! That’s who you really are.* But that’s also why the world doesn’t recognize you or take you seriously, because it has no idea who He is or what He’s up to. But *beloved, that’s exactly who you are: a child of God...*”

“...For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people.’ (2 Cor. 6:16)” This began when you were born again—*when you were dead in your trespasses* (Eph. 2:4; Rom. 5:8). And God always wants to be *with* each of us.

“God commends His love toward you, in that, while you were yet a sinner [at your worst, exposed for what you really are, no masks], Christ died for you. (Rom. 5:8; 2 Pet. 1:2-4)”

“God, who first saved you and then called you to this holy work. You had nothing to do with it. It was all His idea, a gift prepared for you in Jesus long before you knew anything about it. (2 Timothy 1:9)”

“Jesus intentionally revealed Father God to you and is continuing to do so, that *Father God’s perfect love for Jesus is in you, and Jesus in you!* (John 17:26)”

"Now you are no longer *a slave* but God's own child. And *since you are His child, everything He has belongs to you!* (Gal. 4:7)"

"You are Christ's and Christ is God's. (1 Cor. 3:23)"

"*Your Father knows what you have need of before you ask Him.* (Matt. 6:8)"

"O my people, *trust in Him at all times. Pour out your heart to Him,* for God is our refuge. (Ps. 62:8)"

"*You did not choose Me, but I chose you* and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (Jesus at John 15:16)

"The Father [God] has *enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people [you],* who live in the light. For *He has rescued us [you] from the kingdom of darkness and transferred us [you] into the Kingdom of His dear Son, who purchased our [your] freedom and forgave our [your] sins!* (Colossians 1:12-14.)"

"I [Jesus] am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in Me, and I in them, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing [good]. (John 15:5)" In Him, the question is not one of doing a thing *for* God, but *of* God.

"As the Father loved Me [Jesus], I also have loved you; abide in My love. (John 15:9)"

"As a father loves and pities his children, so the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him [with reverence, worship, and awe]. (Ps. 103:13)"

"For in Him [God] you live and move and have your being, as also some poets have said, 'For we are also *His offspring.*' (Acts 17:28)"

"For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but *My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall my covenant of peace be removed,*' says the LORD, who has mercy on you. (Isaiah 54:10)"

Luke 15:11-32 states the familiar parable of the outrageously loving father a.k.a. the "Prodigal Son." Most of us have enjoyed more than a couple of great sermons from it. My understanding is that

culturally, the returning, wayward, younger son who prematurely took his inheritance to another land [kingdom] and squandered it was liable to be killed by the guardians of the community for his transgression. And therefore, the unconditionally-unlimited-loving father [God] literally saved his self-serving son's [your life and humanity's] life also when he ran out to him.

Continuing, "the finest robe in the house put on his son, the ring for his finger, and sandals for his feet, butchering the fatted calf, and lavish celebration with a banquet party" were all clearly *identity* symbols. And the father exclaimed, "For this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found" is also plain *identity* language, agreed?

"Meanwhile, the...older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, 'All these years I've worked hard for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. ...His father said to him, 'Look, dear son [identity language], you and I are very close, and *everything I have is [already] yours* [let that identity symbol sink into your heart] ...And we had to celebrate this happy day..!'"

Note that both sons had the orphan mindset. The wayward one exchanged his sonship for despairing independence. Notice too (v. 19) that he was returning to his father to become "one of his hired *servants;*" *being made right through performance.* And the older son lived more like an orphan than the unruly son. He defined his relationship by his performance not by his relationship to his father as a son. He felt entitled, so he was bitter when his brother returned. Performance and its pride, among other challengers, can make God's children view life through a skewed lens.

True Identity = How you are known in heaven + who God is for you (including what God wants to be for you in any situation)

How you are known in heaven: "A masterpiece," a deliberately chosen, adopted, unconditionally loved,

forgiven, redeemed, healed, whole, blessed, highly favored son or daughter in Christ, co-heir with Jesus in this life too, who is being personally, compassionately empowered, tried, purified, transformed more and more in the image of Jesus, seated with Him in the heavenly realm, who, compelled by His love can do the good things He planned for you before time began, through faith.

“Affirmation from your earthly father is such a gift. When an earthly father fails to express words of love and validation, sons and daughters are left vulnerable to an identity crisis. Unsure of who they are, they become susceptible to following the world to define them through ungodly influences.

“Father God audibly affirmed His love for His own Son, Jesus (Matt. 3:17; 2 Peter 1:17), because He lived as a mortal human, subject to all the assaults that one can experience. His character was maligned. And although He knew the truth of His birth and calling, the questions surrounding His birth labeled Him illegitimate. He had to choose to focus on His true identity.

“All God’s sons and daughters are attacked in the area of their identities. Whispers of doubt and doom, accusations and suspicions, coming both from outside and within, can all challenge your stability. Be reminded, “The spirit of a person can endure their infirmity, but trauma, who can bear?” Only by hearing and knowing that you are loved will you possess the security you need to break through the clutter of voices. Listen to Father God speaking to *you*: *‘You are my beloved child in whom I am well pleased!’*

“Each and every person has a deep desire to be known by their earthly fathers and by God, their heavenly father. If your earthly father fails to affirm his love for you through words and affection, you will live your life seeking to fill this void in inappropriate ways. A wounded spirit who can bear?

“For daughters, they will be tempted to give their precious body away in hopes of feeling that love and intimacy they lacked from their earthly father. For sons, they will try to prove their worth through performance, achievements or deal with their inner pain with sex. This will result in a leanness in their soul and a wound in their heart that only God can fill. They will find themselves uncertain in their inner life, ruled by questions of who they are and seeking the opinions of others to decide this question.

“For men, a woman will often become the source of determining their manhood. Then they seek to perform for others and become posers, living the life they believe others will accept. They live as an orphan when their earthly father fails to give them what he was designed to impart to them.

“Truly, truly, God longs to fill that ache in *your* soul, and He can if you will let Him. He is a Father to the fatherless. And He loves you and all His sons and daughters.” ⁵

Psalms 68:5 states, “Father to the fatherless, defender of widows—this is God, whose dwelling is holy.”

“Now suppose one of you fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, *how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?* (Luke 11:9-13)”

“We know how much God loves us, and we have put our trust in Him. God is love, and all who live in love live in God, and *God lives in them*. (1 John 4:16)”

“Nothing, absolutely nothing can separate you from the love of God! (Romans 8:38-39)”

“For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body, and *you are complete through your union with Christ*. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe! (Col. 2:9, 10)”

"For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of *adoption* by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." The Spirit Himself bears witness with your spirit that you are *a child of God*... (Rom. 8:15, 16)"

"And it was only right that God—who made everything and for whom everything was made—should bring His many *children* [including you] into glory. Through the suffering of Jesus, God made Him a perfect leader, one fit to bring you into your salvation. So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy [you] have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call you His brother or sister. For He said to God, 'I will declare the wonder of Your name to my brothers and sisters [you]. (Hebrews 2:10-13)"

"This is the confidence you have in God: that if you ask anything according to His will, He hears you. And if you know that He hears you—whatever you ask—you know that you have what you asked of Him. (1 John 5:14, 15)"

"For whom He foreknew [*"He chose you from the beginning"* Eph. 1:5], He also predestined you to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many *brethren*. Moreover, *whom He predestined, He also called; whom He called, these He also justified [acquitted & made right]; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.* (Rom. 8:29, 30)"

Note that we're graciously informed at Eph. 1:11-13 that "predestined" means that based on His unconditional love for you, God mapped your unique destiny, uniquely gifted you, and charted a personalized path, beforehand, for you to be conformed more and more unto the image of His Son, glorifying Him. You always have a choice to exercise your free will on His premeditated, custom, and specific path for you.

"This is love, not that you loved God, but He loved *you* and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for *your* sins." (1 John 4:10) *You were in sin and He loved you. "He made you accepted in the beloved.* (Eph. 1:6)"

"Once you had no identity; now you are a child of God. Once you received no mercy; now you have received God's mercy. (1 Peter 2:10)"

"And now God is building *you*, as a living stone, into His spiritual temple. What's more, *you* are a holy priest of God's, who offers spiritual sacrifices that please Him because of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)"

"You are Christ's ambassador... (2 Cor. 5:20)"

"This is how much Father God loves *you*: He gave His Son, His one and only Son. And this is why: so that you need not be destroyed; by believing on Him, you can have a whole and lasting life. (John 3:16 MSG)"

"It is by grace you have been saved. And God raised you up with Christ and seated you with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to you in Christ Jesus. (Eph. 2:4-7)"

The early foundational chapters of 'Ephesians' are so rich in identity language. And a little later, in one enunciation of "good works which God prepared in advance for you to do," we're graciously instructed at Ephesians 6:11-17: "Be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power. Put on [agree with] all of God's armor so that you will be able to *stand* firm... Then after the battle you will still be *standing* firm. *Stand*..." In this context, we cannot stand firm without realizing our true identity on which to stand: How you are known in heaven—"strong *in the Lord*"—plus what God wants to be for you—"battle armor and mighty power!"

"Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to [doubt their true identity and] devour. (1 Pet. 5:8)"

"I am my beloved's, and His desire is toward me (Song of Solomon 7:10)." "God changes not. (Malakai 3:6)" And "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever! (Heb. 13:8)"

Father God and His Kingdom Meet All Your Needs

God is indeed love. And out of His unconditional love for His children, He has graciously met our primary personal need of our true identity—how we are known in heaven, and who God is for us (and what God wants to be for us in any given situation). We are now getting the authentic answers to life's most important questions: "Who am I?" "What am I here for?" And "Who cares?" We will soon truly enjoy the security and meaningful purpose that realizing our true identity produces.

We can also sit down with our Bibles and find passages that claim God has met not only our personal identity needs but our every need as well. We can enjoy reviewing the following well-known verses *as a basis for our faith*. There are, of course, many others.

Remember to read the following from a stance of receiving, not doing. Let go of all performance expectations. In another section we will learn how to intentionally apply God's Word in our personal lives.

Here is one of the true meanings of the cross. A divinely ordained exchange took place. Simply put, all the evil due to you came upon Jesus that, in return, the good due to Jesus might be offered to you.

God meets your physical needs!

"I [Jesus] tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. ...Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? ...O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the unbelievers run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and *all these things will be given to you as well [by faith—clinging to, trusting in, and reliance]*." (Matt. 6:25-33; see also Col. 2:9, 10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Isa. 41:10-20; Ps. 23; Lam. 3:24.)

God meets your need to know that tomorrow your physical needs will be met!

"Take therefore no [stressed] thought for tomorrow. (Matt. 6:34; see also Eph. 2:14-19; Col. 2:9,10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Isa. 41:10-20; Ps. 23; Lam. 3:24)"

“Be anxious [stressed] for nothing; but in every thing...let your requests be made known unto God ... My God shall supply *all your need according to what you’ve done* His riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Php. 4:6, 19; Col. 2:9, 10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Ps. 23; Isa. 41:10-20; Lam. 3:24)”

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about what happens to you. (1 Peter 5:7; Isa. 41:10-20)”

God meets your need for emotional, mental, and physical wellness!

“Beloved, I pray *above all things* that you may prosper and *be in health*, even as your soul prospers. (3 John 1:2)”

“Jesus personally carried away your sins in His body to the cross so you can be rid of sin and live the right way; *by His stripes [wounds] you were healed*. (1 Peter 2:24; Isaiah 53:5)”

God paid for and provided for your healing when Jesus went to the cross. In fact, medical science has grouped all sickness and disease into 39 categories, and Jesus took 39 stripes on His body in exchange for your bodily healing! (Deut. 25:3; Josephus, Antiq. lib. iv. ch. viii. sec. 21; Mish., Maccoth, fol. 22, 10.) God sacrificed His only Son so *all* may access what He provided in doing that; already paid-for in full.

Please notice that in all cases of healing in Scripture, no human remedy was used, but spiritual means were used instead. That is all that God has promised, commanded, and provided for people (Gen. 20:17; Ex. 15:26; Isa. 53:4-5; Psalms 103:3; 107:20; Prov. 3:7-8; Matt. 8:15-17; Mark 5:25-34; Jas. 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24; www.gotchoices.net/health/lessons).

Forgiveness and healing go hand-in-hand; both paid-for in full, “once and for all,” by Jesus’ sacrificial death.

On the cross, “Surely Jesus took up *our issues*, and bore *our emotional pains*. Yet we considered Him punished by God, stricken by Him and afflicted. But He was debased [defiled] for our immoral sins, transgressions, He was crushed for our rebellious sins, iniquities; the punishment that brought us *peace* was on Him, and *by His wounds we are healed*. (Isaiah 53:4-5)”

“Healing is God’s children’s bread.” (Jesus at Matt. 15:24-28.)

Recall the woman’s testimony at Mark 5:25-34: “Now a certain woman had a health issue (of blood) for twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was not [authentically] better, but rather grew worse... When she had heard of Jesus...she touched His garment believing and saying that she shall be whole. And immediately...she was healed. ...And Jesus said unto her, ‘Daughter [identity language], your *faith* has made you whole; go in peace and be healed of your affliction.’”

It’s significant to note that the original Greek word that this woman was believing on is *sozo*, translated *whole* in that passage and others. That’s the same word Jesus the healer said, *sozo*, when He said to her, “Your faith has made you *whole*.” That’s the same original Greek word translated *healed* when Jesus pronounced to her “be *healed* of your affliction.” And that’s the same original Greek word translated *salvation* at Romans 10:9-10 as well as many other New Testament passages. Your salvation includes healing, deliverance, and wholeness in this life and the next! “Jesus never ever changes. (Heb. 13:8)”

Isaiah 61 states: “The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me [Jesus], because the LORD has appointed Me to bring good news to the poor [afflicted]. He has sent Me to *comfort [heal] the brokenhearted* and to announce that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. He has sent Me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD’s *favor has come*, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. To all who mourn...He will give *beauty for ashes, joy instead of mourning, praise instead of despair*. For the LORD has planted them like strong and graceful oaks.

“*...Instead of shame and dishonor*, you will inherit a double portion of prosperity and everlasting joy.

“For I, the LORD, love justice. I hate robbery and wrongdoing. I will faithfully reward My people for their suffering and make an everlasting covenant with them. Their descendants will be known

and honored among the nations. Everyone will realize that they are a people the LORD has blessed.’ (Isaiah 61)”

God meets your need for security (unconditional love)!

“God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners [at our worst, exposed for what we really are, no masks], Christ died for us. (Rom. 5:8; see also John 17:23, 26; 2 Pet.1:2-4)”

“God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loves us, *even when we were dead in our transgressions*, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)... (Eph. 2:4-5)”

God has met your need for meaningful purpose (significance)!

“For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew *in Christ Jesus*, so that we can do the good things He planned for us long, long ago [before time began]. (Eph. 2:10; see also Col. 2:9,10; 2 Pet. 1:2-4; Isa. 43:7; Ps. 23; Lam. 3:24)” And in Jesus, we don't do a thing *for* God, but *of* God.

“The truth is, anyone who *believes [relies]* on Me [Jesus] will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. (John 14:12; see also Col. 2:9, 10)”

God meets your financial needs!

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that *you through His poverty might be rich [by faith—clinging to, trusting in, and reliance]*. (2 Cor. 8:9)”

“Beloved, I pray *above all things that you may prosper* and be in health, even as your soul prospers. (3 John 1:2 KJV)”

“And this same God who takes care of me [Paul] will supply *all* your needs from ~~your good deeds~~ *His glorious riches*, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. (Php. 4:19)”

“The blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow [painful, laborious toil] with it. (Proverbs 10:22)”

God meets your need to be forgiven of your sins!

By the walk of Christ in real humanity and yet without sin, He condemned sin in you and me, and made a way for us to escape judgment and condemnation!

“Jesus personally *carried away your sins in His body to the cross* so you can be rid of sin... (1 Peter 2:24)”

“God has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom *we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins*. (Col. 1:13-14)”

“God made Jesus who had no sin *to be sin for us*, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Cor. 5:21)”

Under the old covenant, many received God's wrath because the law of Moses exposed their sin and required judgement (justice) from a holy and righteous Father. The law was necessary to show people that we could never fulfill it on our own. The purpose of the law was to reveal humanity's sin and our need for a savior. In due time, when Jesus came to earth, everything changed. Through His death, God made a way for you to escape judgment and condemnation. Sin always requires the sacrifice of life. Prior to the cross, animals were sacrificed on behalf of the people to demonstrate the blood price for sin. You can never earn righteousness through performance—your works or moral deeds. By faith—clinging to, trusting in, and reliance—your righteousness is only through the blood of Jesus Christ's death on the cross. You simply need to confess your sins to God. He will restore you immediately.

“If we walk in the light as God is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, *and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin*. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness*. If we say that

we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:7-10).

“God’s law was given so that all could see the extent of their failure to keep God’s laws. But the more we see our sinfulness, the more we see God acquitting us of our sins and grace abounding and reigning in our life! (Rom. 5:20)”

“Colossians 1:21-23 states, ‘And you, who were once so far away from God. You were His enemies, separated from Him by your evil thoughts and actions, yet now He has brought you back as His friends. He has done this through His death on the cross in His own human body. As a result, *He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are holy and blameless* as you stand before him without a single fault—if you continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel which you heard...’

“In reconciliation, God’s love and wrath join hands. His wrath destroys and consumes the separating barrier. He is a just God. He could not justify [acquit, provide righteousness to] people while sin was still there so there had to be God’s love and wrath together.

“God’s wrath destroys and consumes sin because it has to fall on sin and disobedience. It destroys the barrier and the sin. And when Jesus took the sins of the whole world, God’s wrath reached out, darted forth and struck that sin. Jesus took the full charge because of the sin that was placed on Him during those hours. And now any barrier or sin that would come in between God and any person when the person looks to Jesus in faith, the wrath that would have been reserved for that sin and that would have struck the person because s/he was associated with that sin, the wrath reaches out and consumes that sin. And then turns around because it sees Jesus’ blood and the wrath turns around and hides itself in God’s love [Isa. 61:10].

“God is perfectly just and the vindicator of any person who puts their trust in Jesus’ blood. God’s wrath is still there for sin (Rom. 1:18,

19, 6:23; Jas. 1:13-16) but He can vindicate, pardon, any person because His wrath sees the blood and knows *judgment has already struck* and it turns around and hides in God’s love. When any person’s *faith (trust, reliance)* is in God’s Son Jesus’ blood, His wrath cannot penetrate because it has already spent its charge on sin. *Any person then can stand before Father God knowing that by His choice He cannot remember against that person’s sins.* It’s the eternal covenant that God made with people through the sacrifice of His Son. Jesus, as the High Priest, went into the heavens and blotted out as a thick cloud every record of anything that could be against any person. Written in Jesus’ blood is a new covenant (sacred, promissory union) for any person. The sins and their iniquities (sin’s destructive consequences) will God remember against the person no more, forever (Rom. 5; 2 Cor. 2:19; Col. 1:13-23; 2:11-14; Heb. 10:7-18).

“These truths contain the gentle yet unlimited power to free any person from all stress, fear, anxiety, resentment, shame, guilt, emptiness, confusion, and despair. They can liberate any person from the burdens that they may be going through. They can free any person from their own efforts of trying to lift themselves into a place where they can please God.” —Pastor Roland Buck, author of the inspired book, *Angels on Assignment*

Is it still possible to sin? Yes. “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. (1 John 1:10; see also Rom. 6:15-23.)” Must we repent when we continue in sin? Yes (2 Cor. 7:10; Rev. 2:5; 3:19). And, there is *zero condemnation* in this admission, beloved. It’s part of life and maturity to acknowledge what isn’t working. Because of God’s grace and mercy, we fall forward, not backwards, when we repent! Proverbs 24:16 states: “The righteous may trip seven times [completely], but each time they will rise again! But one calamity is enough to lay the wicked low.” Be encouraged once again: you can never earn righteousness through your works or moral deeds—performance. Your righteousness is only through the blood of Jesus Christ’s death on the cross. You simply need to take responsibility for your sins with God. Again, 1 John 1:7-9 states: “*If we*

*confess our sins, He is faithful and **just** to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” God is “just” in this because justice has already been served—Christ’s sacrificial death paid the penalty in-full for your sins “once and for all! (Rom. 5; 2 Cor. 2:19; Col. 1:13-23; 2:11-14; Heb. 10:7-18)”* **No more shame; no more guilt; no more fear or stress; no more resentment, period.**

Be reminded, “God saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of His mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit...Because of His mercy He made us right in His sight! (Titus 3:4-7)” “The key to the Christian life is not effort. It is union [with Jesus].” —*Derek Prince*

“Therefore there is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ... (Rom. 8:1; see also John 3:17; 8:10-11; 1 John 3:20)”

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him *freely give us all things*? (Rom. 8:32)” “God changes not. (Malakai 3:6)” The blood of Jesus covers sin, including the ones that wound us. There is so much power in the Gospel!

God’s prescription, detailed in another section, will provide practical, crystal-clear direction how to appropriate—take possession of—God’s promised blessings and benefits that He has paid for in-full. Understand our need to appropriate what Jesus has already paid for at www.gotchoices.net/promises/appropriate

God has given you all the authority you need to live victoriously!

Jesus is crystal clear: “I tell you the truth, *whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven...If two of you agree here on earth concerning anything you ask, my Father in heaven will do it for you.* For where two or three gather together as my followers, I am there among them. (Matt. 18:18-20)” Jesus at Luke 10:19: “Look, I have given you *authority over all* the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you.” The “snakes and scorpions” and “all the power of the enemy”

refer to demon powers primarily, although immunity from any harm of vicious animals and from poisons is also promised (Ps. 91; Mk. 16:17-18; Acts 28:5). The passage is speaking of devils, Satan, serpents, scorpions, power of the enemy, and spirits. Our Bible says Jesus has been given all authority both in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18), and because you are in Him, that authority is yours. Psalms 8:4 declares, “What are mere mortals that you [O Lord] should think about them, human beings that you should care for them? Yet you made them only a little lower than God and *crowned them with glory and honor. You gave them charge of everything you made, putting all things under their authority.*”

Ephesians 2:5-6, 1:21 states, “God gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s mercy that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and *seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus...far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come.*” And 2 Corinthians 5:20 informs you: “*You are Christ’s ambassador...*” Think of an ambassador to a foreign country. This chosen ambassador has the authority to represent the mother country. God has stated to us through Jesus the last Adam, the same thing He stated to the first Adam at Genesis 1:26: “Be as My image and as My likeness! *Be blessed! Be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion on the earth...*”

And Mark 9:23 is another passage of many that states God’s unlimited promises of *power* that He promises each of us: “What do you mean, ‘If I can?’ Jesus asked. *Anything is possible* if a person *believes [trusts, relies on, clings to]*.” You will live in the victory of His *power* when you enjoy God’s prescription, detailed in a later section.

Truly Foundational

To the degree that I allow the Holy Spirit to train me in clinging to, trusting in, relying (believing) on the above passages, I am freed from living as a self-reliant, independent (orphan), as the ‘old self’—a life of

self-centered compulsion in whether or not my own needs are met, and I am able to move on to real Christian maturity, confidently knowing (not necessarily always “feeling”) that “*all* of my needs are met according to God’s glorious riches in Jesus Christ [not according to your moral works].” My physical needs will be met according to God’s purposes and my personal needs are now and forever perfectly met!

And my personality becomes more and more like “the fruit of the Spirit: love, its joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and a firm grip.* Against such things there is no law [no effective opposition]! (Gal. 5:22-25)” * A more accurate translation and theology; see also Col. 1:11.

In addition, my hurts, hang-ups, habits (including addictions), health problems, relationship heartache and/or financial headache get reversed because they go back to Jesus who paid for them! (3 John 1:2 KJV) *Our Bible clearly proves that no issue is irreversible!*

Kindly note that to trust in this in the face of tremendous pressure to agree with the sin-cursed world’s system of living for money, pleasure, or fame requires a strong commitment to the authority of Scripture.

“It can be distressing to hear some Christians treat the Bible as helpful but not authoritative. Some seem to regard Scripture as accurate in its teaching on spiritual matters but possibly incorrect in the realm of scientific concerns. If we are followers of Jesus in any meaningful and practical sense, we must dogmatically insist that wherever Scripture speaks, it speaks with infallible authority [2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20]. If the Bible says my personal needs are met, then they are met. Even though my entire being may rebel and scream within me, ‘I feel I am not worthwhile,’ I must forcibly by an act of my will, and *empowered by the Holy Spirit*, bow before the Word and admit that somewhere I am not perceiving things accurately.”³

You will continue to receive the practical help that deals with those inaccurate perceptions and allows the transition to square with the life and love of Scripture.

Also, we will truly learn to enjoy being a child of God; how to allow Him to meet all of our needs, and in every circumstance. By the way, God realizes that we haven’t been taught this—we’re just learning. He always looks at you, a son or daughter, based on your future. He never defines you by your past failures. God always sees the best in you (2 Cor. 5:17). *Failure is merely a steppingstone in your maturity process; it is never an event to define your identity.* If it were, no one would want to continue on their life journey.⁵ Recall Jesus informed Peter that before the rooster crowed in the morning, Peter would deny Him three times. Jesus’ very next words to Peter were, “Do not let your heart be troubled...There are many rooms in my Father’s home...for I go to prepare a place for you. (John 13:38—14:4)” And recall how Jesus responded to Peter after His resurrection, after Peter’s three denials. Jesus loved Peter with open arms (John 21:10-19). For God’s love is always greater! (1 John 3:20; see also Luke 2:52; John 3:17; Rom. 8:1; Titus 3:5; Heb. 4:16; 1 Pet. 2:10.)

Realizing Your Truest Identity is Imperative

In various places the Bible compares the life of a believer to the construction of a building (i.e., Pr. 24:3; Ps. 127:1; Jer. 22:13-14; Mt. 7:24-27; Heb. 3:3-4). Naturally, the first and most important feature of any permanent structure is its foundation. The foundation sets a limit to the weight and height of the building to be erected upon it. The realization of your true identity in your heart of hearts is indeed your life’s *foundation* so that you enjoy and fulfill your life’s purpose that God lovingly wants to erect. And just as a building’s foundation rests on bedrock, your realization of your true identity in your heart of hearts yields a serene *rest* in your spirit, soul, mind, and body! (Hebrews 3:6—4:11.)

How Problems Develop Part I ²

Kindly be reminded to read the following from a stance of simply learning, not doing something. We can't fail or make a mistake while we're just learning. In another section we will learn to allow God's Spirit and Word to reverse the specific issues in our lives.

It has wisely been said, "Eliminating our problems starts with knowing the cause." If we don't have a basic understanding of the cause, we won't recognize the biblical solution.

To some degree humans will forever remain a mystery. We're discussing a complex creation of an infinite God! And, a good clear progression describing the basics of human functioning is extremely helpful.

Most of us are terribly confused about our own behavior. Why don't we take God at His word? And why do we do what we do? The apostle Paul expressed agonizing bewilderment over his own behavior in Romans 7. He tells us that he regularly found himself doing precisely the opposite of what he honestly felt he wanted to do. As he observed his perplexing pattern of behavior, he could only conclude that there was a law of some sort operating within the structure of his personality that completely opposed his conscious and sincere intentions. Most of us can easily identify with Paul's dilemma.

- A man with a hot temper honestly intends not to lose control again. Within minutes, he's bellowing at his wife, sometimes hitting her. (Both wife and husband beating, by the way, is reportedly on the rise, not just in low-income, minority homes, but in middle- and upper-class "respectable" homes as well.)
- Two young people pledge with deeply felt sincerity to love, honor, and mutually care for each other until parted by death. A few years later they lie in bed with their backs to each other, wondering why their marriage is dead.
- A wife determines not to let her husband's behavior get her visibly annoyed, but before the evening ends, she has bitingly expressed her irritation.

- After screaming at her child, a mother vows never to raise her voice again. Junior stubbornly refuses to pick up his toys or her teenage son arrogantly smart-mouths her and her vow is broken with an ear-splitting shout.
- A middle-aged man obsessed with a perverted sexual fantasy feels guilty every time he enjoys his own private world of erotic pleasure. Certain movies and magazines offer such strong temptations that he succumbs. Wrecked by deep remorse, he promises God he will never allow his mind to dwell on his sexual daydreams again. That evening in bed he rehearses in arousing detail another fantasy.

Why? Why, despite our best intentions, do we fail to carry out our sincerely made resolutions? It is not uncommon, when asking this question, to hear any number of completely unhelpful evangelical clichés like, “You’re not trusting in the Lord’s power, you’re depending on your own” or “Let go and let God” or “You’re not reckoning your old nature to be dead” or “Pray more earnestly for deliverance, then repeat phrases including ‘the blood of Christ’ your problem will disappear.” But the problems continue. Many people who conscientiously are trying to change for the better experience serious dissatisfaction that only compounds their difficulties in self-control. What is the answer to the problem? Why do we do what we do even though we consciously may not want to?

The helpful answer is not an authoritarian rigid set of principles, or a simple pat answer easily expressed in a few words. What follows in this section is an earnest attempt to put language to human behavior that is drawn from a scriptural view of humanity.

1. We Need a True Identity

The first stage in the progression is the concept of *need*. Because we are both physical beings and personal beings, we have both physical needs and personal needs. *Physical needs* consist of whatever is needed to physically survive, to keep the body alive—food, clothing,

shelter, etc. *Personal needs*, however, consist of whatever is required to personally survive, to keep us alive.

Our true identity is the primary *personal need and as the basis for our feeling worthwhile*.

e.g., “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased!”

We must have the unconditional love (security) and meaningful purpose that come out of our true identity if we are to remain alive as persons (Gen. 1:26-28; John 17; 1 Thess. 5:23-24). Many of us are in the process of dying and do not realize our plight. For as long as we entertain the hope that more money, prestige, sex, fame, vanity, travel, whatever will provide us with identity, we keep going. And as soon as we face the horrid blackness of no worth and no hope of attaining it, a deep despair sets in. At that point we either plunge into irrational efforts to dull the inner pain (alcohol, drugs, working, porn, meaningless sex, human remedies, commendation, retail therapy, overeating, self-pity, isolation, enabling, coercing or manipulating others, narcissism, etc., etc.), have a meltdown, become psychotically withdrawn or bizarre, or commit suicide.

When we come to know that we know, that we know the truth in our heart of hearts of how we are known in heaven + what God is for us in any situation and begin to practice that truth by rational, responsible, obedient, and committed living, we become more and more whole, alive, vibrant, full. Life, no matter how difficult the circumstances, is worth the living. It makes sense. There is joy and reason to go on. All the characteristics of a truly gracious, mature personality, and transcendent life begin to emerge.

The first concept then is *identity*, not wants, not acquired needs, but *identity*. In an understanding of how a person functions, we begin with identity. (Reference also the stated biblical passages on pages 16-35 above.)

(Earlier it was established that Satan counterfeits our identity. “Identity = Performance [good works] + Others’ opinions” versus “True Identity = How you are known in heaven + who God is for you including what God wants to be for you in any situation”.)

2. We Are Motivated

It wasn't until after God proclaimed about Jesus, "...This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" that Jesus stated at John 8:29:

"He who sent me is with me. The Father has not left me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."

Notice the direct connection between His worth (identity), the security and meaningful purpose it produces, and *motivation*. Jesus knew that He knew in His heart of hearts His true identity; He realized His sonship vs. an orphan mindset; He realized He was secure (unconditionally loved) and had a meaningful purpose.

The second concept in the stages of human behavior is *motivation*. Simply stated, motivation is the drive or urge for identity. It is that sense of momentum that compels us to do something to feel worthwhile. We as people experience an acute, keen desire for identity. We are willing to expend tremendous personal energy to satisfy this need. We call this profound, involuntary willingness to feel worthwhile *motivation*.

Basic motivation considered by itself is little more than random, undifferentiated energy. I am willing to do something, to move, to work hard at becoming a worthwhile person. But what do I do? In what direction do I choose to move? What am I motivated to do? What becomes important to me? In what pursuits do I expend my motivational energy? The answer to these questions is as important as it is simple: *The direction that I am motivated to follow in an effort to meet my identity need depends neither on the need nor on the motivational energy but rather on what I **think** will meet that need.* The need is there and I am anxious to meet it, so I am motivated to do whatever I *believe* will give me identity.

We're generously informed at James 4:3 that our motivation is usually wrong. Saul of Tarsus was motivated to "harshly persecute" Christians before God amended his identity to "Paul." (Acts 7:54-58; 8:1-3; 9:4.)

After allowing the Holy Spirit to renew Paul's former motivation for identity (Gal. 1:17-18), Apostle Paul graciously shares with us his, and to what motivation the Holy Spirit is renewing every Christian's: "...**Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.** (1 Cor. 10:31)" "For **Christ's love compels us... those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ...** (1 Cor. 16:14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15)" "**Let this motivation** of Christ Jesus be also in you...When He appeared in human form, **He humbled Himself in obedience to God to the point of death** on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8)"

We are motivated to enjoy living from the unshakable security and meaningful purpose of our true identity. If we feel hungry, we behave in ways designed to procure food. If we feel insecure, we try to find love. And Jesus' basic motivation is our pattern. (He is the way [the journey], the truth, and the life. And we now graciously possess the very same Holy Spirit Jesus did, and it's His role to train us in aligning our motivation. "I will not leave you as an orphan [independent].") Therefore, in truth, as a follower of Jesus, my basic motivation is to come out of realizing my true identity in my heart of hearts. And not my mere intellect.

Colossians 2:9 reminds us, "For in Christ is the fullness of God in human form, and *you are complete through your union with Christ!*" (See also Eph. 4:19.) Until our identity need feels met by God, we are operating from a lack, a deficit. Therefore, our basic motivation can be characterized as self-serving. **Motivation to find identity is at the core of all our behavior. We are trying to meet our need ourselves.**

And our truest identity is required before we will be motivated to genuinely express who God created, simply because **until we truly realize in our heart of hearts God's loving appraisal of us, we do not believe we really are anyone.**

The Holy Spirit through Paul reports this at 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: "If I could speak in any language in heaven or on earth but *didn't have love, I would only be making meaningless noise* like a loud gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I knew all the mysteries of

the future and knew everything about everything, but *didn't have love, what good would I be?* And if I had the gift of faith so that I could speak to a mountain and make it move, *without love I would be no good to anybody*. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but *if I didn't have love, I would be of no value whatsoever*.”

“I pray that you, being rooted and established in...the love of Christ...and to know *this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God [new and genuine security out of a right motivation]* (Eph. 3:17-19)!”

However, we develop ideas from interaction with ‘the flesh’ and the sin-cursed world system about what is required to feel worthwhile. In order to understand why we do what we do, we need to see that we operate from deficit motivation—trying to *obtain* something we believe will provide our identity, even if it involves dishonesty and/or going into sin to obtain it. Many times this includes the sin of self-righteous religiosity as did Saul (Acts 7:54-58; 8:1-3; 9:4, later redeemed as “Apostle Paul”).

Again, rest assured that it is the Holy Spirit’s compassionate role to lead, guide and empower us in the renewal of our motivation.

Until we know that we know in our heart of hearts our true identity, we feel a lack, or *a deficit, and act in ways designed to fill the void*. Our basic motivation is amiss. It is one thing to say that we can claim by faith that our needs are already met in God. It is quite another thing to disentangle ourselves successfully from the sticky web of deficit motivation—*basic motivation coming out of a vigorously convincing yet fictitious lack of identity*.

And much of the time this ensues beyond our conscious level.

So far the progression looks like this:

Start Here:

1. The inherent personal need for a true identity
2. *Motivation* or the drive or urge to meet that identity need

3. Trauma, ‘The Flesh,’ and Our ‘Basic Assumption’

Who has defined your true identity? We all have a self-image. Each of us has a perception of ourselves. God, who *is* love, also has an image of you, one that He imagined before time ever was. Is the image you have of yourself the same one that He has? So once again, who has defined your identity?

As children, we pass through an orderly series of developmental stages. In these stages we are motivated to find our identity. At some point we each hit upon a strategy that seems to work.

And as part of our mental functioning, we make *basic assumptions* about how to meet the need of our true identity. Usually we develop one, perhaps another, broad, guiding idea at a time. The most common guiding ideas are:

“My identity comes from

- money
- a loving spouse
- excelling
- child; children; and/or my kids turning out well
- perfectionism
 - not making a mistake
 - not criticized
- acceptance from everyone
- business prestige, or career prestige
- being a steady worker
- being a sexual object
- recognition by my peer group, or inclusion
- no one rejecting me in some way
- a merit-based walk with God, or ‘my’ ministry.”

Compare this list above of how we typically meet the need of our true identity with God's way of meeting the same need:

True Identity = How you are known in heaven + who God is for you
(including what God wants to be for you in any situation)

Realizing our true identity is so necessary that we hold onto our basic assumptions, or attitudes, firmly and emotionally about how to meet our need of a true identity. Our assumptions, or attitudes, solidify into beliefs about an identity.

We as children developed a strategy for meeting our identity need. Our parents or caregivers, the sin-cursed world system, and mostly "the flesh" teach us *a false* assumption about how to meet the need of our true identity. And this early, false assumption for meeting our identity need connects to a life-event in each of our lives that was traumatic, shocking, humiliating, heartbreaking, sexual, or frightening. This event happens to all but a hundred percent of us before age eleven and involved one or more of the following wounding: neglect, verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, fright, sexual abuse, or rejection that was obvious or veiled. This is consistently when our self-reliant, independent orphan perspective begins.

**This wound was not, in any way,
your fault, or your responsibility.**

"Your age-old enemy has no new methods because the following three strategies have worked well for him for literally thousands of years since he fell from heaven. He seeks to defeat and control God's sons and daughters through: 1) the lust of the flesh, 2) the lust of the eyes, and 3) the pride of life (1 John 2:15, 16). Whenever one of us falls, it is due to one or more of these sins. Satan will entice you to fulfill your intimacy needs through your sensual soul nature; he will entice you to acquire possessions to fill empty places in your heart; and he will make you feel like you are more important and special than anyone else. Beware of his schemes." ⁵

It is vitally important to realize the truth that the apostle Paul graciously informs us at Ephesians 6:12: "Our struggle is not against flesh and blood [ourselves, parents, caregivers; peoples], but

against...the unseen *spiritual forces of evil* in the heavenly realms." And the truth at Romans 7:17-23, that Paul candidly informs us, "the sin that dwells in us" is *separate* from ourselves. Paul explains: "I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. ...If I do what I don't want to do, *I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. ...There is another power within me that is at war with my mind.* This power makes me a slave to *the sin that is still within me!*"

In truth, we are not our problems. We are not our wounds. We are not our sins. You, and other people are not the problem. That reality is important good news.

And now, returning to the significant occurrence that we as children developed a strategy for meeting our identity need before the age of eleven. As the apostle Paul has already described the cunning power of indwelling sin in all of us, *it readily deceives each of us in our minds by giving us thoughts through 'the flesh.'* We experience these thoughts as our own thoughts because they cleverly come in the form of first-person-singular-pronouns. Because of this, Paul confesses to us that he actually carried out what he didn't want to, and didn't do what he wanted to do. Sound familiar?

By this same tactic, 'the flesh' teaches us *a false* assumption about how to meet the need of our true identity. 'The flesh' delights in offering any god that does not submit to Christ. The Holy Spirit graciously explains this dynamic concisely through Paul, highlighted at Galatians 5:13-17: "The Holy Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what 'the flesh' desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict."

Romans 7:23 states, "There is another power within me [Apostle Paul] that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me!" And Romans 8:6 testifies, "For the *mind* set on 'the flesh' is death, but the *mind* set on the Spirit is life and peace (NIV)." Evidently, God's best for us is to learn to live Holy Spirit-*minded*.

Notice that we humans can be 'fleshly minded' and we humans can be 'Spiritually minded.' Reported at Ephesians 2:3, it is "the mind

of the flesh” that is sinful because of being controlled by sin (NIV). And those who *mind* the things of ‘the flesh’ will naturally fulfill them (James 1:13-15; see also Rom. 7:5, 23; 8:4-13; 13:14; Eph. 2:1-3; 6:12; Gal. 5:19-21; Rom. 1:29-32; 6:11-16, 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Col. 3:5-10; 2 Tim. 2:26; Rev. 12:10b; Mark 7:19-21).

Clearly, a part of our personal thought life does not take God into its consideration and is thoroughly fervent with the idea that *fleshly* pursuits lead to personal victory. For example, “Those who are after the flesh, *mind* the things of the flesh,” as well as “Let us ...make no provision for ‘the flesh,’ to fulfill *its* lusts” (Rom. 13:14 NIV).

“And let me carefully indicate that this concept corresponds to what modern psychology calls *the unconscious mind*.”³

It is crucially important to realize that ‘the flesh’ and ‘its mind’ do not originate as part of our own God-given personality. ‘The flesh’ is really not you, and you really are not ‘the flesh.’ “It is *‘the mind of the flesh’* that is sinful because of being controlled by sin.” Therefore, “make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill *its* lusts.” (Reference also Eph. 6:12.) Repeating important good news: *you* are not the problem, in reality!

Until we come to know in our heart of hearts that our true identity need has already been met by God, ‘the flesh’ is part of the reservoir of basic assumptions which we firmly and emotionally hold about how to meet the need of our true identity.

When we, as a child, experience the aforementioned trauma event, a predictable downward spiral to the independent (orphan) perspective commences. We immediately lose the knowledge that we are loved. We saw it happen with Adam & Eve in the Garden (page 10). *‘The flesh’ ushers in fear, shame, and guilt* from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. The walls of our heart become thick protective armor for fear of being hurt again. We suffer the loss of our sense of worth, value, identity. We suffer the loss of the *security* aspect of our identity; we lose the sense of safety through God’s unconditional love; ‘the flesh’ offers a warped self-serving

counterfeit and makes it not possible to receive love without fear. This is a primary root cause of our issues including addiction.

We’re deceived by ‘the flesh’ into distrust. We’re quickly inclined now to only trust ourselves to meet our needs. We become our own authority to rationalize our irrational conduct and for personal survival. We’ll hold others to different standards than ourselves. We fear or reject counsel, and being counseled by Godly leadership in authority. We feel unsure about what is true. ‘The flesh’ deceives us away from accepting the protection and provision Godly leadership in authority bestows. And even though our wounding was not at all our fault, we *all* believe that it must be our responsibility; “I must be faulty.”

When the co-author of this Bible study was eleven years old, “the sin that dwelled within” gave my dad the following whammy through ‘the flesh:’ My dad verbalized to me that he and my mom wished they hadn’t had me. When children experience rejection, ‘the flesh’ convinces us to continually try to avoid further rejection, including suspecting other’s motivations. And even fibbing. We’re convinced to take most everything personally even when it is not personal. ‘The flesh’ sabotages relationships. ‘The flesh’ offers us expectation to be rejected. Some of us feeling rejected follow ‘the flesh’ into loneliness, misery, to self-pity: “Nobody understands me.” The steps following self-pity are often criticism, depression, despair, and hopelessness: “It’s no good. I might as well give up.”

Others of us feeling rejected follow ‘the flesh’ into hardness. “Well, if they don’t love me, so what? Who needs them anyhow? I can do without them.” Then the hardness leads to unconcern. “I don’t care! Nobody’s ever going to hurt me that much again. I’ll put up a barrier that nobody will ever get inside.” Outwardly we’re one way but inwardly, we’re another way. After ‘unconcern’ frequently comes rebellion. “Well, they’re against me, so I’ll be against them.” Rebellion quite often leads to victimizing, and ‘witchcraft,’ which includes the seducing power of controlling others, as well as moving in the occult (consider 1 Samuel 15:23).

‘The flesh’ gives us a false sense of security when we’re included in a peer group, especially when it’s dysfunctional. Most rejection is much more subtle, and even silent, than the obvious rejection wounding in my childhood. And now, after God exposed Rejection, and my applying God’s prescription, detailed later, I realize that feelings of rejection felt “normal” to me—‘the flesh’ keeps us in denial. You will also learn that later as an adult, I was diagnosed with a lethal disease of which “rejection by the earthly father” is a primary root cause. As I come out of rejection and after accessing my Divine healing, I want you to know that our Father God gave me the honor and privilege of leading my dad and my mom to the Lord!

When a girl or boy goes through loss, including parents’ divorce, a death, even of a close Grandparent or caregiver, wounding comes from feelings of abandonment. ‘The flesh’ will deceive us not to love for fear of future abandonment. When a girl or boy is sexually abused, ‘the flesh’ warps their perspective into connecting their identity with rejection, and being a sexual object.

Because of our wounds from childhood, ‘the flesh’ blames others through us rather than us being honestly responsible and answerable for our conduct, compensating for feelings of insecurity. Before long, we need justice to be served through methods of ‘the flesh,’ outside of God’s and His timing. Sooner or later, we’re deceived into agreeing with pride, criticism, and bitterness to cope with the feelings of shame and guilt. ‘The flesh’ can get us accomplished at managing, controlling or manipulating others through anger or self-pity as protection from more devastating feelings of worthlessness.

‘The flesh’ is behind eating disorders, self-mutilation, criticism, self-criticism, judgement, codependence, conflict, etc., etc. ‘The flesh’ conjures fantasies in our lives, including a fantasy spouse to meet our needs of security and meaningful purpose. This diabolically sets us up for failure because that ‘chosen’ individual also has ‘pre-existing conditions’ (issues) from their childhood wounds. And only God meets our needs of security and meaningful purpose—our true

identity. *We were too young to understand trauma’s shocking effects on our soul.* Sooner or later, we live a shame-based, fear-based, reactive, and compulsive life—compliments of the self-reliant, orphan, the ‘old self’ mindset.

This self-reliant, independent (orphan) lens is obviously a distorted and insecure one. But when someone disagrees with our (orphan) viewpoint, we compulsively react, we experience that as personal, rejection, insulting, offensive, and shame. In due course, our childhood wounding literally stunts our emotional and spiritual growth; we remain childish (not *childlike* as in Matthew 18:4), needy self-reliant, independent (orphans) in areas of our lives.

Each of us has been trained through ‘the flesh’ to believe that identity, security, meaningful purpose, joy, abundance, health & wellness, victorious happiness—all the good things of life—depend upon something *other than dependence on God*. The flesh (that unconscious opposition to God) happily provides the sin-cursed world’s teaching that we are sufficient unto ourselves. And that we can figure out a way to our true identity and victorious living without humbly submitting to Jesus. Satan has led the development of a belief that we can meet our needs if only we had _____.

The blank is filled in differently, depending on our particular family and cultural background, our early traumatic wounding, spiritual understanding, and especially our teachability. ‘The flesh’ energized by a sin-cursed world system has squeezed us into the mold of assuming that something other than God offers personal reality and fulfillment.

As part of our mental functioning, human beings make basic assumptions about how to meet the need of a true identity; *Correct assumptions* as Jesus demonstrated, or *mistaken assumptions*. Without exception, we all develop some mistaken assumption about how to get our needs met (James 3:2a). Dr. Alfred Adler rightly calls this assumption a person’s “guiding fiction,” a belief based on a *deceivingly convincing lie* that determines much of our feelings and behavior.

The Anatomy of Our Assumptions, Attitudes, and Actions⁴

It's really important to have a basic understanding of what happened, biologically, when we were wounded, and as children. God says, "My people perish from lack of knowledge, or they reject knowledge (Hosea 4:6)." And, "The truth shall make you free (John 8:32)!"

All the above-mentioned behavior and emotions connected to our woundings originate as thought; thoughts come with emotions. These negative emotions are physically stored in the form of chemicals in an area in your brain that also forms your *behavior*. This area of the brain is a component of your limbic system called the *amygdala*. We experience all woundings through our physical senses. Info from your physical senses does not go directly to your brain. All of your sensory information first gets sorted, processed, and prioritized by a structure within your brain. This structure is also a component of your limbic system, called the *thalamus*. And there is yet another area in your brain that is responsible for rational decision-making. It is called the *pre-frontal cortex*.

Here is one of the main points: *the connection between the emotional part of the brain (amygdala) and the rational decision-making (pre-frontal cortex) is not developed in children before the age of 18*. Therefore, when neglect, verbal, emotional, physical, sexual abuse, fright, or rejection wounding occurs before we are 18 years old, *we completely lack rational decision-making capabilities*. Without Godly, adult guidance at the time (Prov. 22:6), the event is stored by our thalamus, and the negative emotions by the amygdala, *with zero rational context*. *As a result, we as children cannot rationalize that the wounding is not our fault*. With no rational decision-making, we feel responsible for the neglect, verbal, emotional, physical, sexual abuse, fright, and/or rejection wounding in our life. We lose our innocence and gain shame & guilt. We lose our security and gain the insecurity of independence. We become chronically self-serving. We gain an orphan identity mindset from an orphan lens.

Another gland of our limbic system called the *hippocampus* holds all your wounds from prenatal on.

As adults without realizing in our heart of hearts God's personalized healing prescription (detailed later), we compulsively react out of the same irrational memories when we experience a situation that even smells like a painful event of our childhood wounding. One well-known example would be the 'fight or flight' automatic reaction in situations that aren't life-threatening. Neuroscience and medical research explain that chronic 'fight or flight' in our lives is directly connected with chronic harmful stress and maladies in our lives.

When we are wounded as children, our limbic system unwittingly brings our irrational emotions, unresolved conflicts, and reactive behaviors from our childhood into our adulthood. The thalamus and hippocampus glands of our limbic system get 'stuck in the past.' This is the primary source of negativity and "double-mindedness" (Jas. 1:8) in our adult lives. And it even prevents the reasoning that a painful event of our childhood did not just now happen; that it is a stored retention from our past; and that it was not our fault.

It is very common to carry wounds, trauma, for years that your mind never knows about—deeper than the mind, deeper than reason, deeper than the memory. The orphan wounding and attitude are in that deep area. And often, because it's so deep, we do not even realize our problem (page 12 above; 1 Cor. 2:11).

As adults in relationship, when an imperfect person's conduct reminds 'the flesh' of our previous wounding, the correlated negative emotions get expressed without the vital rational aspect. No one is perfect. People 'touch' our 'open wounds.' As adults, we continue to be reactive and compulsive because the negative emotions from a childhood wounding event are involuntarily experienced as negative emotions with no rational context (Matt. 7:1-3; Mk. 7:20-23; Rom. 2:1-3; Jas. 1:14; 4:1). After 25-years of research, Dr. Paul Hegstrom uncovered that *almost 98% of the issues couples*

struggle with are rooted in childhood wounds each of them suffered before the age of eleven. ⁴

Dr. Hegstrom's research also found that "the earlier the wounds were inflicted, the more people need rules." ⁴ (Consider Galatians 5:4 because they had "fallen away from God's grace by trying to make themselves right with God by going back to keeping the law.") And, "We don't need to delve into our past and search for a specific trauma that may have caused lasting results (Lk. 9:62). *What's relevant is that we identify our behaviors and emotions and realize that they have a source.* What we identify and can understand, we can deal with [God's way]." ⁴ This is a significant active ingredient of God's personalized prescription detailed in another section.

Ephesians 4:14-15 states, "*We will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of His body, the church.*"

"When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11). "

Mistaken Assumptions, Scriptural Absolutes, Unconditional Love ²

We have a self-consciousness; we can talk to ourselves in sentences (e.g., Ps. 103:1). The sentences we consciously tell ourselves strongly influence how we feel and what we do. And we now can see where these sentences originate. The content of the sentences we tell ourselves in our conscious minds draws upon the mistaken assumptions haunted with early-life wounding held by 'the flesh.' All in all, we are not aware of our mistaken belief about our identity. Yet that ungodly belief controls our feelings and behavior. *The battle is*

*for our minds. Influence what we **believe** and you influence the whole person* (Matt. 8:13; 9:29; Prov.23:7).

In order to understand how our problems develop, we need to add another element to the progression—what we say to ourselves as *basic assumptions* or *attitudes*. Expressed like this:

Start Here:

1. The intrinsic personal need for my true identity
2. Motivation or the drive or urge to meet that need
3. *Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by 'the flesh' of what provides my true identity*

Understandably, we as children select our strategies for identity in negative association with our prepubescent traumatic, shocking, humiliating, heartbreaking, sexual, or frightful wounding. Additionally, it seems quite reasonable to suggest that we are also influenced by whatever consistent pattern of living our parents (or primary caregivers) display.

Proverbs 22:6 tells us to train up our children in the way they should go. The Hebrew word for "train up" first was used (according to Howard Hendricks in his superb material on child training) to refer to a Hebrew midwife placing her finger in the mouth of the newborn infant in order to stimulate the sucking reflex. The general thought contained in the word is to do something that triggers basic reflexes, to prompt a natural activity, or even more broadly, to create a desire. We as children are inherently motivated to find our identity. A primary role of parents is to prompt that basic reflex by the way they live. Parents are to create a desire in their children to look to the Lord for the satisfaction of their identity and physical needs.

Make no mistake. We in some form have reproduced our parents' (or caregivers') efforts to meet our identity need. If they really believed that money or performance or other people's opinions brings identity or that compliments or attractive clothing brings it, they could chatter all they want about the joys of knowing Jesus. We learned to depend on what they really were depending on for their satisfaction in life. No amount of teaching, family devotions,

or trips to church effectively countered the message they conveyed by their lives. As children, we learned that our identity can be found if we reach the same goal for which our parents (or caregivers) strived.

The church of Jesus Christ needs to live out the reality of our true identity by our unswerving and uncompromising commitment to the absolutes of Scripture and by our practice (not merely our expression) of unconditional love. Unless young people find the rational, legitimate answer to their deepest needs that only Christianity affords, they will become either machine-like puppets, mechanically conforming to society's expectations. (Is that what we really want, down deep? It may be.) Or they will plunge into the horrible blackness of utter despair—no meaning, no love, no nothing; moving on as zombies going nowhere or, if they have the courage, committing suicide.

The clear challenge for us as parents is to live in such a way that we genuinely do depend on the Lord alone for our true identity. And beloved, this is not meant to condemn but to help us access everything that our loving God has purchased for us, including forgiveness, redemption, freedom, and the reversal of any and all brokenness. “With God, all things are possible!”

It is vitally important to realize that our spiritual maturing and therefore our freedom from hurts, hang-ups, habits, and issues depend directly upon how we perceive and think (Rom.12:2; Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 7:23, 25; 8:6; 2 Cor.10:4-5; Eph. 4:23; Php. 2:5; 4:7-8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jas. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; Prov.3:5; 23:7; Isa. 26:3). Or in other words, our spiritual advancement and our emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial health depend directly upon what sentences with which we fill our minds. Therefore, it becomes crucial to know what determines the sentences that we consciously speak to ourselves in our minds.

4. We Set a Goal

Be reminded of Saul-pre-Paul’s goal of persecuting Christians before God amended his identity to “Paul” (Php. 3:6). But after allowing the Holy Spirit to begin redeeming his ‘fleshly’ *motivation* and mistaken *assumption* for identity, the apostle Paul graciously shares with us his personal *goal* at Philippians 3:10: “I want *to know Christ* and *the power* of His resurrection and the fellowship of...becoming [more and more] like Him in His death...”

“Where your treasure is there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:21).” When we as children latch onto an assumption of what provides identity, our motivation acquires direction. A goal is set (i.e., money, a loving spouse, a sexual object, or inclusion in particular circles, etc.). We now will engage in behavior designed to meet the goal that our assumption has determined. Our progression can now be expanded.

Start Here:

1. The inherent personal need for my true identity
2. Motivation or the drive or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal based on what ‘the flesh’ offers for my identity
5. Goal-oriented behavior

5. Goal-oriented Behavior

“There is a way that seems right to a person, but in the end it leads to death (Prov. 14:12; 16:25).” Our misguided behavior (Point 5) is designed to meet the misguided goal (Point 4) that our misguided assumption (Point 3) has determined. And it seems right to us or we wouldn’t behave as such. The progression as it now looks strongly suggests the primary way in which problems develop. We can move effectively or ineffectively toward our goal. Assistance that helps us reach a goal determined by a *mistaken* assumption actually amounts

to teaching a tick how to more productively drain a dog. If we can reach a goal through more effective strategies, we will achieve a measure of satisfaction. But if it is true that only Jesus can truly satisfy our needs and if our goal was determined by a mistaken assumption about what provides true identity, those of us who reach our goal will not be thoroughly satisfied, our needs still will be unmet, and we will be motivated to go through the cycle again and reach *new* goals.

Our goal-oriented behavior can be intelligent, realistic, and sensible or it can be misinformed, unrealistic, and utterly ineffective. The goal therefore may not be reached, we will feel threatened as our identity need remains unmet, and we will become stressed and/or resentful.

All our life we will chase after things that never satisfy. God told Jeremiah that His people “have forsaken Me—the fountain of living waters. And they have dug for themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).”

Our Lord told the Samaritan woman that people who rely on any source of nourishment other than Jesus Himself will never be content. The cycle of drawing water from the well becomes perpetual, wearisome labor, continually toiling for that which never satisfies. What a tragedy to see men and women locked into a vocational structure, sacrificing their families to “make it” in business. An expensive home with a Bentley in the garage and a bank account that is bulging amount to nothing more than a broken cistern.

Paul came to know how to abound and how to be abased. He could enjoy luxuries if they came his way, but he also could do without them. He realized that depending on material possessions for happiness was like lowering a bucket into an empty well in order to satisfy thirst. Material possessions hold no water that can nourish the soul with a true identity, but so often we get a longer rope to drop the bucket deeper into the bottomless, waterless well, hoping that eventually we will find what we seek. Some of us give up on the life of

affluence, sell everything, and move to a fishing village or a farm in the country, all to quiet that uneasy sense of dull, aching independent, (orphan), the ‘old self’ emptiness. Many of us cannot afford either to buy more things or move to the country, but longingly imagine that if we could, our needs would be met. However, nothing apart from relationship with Jesus the Christ will ever satisfy.

When the desired goal is not reached, we are motivated to protect ourselves from the painful feelings of worthlessness.

“The *spirit* of a person can endure their infirmity, but a *wounded spirit* who can bear?”

Our hurts, habits, hang-ups, relational heartaches, financial headaches, compulsions, obsessions, stress, phobias, fixations, addictions to or obsession with alcohol, chemicals, work, spending, sex, approval, overeating, vanity, excuse making, blaming, sexual dysfunction, allergies, hypersensitivities, food intolerances, syndromes, the various cancers, cardiovascular diseases, and our other physical health problems are quite often the result of our compensating for the emotional pains of a mistaken identity. We will gain further clear understanding of this in upcoming sections.

Now adding to the progression of how problems develop:
Start Here:

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation or the drive or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal based on what ‘the flesh’ offers for my identity
5. Goal-oriented behavior
6. Goal reached
7. *Partial, temporary satisfaction*
8. *Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness*

Returning Back to Start

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity

The stages now reflect how most “well-adjusted” people live. We have set goals for ourselves according to religion’s assumptions and/or the sin-cursed world’s assumptions about what provides identity. Through hard work, careful planning, or “dumb luck” (many would call it that), we have reached our goals. We have money, nice kids, good health, business prestige, whatever we value, and we enjoy a real measure of personal prosperity and happiness. We don't feel the need to seek help. Some of us feel no need for God in our lives—we do fine without Him. The problem is that when everything goes according to plan, we really do feel good. The way that seems right has been achieved and is bringing temporary satisfaction. It is hard to convince us that the end of our way is personal death — eternity with neither legitimate meaning nor authentic love.

Jesus is the way [the journey], the truth, and the life—He was Paul’s pattern and his power, and Jesus is our pattern and our power. Jesus’ basic *motivation* was right, He completely repelled ‘the flesh’ (Jn. 14:30), therefore His basic *assumption* was correct. And Jesus engaged in *conduct, actions, behavior* while He was physically on the earth. But which conduct, actions, behaviors? (See John 5:19-20; 14:10, 18, 23-24.)

James 1:22-25 also teaches us, “And remember, do not *merely listen* to the word [of God], and so deceive yourselves. *Do what it says*. ...And if you do what it says and don't forget what you heard, then *God will bless you in doing it*” (see also Php. 4:13). Jesus teaches us at John 15:5, “Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. *Those who remain in Me, and I in them, will produce much fruit*. For apart from me *you can do nothing [good]*.”

As we now understand, Christians are graciously empowered by the Holy Spirit to be the most compassionately loving, joyful, peaceful, patient, long-suffering, kind, good, faithful, gentle, gracious, merciful, the most free from egocentricity and pettiness, squabbling, sulking, self-pity, and other manipulation, emotional, mental and physical issues, dis-ease, resulting from a selfish concern with getting one's

own identity need met. Colossians 2:9, 10 states, “For in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form, and *you have been given fullness in Christ*, who is the head over every power and authority!” (See also Luke 10:19.) Christians are in a position to be free from the “deficit motivation” described above—motivation coming out of a mistaken identity. Yet we often differ not one whit from the self-seeking worldling who is preoccupied with meeting his or her own identity need. The apostle Paul rebuked Christians for living like ordinary men and women.

The reason for such carnal behavior is not hard to unearth. In a word, the problem is unbelief, or as Christian Counselor, Dr. Larry Crabb, preferred to think of it, mistaken belief. God has promised to meet our every need. What remains for us is to “possess our possessions,” to intentionally, aggressively and persistently believe that He is looking after our needs thoroughly, and to thus live in joyful abundance and authentic peace.

There are some of us who, when we reach all our (mistaken) goals, are brought face-to-face with the horrible fact that “dreams come true” have not really satisfied; we are still in the empty, self-reliant, independent (orphan), the ‘old self’ condition.

Non-Christians may, of course, meet their needs at a given moment without consciously relying on the Lord. If physical health is good and if there is plenty of money in the bank, people apparently can go on to be motivated by their need for identity. It is here that a non-Christian gets stuck.

Without the Lord it is possible to feel identity in the love of a spouse or friends and to feel a definite sense of identity in devoting yourself to “humanitarian” purposes that many would agree is important. On the basis of the counterfeit replica of satisfying sources of identity, some people do move on to what most observers would agree is a healthy level of becoming self-giving. But if it is true that every attempt to meet a personal identity need apart from a committed relationship to Christ must logically fall short of its goal, then every non-Christian must in some sense be forever trapped in

searching for identity. Because we are not and cannot be fully satisfied in our most basic personal needs, there will always be an undercurrent of motivation to find identity in *all our behavior*. We are doomed to self-serving until we *amend our performance-based identity, which we cannot really do without becoming a pupil of Jesus*.

Many non-Christians exhibit a commendable humanitarian interest in other people. Is this not an expression of a truly whole person? No, because underneath whatever worthy, conscious motivation may exist there must be the demanding rumblings of unsatisfied needs for their true identity. If there are no such rumblings, then it must be possible to become a truly self-giving person without knowing who God is for them. An example may be the late Robin Williams' suicide. Accomplished, famous, actor, comedian, husband, and father, Robin Williams was also very well-known for his humanitarianism. Why suicide? He apparently reached the pitiable but honest stage of utter despair: "I've reached all my goals but they don't satisfy. I'm empty. Life is not worth the living. There's nothing else to try. I've tried everything. Nothing relieves that deep self-reliant, independent, (orphan) pain inside me. Death is now the only possible relief."

God is utterly indispensable in meeting personal needs. Therefore, no matter how whole or giving or loving we as a non-Christian may seem to be, we still are operating from a lack—a deficit. The motivational core of our behavior must be stained with a desire to meet our needs ourselves. We still are fundamentally self-centered, prompted by deficit motivation to supply ourselves what is missing. Advice on how to live a victoriously happy life has simply taught us how to more effectively manipulate others to meet our needs. God, who sees to the innermost depths of our hearts, cannot commend behavior that is in any way selfishly motivated.

"Most power is power to coerce somebody." —*Charles Koch*

Adding this kind of experience to our progression, it now looks like the following.

Start Here:

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation or the drive or urge to meet that need
3. New mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by 'the flesh' of what provides my true identity
4. Set a new goal based on what 'the flesh' offers for my identity
5. New goal-oriented behavior
6. New goal reached
7. ~~Partial, temporary satisfaction~~
8. ~~Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness~~
7. Revealed orphan mindset; 'broken heart;' despair (including questioning meaning of life & death)
8. Suicide

Your Super Powerful 'Will'

Science has discovered a God-given physical structure in our brains which is our free will. And in over 4,000 scriptures where "choose," "will," and other words expressing choice are used, not one suggests that God forces any person to accept Him, His love, or do His will! Our relationship with God is entirely on a voluntary basis (Rev. 22:17; Mark 16:16; John 3:16; John 7:17; 1 Peter 5:2). If we did not have the freedom of choice, God would be entirely responsible for all evil, sickness, poverty, rebellion, and alike.

No one recognizing that endless decisions are necessary to daily life can deny the fact of free acts and behavior, for we know we have freedom of action—moral action—concerning right and wrong. Obedience is meaningless without the possibility of disobedience. We cannot be free if we have no choice—if God imposes His will on ours. From what would we be free?

We generally choose to do what makes sense to us. Practically speaking, our freedom of choice is restricted by the limits of our rational understanding. For example, a primary problem an unsaved person has is not their inability to choose God. His or her will is perfectly capable of choosing to trust Christ, but their darkened understanding will not allow their will to make that choice (2 Cor. 4:4). He or she does not need a strengthened will; they need an enlightened mind (1 Cor. 2:16), and that is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

Ministries, coaches, family, or friends can spend their energy exhorting people to change their behavior. But the human 'will' is not exactly a free entity. It is bound to a person's understanding (i.e., Prov. 2:10-11; 16:22; Hosea 4:6). We will do what we believe (Matt. 8:13; 9:29; Prov. 23:7). When we experience the revelation of who Christ is (Matt. 16:17), on what basis we are worthwhile, and what life is all about, we have the preparation necessary for any sustained increase in lifestyle. Christians who try to "live right" without correcting a mistaken perception about their identity (how they are known in heaven plus who God wants to be for them in every situation) will always labor and struggle with Christianity; not resting-in but grinding-out their responsible duty in a joyless, strained fashion.

Christ taught that when we come to realize the truth, we can be freed. We now are free to choose the life of obedience because we realize that in Christ and only in Christ, we now are a worthwhile person. And we are free to express our service and gratitude in the worship of the One who has met our needs; *our will becomes aligned with God's will for us and we authentically want to serve Him, and Him alone.* ("If you love me you'll keep my commands;" "...And His commands are not burdensome;" "God loves a cheerful [a 'prompt'] giver." (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; 2 Cor. 9:7; Matt. 11:30; see also Heb. 12:2; Pr. 17:22; Rom. 14:17; John 16:24))

Obedience does not automatically follow from correct understanding. Our *perceptions* determine the range of options we can choose. 'The will' is a real part of the human personality with the

function of responsibly choosing to behave consistently with how the Holy Spirit, in relationship, trains us to evaluate our world (Jn. 14:26). And such choices are not always easy (Gal. 5:17). It often involves teeth-gritting effort to choose to behave rightly. It is important to choose to do what is right moment by moment. And apart from the clear exercise of the will, there will be no consistent obedience. As the Christian continues to choose the path of righteousness-in-love, his or her capacity for right choices in the face of adversity and temptation enlarges. We become a stronger Christian, one whom God can trust with greater responsibilities (Ps. 25:9-14).

From a biblical perspective, there really are only two possible basic directions that one may choose: live for self or live for God (2 Cor. 5:15). If with our heart we choose to live for self (which we all naturally do; 1 Cor. 2:14), then we will never have our personal needs fully met. By cutting God off (what a staggering concept of freedom—mere humans can cut God off from our lives), we cut off the only source of the security & meaningful purpose our true identity ensures. We then are left to ourselves and so we do the best we can in meeting our personal needs.

The mistaken beliefs that we Christians have learned still enter our conscious minds, but we deliberately evaluate our world from a biblical framework & heart (2 Cor. 10:5). We evaluate our lives from God's perspective; we choose to behave as God tells us and empowers us to; we feel compassion for others and behave accordingly. We *experience* a deep sense of our own personal worth and know experientially the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). But if I am a Christian living as a carnal man or woman, I am still living for myself, still evaluating my world from a fraudulent perspective, and I therefore behave selfishly, manipulating (others) to meet my needs, disobediently, and without compassion. I think, feel, and act just like an unbeliever. What a tragedy!

Our *Will* and Our Progression

Regarding our progression of how problems develop, simply be reminded that we each do have *a will* with which we make many, many choices, including our identity choices. Therefore, it is quite appropriate to incorporate the involvement of your *will* in Points 4, 5, and 6 (listed above) and with this description: “Basic direction choice: Self-serving or Christ-like.” You will also see it throughout the following illuminating synopsis:

‘What This Looks Like Monday Morning’²

Now that we have a simplified progression of how problems develop, the following practical illustration is an earnest attempt to clarify how it explains our common behaviors:

I need to feel worthwhile from my true identity and I am motivated to somehow meet that need. I have been taught by a sin-cursed world system that money conveys significance, security—identity. I therefore assume that financial wealth gives a person identity. My goal therefore becomes making as much money as I can. I listen to the preacher tell me that the love of money is a primary root of all evil, that I can't serve God and money, that I am to seek first His kingdom and set my goal for laying up heavenly treasures.

Because I am a Christian and because I believe the Bible is God's inspired word, I fully agree with what the preacher is telling me, *but in order to feel worthwhile*, I still feel an inner drive compulsively spurring me on to make money. I try to shake it but I can't. Prayer, repentance, dedication all make me feel better for a while, but the lust for money remains strong. My real problem is not a love of money but rather a mistaken belief, a learned, deceptive assumption that *personal identity depends on having money. Until that idea connecting identity with money is deliberately and consciously rejected, I will always covet money*, no matter how many times I confess to God my sin of lusting for money.

If I make a ton of money, I may feel guilty because I know my desires are wrong, but I will likely feel rather good on the inside. I do attain a measure of identity according to my mistaken but firmly held assumption. If I do not make money, I feel worthless. Perhaps I give up a lucrative job to enter full-time Christian service, but I will not find a sense of real fulfillment until my thinking changes about what gives a person identity. If I continue in my compulsion to earn big money, but experience financial reverses, I then may redouble my efforts to rid myself of this consuming desire for money. But again, as long as I unconsciously believe that money equals identity and the security or meaningful purpose it provides, I never will stop lusting after money because I always will be motivated to meet my need.

The New Testament says that transformation depends upon renewing our minds. Said in another way, our motivational energy can be channeled in different directions when we allow the Holy Spirit, in relationship, to retrain our thinking about what will meet our needs (Jn. 14:26; Rom, 12:2). My efforts to change is not to focus on my behavior but rather on renovating my mistaken thinking.

If I don't reach my goal of money and don't correct my thinking, I may resort to unethical strategies to achieve my goal. I will know I'm wrong and will hate myself for behaving sinfully, but I'll do it anyway. Motivation to meet personal needs is overwhelmingly strong. I may develop a seared conscience in order to give myself some sense of peace. Or I may resort to creating a series of maneuvers designed to protect an injured sense of worth. Perhaps I will even develop fatigue, dizzy spells, headaches, or other health problems.

I might experience emotional problems like depression, anxiety attacks, sleep issues, or other health issues. These *problems will serve a useful function in dulling the inner pain of feeling worthless. I can comfort myself by believing that were it not for this unfortunate problem I likely could become quite successful. My worth is therefore safeguarded in the face of financial failure.*

Although the symptoms I develop *may be neither consciously fabricated nor deliberately intended* to serve a useful psychological function, they nevertheless are effective in preventing *the worst possible hurt: the conscious admission that I am worthless*.

Until I reach that point, any suicide notions I have will be basically manipulative, designed somehow to further protect my sense of worth. And, *when I can no longer avoid the admission that I am worthless, suicide becomes in my mind a rational alternative*. The co-author of this Bible study speaks from experience.

This motivation for money to feel worthwhile is only one example. In other examples, I may participate with any lust, compulsion, attitude, or inordinate affection in any area of my life—even though I know it’s wrong—in order to feel worthwhile. Or I may isolate; emotionally and/or physically isolate myself even though I’m called to be in relationship, to actively love others as myself. The point being that *in any area of my life* I might sin *to feel worthwhile or to protect my sense of worth or identity*.

“You are going to serve the one (kingdom) that you think best meets your needs, period.” —*Pastor Gary Keese*

Wrong patterns of living develop from wrong philosophies of living. “For as man *thinks in his heart*, so is he... (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV; 27:19; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)”

In Summary

Everyone wears a pair of glasses. These glasses are not physical glasses purchased to help us see close or afar. These glasses are another kind of glasses. Most people don’t think about the fact that we see life differently, depending on what glasses we are wearing and how they were formed. These glasses are really what we call our ‘basic assumption’ or attitude of what provides our intrinsic need of our true identity.

We could say that your inherent need of worth, value, true identity, is the foundation that builds your beliefs, and behavior.

Ultimately, there are only two foundations for this: a mistaken assumption held by ‘the flesh’ & indwelling sin of what provides your true identity, or God’s loving truth of what provides your true identity (Gal. 5:13-17; Rom. 7:17-25; 8:6, 14).

You see, we all have the same innate need for true identity. Now as Christians—to understand and experience this need being met fully by God—we must start from the foundation of God’s word. Only God knows everything, and in His word, He has revealed to us the key understanding we need so we can put on the right glasses. Sadly, even we Christians look at life through the wrong glasses because we’ve been guided by our early wounding, ‘the flesh,’ indwelling sin, our family shaping, religiosity, and the sin-cursed world system.

Not only does this determine how our innate personal needs are met but also how we behave. As the Bible clearly states:

“Do everything with love.” “Christ’s love compels us. ...Those who receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.” —the one who has already met our true identity need. “...Whatever you do, do it *all* for the glory of God.” (1 Cor. 10:31; 16:14; 2 Cor. 5:14-15) As you would expect, our motivation ultimately forms our conduct.

What we experience as emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial issues are the symptoms of unmet needs for security and meaningful purpose inherent in our sense of worth, truest identity. We’ve been deceived by indwelling sin, our family training, religious legalism, the sin-cursed world system and mostly ‘the flesh,’ to dismiss God freely meeting these needs. We are compulsively trying to meet these personal needs ourselves. This perpetuates the self-reliant, independent (orphan), the ‘old self,’ and double-minded mindset. And a primary characteristic of this mindset is denial. Problems develop from a mistaken assumption (haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’) of what provides our true identity. It is the real root cause of all our chronic issues.

Also, we now understand that as young people, our parents (or caregivers) were also allured by seducing lies of indwelling sin, their

family shaping, religiosity, the sin-cursed world system and mainly ‘the flesh,’ about how to meet the need of their true identity. And their parents or caregivers were also allured by the undercurrent seducing lies about how to meet the need of their true identity. No differently from us, when they, as young people, latched onto a mistaken assumption of what provides identity, their motivation acquired a wrong direction. A mistaken goal was set. Without exception, *we’ve all engaged in behavior designed to meet the goal that the mistaken assumption had determined*, courtesy of ‘the flesh’ and the aforementioned undertows.

A little earlier in this Bible study, the might of our ‘will’ was discussed. Kindly note that ‘the flesh’ & indwelling sin influence your will, and God influences your will. And we exercise our will as we move along in either opposing direction. The opposing influences—‘the flesh’ & indwelling sin, and God—need us to exercise our ‘will.’ In accord with God’s influence, He empowers us to align our will with His then exercise our God-given will (Php. 2:13). (Reference Points 3 - 8 of the progression.)

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow...be sure that your faith is in God alone. Do not waver, for a person with divided loyalty is as unsettled as a wave of the sea that is blown and tossed by the wind. Such people should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Their loyalty is divided...and they are unstable in everything they do. (James 1:2-8; see also Rom. 5:3-4)”

Please be reminded that our Bible indicates we each have deep hidden parts of our personalities where we hold tenaciously to, and have choices, regarding our identity. Do trust that the Holy Spirit with the Bible provide the unique solution.

Please consider imagining how much more loving our lives, families, and Christians would be if we each basically understood the above human behavior progression.

Also, rest assured that, to access God’s emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial health, there is no need to try to re-script memories, or somehow re-live past events or situations (Isa. 43:18; Luke 9:62; Php. 3:10, 13). We’ll learn in another section why that would actually be counterproductive.

You now have a simple progression of the opposing kingdom’s groundwork in developing life-problems through human behavior. In the next section you will have one more very key element in the progression.

How Problems Develop Part II³

Be reminded to read the following from a stance of understanding, not doing; letting go of all programming to 'do.' In another section we will learn to allow God's Spirit and Word to reverse or prevent the specific problems in our lives.

God wants to ensure that we operate from our (true) God-given identity—how we are known in heaven, and who God truly is for each us in every situation. He also wants to ensure we disentangle ourselves from the enemy's alluring counterfeit. And if God is going to help us shift, we need to understand an additional basic principle of personal functioning.

Well-known psychologists Freud and Skinner and much of this sin-cursed fraudulent world teaches what *happens* to a person is responsible for their problems. A primary theme of the Bible indicates that how we *perceive* what happens to us has much to do with our emotional and behavioral reactions (i.e., Matt. 8:26; 16:8; 6:30; 14:30-31; Mark 7:15; Rom. 2:1-5; 5:3, 12:14; Jas. 1:2; Josh. 24:15).

As detailed in the previous section, we have a self-consciousness; we can talk to ourselves in sentences. With this ability to say things to ourselves in propositional form (e.g., we clothe impressions in words), we evaluate our world. When an external event or situation occurs and catches my attention, I respond to it first by talking to myself about it. I may not always notice the sentences I am telling myself, but I am responding in verbal form nevertheless and, if I paid attention to my mind, I could observe what sentences I am using to evaluate this event. For example, if I wake up to a rainstorm on a morning planned for golf, I may mentally evaluate the event with sentences such as, "My golfing partner is a potential client who will be leaving town tomorrow and I perhaps am losing a chance to make big money. This storm is a terrible thing." My emotional reaction would be very negative. If my wife asked me why I felt depressed, I might say, "Because it's raining outside." But that wouldn't be accurate. A rainstorm has no power to make me depressed, but a strong negative mental evaluation of the storm does.

In other words, events do not control my feelings. My mental *evaluation* of events (the sentences I tell myself) do affect how I feel. Suppose I were to change my evaluation from “This storm is a terrible thing” to “Money is important but I trust God to meet my needs. Therefore, although I would prefer to play golf today, it is not terrible that I can’t.” With that sentence in my mind, my emotional reaction would include real disappointment but also a quiet sense of peace.

When we perceive what happens as a threat to our identity, we will experience strong negative feelings and will deal with the event in a personally defensive manner. Perhaps we will launch an emotional attack on the situation trying to change it. (Husbands and wives are specialists in working hard to change each other in order to have their own needs better met.) Or we might withdraw from the event to avoid further hurt. If, however, the event is perceived as personally fulfilling (“in order to feel significant, I need recognition; my boss just complimented me on my management ability”), we will feel good. If we perceive what happens as irrelevant to our identity (“the co-author of this Bible study repeats himself”), we likely will have no deep emotional reaction. How we mentally *evaluate* an event or situation determines how we *feel* about that event and how we will *behave* in response to it.

The Role of Negative Emotions

Now consider a scenario that you get such headaches; your doctor says nothing is wrong with you physically but your head sure hurts. You know you’re tense. But if these are really tension headaches, you don’t know what to do. What do you do for help?

Perhaps you’re a pastor or an elder or maybe a Christian in the church body. You might be tempted to think, “Look, this seems like a psychosomatic problem that frankly is beyond my church’s abilities to handle. I’m going to consider seeing a psychologist.” Or, you might consider behaviors designed to aid relaxation. (“Maybe I need a

hobby?” “How about propping up my feet and tuning out the world?”) Perhaps you may unwisely consider transcendental meditation, unaware of its insidious pull toward a godless view of life. Perhaps your church counselor would try to identify the source of tension and help you deal with it biblically.

As indicated earlier, we require a good conceptual understanding of how problems develop. How do we understand what caused our problem and what is maintaining it?

In this section, you will better understand the idea that we are motivated to reach whatever goal we assume will fulfill our true identity need. The progression illustration will be expanded to help explain how most relational, emotional, mental, physical, and financial problems develop. And it will be unfolded in that order — first relational, then emotional, mental, and physical symptoms and then the financial clues in upcoming sections.

The key element behind most issues is an obstacle that interferes with reaching our chosen identity goal. If the obstacle can be overcome by making changes in goal-oriented *behavior*, then the threat of addiction, hurt, negativity, habits, hang-ups, health issues/problems, relational heartache or financial headache can be averted. And repeating, if the goal is based on unbiblical assumptions, the result is either partial satisfaction—and more treadmill-style chasing after fulfillment—or despair. Sometimes the obstacle cannot be overcome (“I can’t get my spouse to love me.” or, “No matter how hard I try, I keep making mistakes.”). Often these stubborn obstacles that remain standing despite the best efforts of frustrated people fall into one or more of three forms:

1. Unreachable Goals
2. External Circumstances
3. Fear of Failure

Unreachable Goals

Whenever we encounter an obstacle on the road to a desperately desired identity goal, we experience frustration. The emotional form that the frustration assumes usually depends on the nature of the obstacle encountered. When the identity goal we set is unreachable, the primary emotional response is *shame/guilt* or *feelings of self-degradation*.

Consider for a moment the case of Stacy, a young Christian who became pregnant when she was seventeen.¹ Stacy gave up her baby for adoption, and only her family and a few close friends knew of the incident. Several years later, Stacy fell in love with a compassionate man named Ron and married him. Fearing his reaction, she didn't tell Ron about the baby. Over the years, Stacy concealed her guilt and grief until the pressure finally became so overwhelming that she admitted the entire episode to him.

Surprisingly, Ron did not respond in anger. He understood the agony his wife had carried for so many years and loved her in spite of her past. It was Stacy who could not cope at this point. Unable to accept Ron's forgiveness and knowing she had failed according to her standards and to society's standards, Stacy felt insecure and unworthy of his love. The kinder her world was, the more she believed that the fault was hers, that she was imperfect. She refused to forgive herself and chose to leave her husband.

In this case, Stacy fell victim to one of the devil's most effective lies: Those who fail are unworthy of love and deserve to be blamed and condemned. Because she failed in her own eyes, Stacy's *perception* of herself was detrimentally affected.

Certain identity goals that we set for ourselves simply cannot be reached no matter how hard we try. Stacy's objective (basic assumption) had become the *unreachable goal* of perfection. Whenever there is a self-imposed unattainable standard against which we measure ourselves, the most common emotional response is shame/guilt or feelings of self-degradation. (When we accept responsibility for *not reaching our unreachable goal*, we feel

unworthy. Often these feelings are expressed in statements of self-hatred, attitudes of despairing disgust with ourselves, and a loss of motivation to try. And, be reminded that Stacy is a Christian.)

CO=AUTHOR'S NOTES

Shame *falsely* accuses us of being *inherently bad*; an *inherent failure* because of failure and therefore forgiving ourselves feels ridiculous. *Guilt* falsely accuses us that our behavior has been unforgivable.

Self-unforgiveness is toxic and progresses to self-hatred (self-bitterness) quickly.

Conversely, God lovingly *convicts* us of unrepentant sin in our accountability and responsibility in yielding to becoming more like Jesus. And that loving conviction offers clarity & direction, not confusion, criticism, judgment, discouragement, blame or condemnation. Please be reminded that our adversary's shame & guilt accusations are false because God graciously informs us of our acquittal in Romans 5. And He clearly informs us again at John 3:17; 8:11; Rom. 6:5-7; 8:1; Col. 2:12-14, and 1 John 3:20 of the great news: "There is now *no condemnation* for those who are in Christ!"

"God understands the human condition of His sons and daughters and builds into your life allowances for the mistakes. Isn't it comforting to know 'He makes *all* things work together for good for those who love Him and are called to His purposes (Rom. 8:28).' Satan's greatest victories are redeemed by God to bring greater glory to Himself. Satan is continually frustrated by God when He does this. God makes even your shortcomings bring glory to Himself. It's part of the journey!"⁵

Second Corinthians 5:19, Colossians 1:13-23; 2:11-14, Hebrews 10:12-14 assure us that God was in Christ, reconciling you to Himself, *no longer counting your sins against you; the blood of Jesus covers your sins, period*. Flesh-opposed, Spirit-empowered forgiveness for your agreement with shame, guilt, and self-condemnation, and forgiveness for your past, present, and future wrongdoings is very good news (1 Jn. 1:7-9).

External Circumstances

If we believe that our identity goal is reachable (whether it is or not) but that some external circumstance has blocked the path to our identity, our emotional response is typically *resentment*. What appears to be the most common problem behind the variety of our troubles is resentment. And resentment sources divisive anger.

The children of Israel offer instructive examples of this problem emotion. Whenever difficult circumstances arose, they repeatedly murmured against Moses, complaining about how badly things were going for them. Their resentment against unpleasant events in their lives boiled to the point that they were ready to stone Moses, the man they blamed for all their problems.

If I am trying to reach a goal but you frustrate my efforts by getting in the way, I will feel angry toward you.

Consider an actual middle-aged Christian woman seeking help concerning severe headaches that had required intermittent hospitalization over a three-year period. Her psychiatrist had indicated possible organic brain problems and was treating her with enough medication to justify a hotline to her druggist. It turns out however that she was filled with anger against her mother for interfering in her life and against her husband for failing her emotionally for years.

Her basic assumption was that her family needed to accept her and strongly support her in all she did to fulfill her identity need. When they became a block to her identity goal of strong support, she came into more intense bitterness toward them but was unable to express it for fear of further rejection. She continually tried to change both her mother and her husband to better fit her needs and, as usually happens when one person tries to change another, she failed completely.

Her goal-oriented behavior was totally ineffective. The basis of her ailment was unexpressed resentment. She had violated the biblical principle of “Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry” (Eph. 4:26). The solution, however, was not primarily a series

of exhortations to behave biblically, but rather involved an exploration and fundamental revision of *the source of her identity*. As she learned that God's love was sufficient to meet her needs and then put that belief into practice by sharing her feelings with her husband and by giving up her need to change him, her headaches disappeared.

CO-AUTHOR'S NOTES

Resentment is an unforgiving accusation of some act, remark, person, or group that we regarded as wrong. Resentment starts with unforgiveness (i.e., Matt. 20:21-24; 6:14-15; Ps. 37:1-10). Unresolved resentment broods retaliation (e.g., Rom. 12:17-19). Retaliation propagates **anger**. Anger then produces its wrath (e.g., Jas. 1:18-21). Then **hatred** joins in (e.g., Titus 3:3-5), and when we hold on to hatred or its critical attitude and irritation, it allows violence (e.g., Gen. 6:13). And violence may then include slander or murder with words and/or murder (e.g., John 8:42-44). This is the progression of what our Bible calls *bitterness*. Each stage in this progression offers a twisted illusion of significance and/or security. But Hebrews 12:15 warns, “Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no *poisonous root of bitterness* grows up to trouble you, *corrupting many*.”

“...Get rid of *anger, rage, slander*, malicious behavior, and dirty language (Col. 3:5-10)...” “*People's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires [can never make things right with God]* (Jas. 1:20).” “*Stop being angry!* Turn from your rage! Do not lose your temper—it only leads to harm.” (Ps. 37:8; see also Prov. 29:11; Ps. 73:21-22; Ecclesiastes 7:9.) “We love each other because God loved us first. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ but hates a fellow believer, that person is a liar, for if we don’t love people we can see, how can we love God whom we cannot see? And God has given us this command: Those who love God must also demonstrate love to others (1 John 4:19-21).”

Resentment or anger is sin when it is our reaction to someone else obstructing our personal need for meaningful purpose, security, including our *acceptance*. And it is my conviction that rejection teams up with bitterness, starting with unforgiveness and resentment.

God has already met our true identity need which produces our acceptance, security, and meaningful purpose. If anger is a response to a moral wrong upon someone else (e.g., human trafficking), it is righteous and Spirit produced.

“Adams in his *Study of Christian Counseling* has a useful section on dealing with anger. He points out that there are two wrong reactions to anger: (1) Bury it and hold a quiet, perhaps unconscious grudge. Ephesians 4:26 instructs us, “Do not sin by letting anger control you. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, for *anger gives a foothold to the devil*.” (2) Express it in a lashing out, attacking way.”³

Each of us have experienced a level of hurt in life through relationship. As a result, many of us feel a level of worthlessness and helplessness. And forgiveness requires a most unnatural determination that the wrongdoer experience no retribution. We try to get our need of worth met by withholding forgiveness. And yet God forgives us “as we forgive others.” Be strongly encouraged to meditate on this potential life-giving blessing or potential devastating torment. The blood of Jesus covers sin, including *all* those sins and those people who wound us. There is so much power in the Gospel (Matt. 6:12; 18:21-35; 11:25-26; Luke 7:36-50; 11:4; Eph. 4:32; Heb. 12:14-16; Isa. 53; see also Ps. 38:7; Lk. 6:28; Rom. 12:14; 1 Cor. 6:7)!

Again, 2 Corinthians 5:19 reminds us: “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, *no longer counting people's sins against them*. This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell and *show* others!” And Jesus graciously alerts us with this significant parable at Matthew 18:23-35: “The Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date with servants who had borrowed money from him. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him

millions of dollars. He couldn't pay, so his master ordered that he be sold—along with his wife, his children, and everything he owned—to pay the debt. But the man fell down before his master and begged him, ‘Please, be patient with me, and I will pay it all.’ Then his master was filled with pity for him, and he released him and forgave his debt. But when that man left the king, he went to a fellow servant who owed him a few thousand dollars. He grabbed him by the throat and demanded instant payment. His fellow servant fell down before him and begged for a little more time. ‘Be patient with me, and I will pay it,’ he pleaded. But his creditor wouldn't wait. He had the man arrested and put in prison until the debt could be paid in full. When some of the other servants saw this, they were very upset. They went to the king and told him everything that had happened. Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison to be *tormented* until he had paid his entire debt. *That's what My heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters from your heart.*”

Which torment is worse—the torment of an unhealed, open wound or the torment by the tormentor permitted by our Father as discipline for unforgiveness? Honest question. This lesson crystallizes the essence of forgiveness—the cancellation of a debt. See also Job 33:14-22; Ps. 51:8b; 119:67, 71, 75; 1 Cor. 5:1-6; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Eph. 6:12.

And this is also Jesus at Matthew 5:21-22: “'...If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, *if you are even angry* with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being

brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.”

Psychiatry researchers at Yale University of Medicine believe the science of addiction can be used to understand bitterness—the progression of unforgiveness, retaliation, violence, and perhaps even violent crime. Recent peer-reviewed, published studies show: “Cues such as experiencing or being reminded of a perceived wrong or injustice—a grievance—activate the reward and habit regions of the brain, triggering cravings in anticipation of experiencing pleasure and relief through retaliation. The retaliation doesn’t need to be physically violent; an unkind word, or electronic message can also be very gratifying. And this is different from just a one-time grievance, or even a grievance revisited. The underlying momentum shaping a grievance into an addiction is when a grievance is pushed into re-animation through the emotional triggers and experiential anchors that first created the trauma or grievance. The specific reward and habit regions of the brain are the ‘nucleus accumbens’ and ‘dorsal striatum.’”⁴ Please consider also referencing trauma, humiliation, shock, fear, neglect, abuse and our limbic system (pages 40-44 above).

The Holy Spirit instructs us at Romans 12:19: “Dear friends, never avenge yourselves. Leave that to God. For it is written, ‘I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it,’ says the Lord.” (See also Lev. 19:18; Deut. 32:35, 43; 1 Sam. 24:15; Isaiah 1:24.) He has His perfect timing. In this context, revenge and justice are clearly not our roles. The challenging truth, yet good news, is that Jesus has already and fully paid the debt for all injustice and wounding done to you as well as to each of us (Is. 53:5-10; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24). Secure in our true identity, we face our resentment and we decide to deal with it God’s way and overcome it. The Holy Spirit, in relationship, gives us the training, comfort, and power of our identity to walk in the fruit of the Spirit and to forgive those who do injustices in our lives and/or wound us. And to love the unlovely. None of us are without sin; through God’s grace—His power becomes our power—we can love the sinner while hating the sin. “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

The Truth About God’s Grace—Empowering Good News

As you may know, God’s “*grace*” defined in the Old Testament is: “*the free, unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving and the ill-deserving.*” The original Old Testament Hebrew word for God’s ‘grace’ is “*ax.*”

Grace is always associated in the Bible with the big-heartedness, love, compassion, mercy, and kindness of one individual to another, whether it be person to person or God to person.

God’s New Testament original Greek word translated “*grace*” is “*chairis.*” It is defined primarily: “*the cheerful, divine influence upon a person’s heart [spirit] and its reflection in the person’s life; including gratitude.*”

In other words, God’s grace (or *chairis*) is now the power of God’s love cheerfully transforming the person more and more into the image of Jesus from the inside-out (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Thess. 5:23; Gen. 1:26, versus the law, affecting only the external life), producing good fruit that includes true gratitude. Or in short, *His power cheerfully becomes your power.* That is good news!

To help us understand: By the Old Testament original definition of “*grace*”—*the free, unmerited favor of God toward the undeserving*—Jesus wouldn’t have had God’s “*grace.*” Yet Jesus was full of God’s grace as it is written at John 1:16-17.

This New Testament definition—*the cheerful, divine influence upon a person’s heart [spirit] and its reflection in the person’s life; including gratitude*—certainly doesn’t exhaust the full meaning of God’s grace. But it is an excellent start. And repeating, *grace is always associated in the Bible with the big-heartedness, love, compassion, mercy, and kindness of one individual to another, whether it be person to person or God to person.*

Forgiving because you believe it is the right thing to do is usually

quite ineffective. The supernatural gift of forgiveness came to us from the heart of the Father—love—in the humble, power-full love gift of His Son, Jesus. “Love...is not proud...does not demand its own way...and *it keeps no record of being wronged* (1 Cor. 13:4).” None of us can love and forgive like that without first taking God’s personalized prescription detailed in another section. Please understand that His love comes first, then faith, grace, then grace empowers our forgiveness (Gal. 5:6; Rom. 5:2). We purposefully love first. Then forgive with love. King David, whom God called “a man after His own heart,” also provided us a righteous pattern by expressing and overcoming anger, recorded throughout the Psalms. We too can be transformed from the inside to deal with resentment and anger God’s way.

Fear of Failure

A third kind of block involves a fear of failure. The identity goal may be reasonable and attainable. The path to the goal may be free from interference. But if we are afraid we might not reach the goal, we often will waver in stressful indecision. In bringing this to light, our Lord led Bishop Andrew Williams to Isaiah 51:1, 12 where He says, “Listen to me, all who seek the LORD! ...I, yes I, am He who comforts you; who are you that you are afraid...?” “It struck me as curious that the Lord would say, ‘Who are **you** that **you** are afraid?’ If, however, we recognize that fear is so very often a manifestation of our pride then this begins to make a lot more sense.

“For the first time I began to see how fear very often seeks to push God aside and take over responsibility for my comfort, care and protection all of which God has said He will faithfully do. The Lord very emphatically says, “I, I am He who comforts you!” And yet fear barges in and tries to take over the role of protector, guide, and comforter. It’s as if fear climbs up on God’s throne and presumes to say, ‘Don’t do that; You could get hurt!’ I think for the first time I saw clearly that fear has the most toxic capacity to set limits on our

obedience to God. When you think about it, isn’t it often the case that we serve the one we fear?” —Bishop Andrew Williams’ *Watchwords Devotional* www.watchwordsonline.com

Be reminded, we set an identity goal. At the start, we believe the goal is desirable and set out to reach it. As we proceed toward the goal, we find ourselves wanting it more and more. Our motivation becomes more intense. And we fail under pressure usually because we reach a point where our ability to focus on *accomplishment* yields to *concern about an outcome*. This worry about outcome forces us to fade our focus on God. The fear of failure begins to rule our emotions and actions, which ultimately results in our failure. Job 3:25 teaches us this valuable lesson, “*What I feared has come upon me.*” *It becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.*

In life, we see giving in to pressure in the form of the self-serving, independent (orphan) compulsions and their negativity. As we continue to move toward the goal, we begin to feel a little uneasy.

We will continue to move toward the goal until we reach the point where to go further would produce a fear of failure more intense than our desire to reach the goal. To go backward would result in a desire for the goal that is stronger than our fear that we will fail to reach it. As long as the beliefs remain where they are, we may spend our life in frozen indecision.

Generally, the basic emotional experience is *stress* when the obstacle to reaching our goal is fear of failure. *Stress* is a modern term for the Bible word, *fear*. Those with psychology or sociology backgrounds call it anxiety. The co-author of this Bible study recently did a very quick count of how many times our Bible instructs us to “Be not afraid,” and “Fear not.” And my quick count was 101 times. That’s certainly God’s most repeated command.

F **a**lse

E **v**idence

A **p**pearing

R **e**al

If we allow mistakes to define our future, we won't risk again. We will live in fear of failing. But some of life's greatest lessons can come through the lessons learned from our failures. God's empowering desire for you is to live free of stress and performance, willing to risk and *trust Him for outcomes*. We needn't yield to pressure. We needn't make decisions based on outcome.

As you may know, TIME Magazine® in April 2001, reported on the number of irrational, unwarranted or disabling fears that totaled more than 550. It's the conviction of this study's co-author that other fears may cunningly join fear of failure to torment us. It's also my conviction that fear of rejection is the most common perpetrator coalescing with fear of failure. Later in this study, we will understand the one thing that fear and faith have in common: Both project into your future tirelessly intending to be fulfilled.

We can walk in faith without wavering no matter the circumstance when we realize in our heart of hearts our worth. Receiving the supernatural revelation of our truest identity, we can enjoy a life based on absolutes, not circumstances. Fear of failure impedes our ability to walk with God, and leaves us unsure of our identity. What we fear comes upon us (Job 3:25).

God *never* defines you by your past, only by what He sees as your potential. Consider again God's first words to Moses, Israel, Gideon, Paul, etc. God saw each one of them for who they were to become. Be released from thinking about your past to think only of the future God has for you! (Consider also 2 Tim. 1:7; Job 3:25; 4:14-16; Ps. 37:8; Eph. 6:12; 1 Jn. 4:18; Rom. 8:15; Matt. 10:31; Jn. 14:27; 2 Thess. 2:2.)

Three Negative Emotions that Spawn Others

The three common negative emotions behind the vast amount of our personal difficulties are shame/guilt, resentment, and stress. A lot of evidence strongly suggests that other negative emotions are either shadings or derivatives of these basic feelings.

Two Pathways

There are generally two 'pathways' by which we experience our problems. One pathway is where we simply continue to agree with alternative strategies to meet our identity need; strategies obtained from the subtly deceiving 'flesh' energized by the sin-cursed world system. Typically, this path eventually leads to a vague sense of emptiness, and then sooner or later to despair (including questioning meaning of life & death).

The other pathway is when our plans to find our identity go awry. Many of us develop symptoms as protection from feeling badly about ourselves. We can find some way to hide behind our fig leaf, to opt out, to shrink back. Our irrational pattern produces genuine emotional pain but it seems less painful than the suffering we would have to endure if our protective symptoms—coping strategies—were not there. And we had to acknowledge fully our own personal worthlessness. Better to hurt badly for other reasons and to maintain some sense of worth than to be relieved of the suffering our irrational pattern produced and to feel utterly worthless. The choice is "between the devil and the deep blue sea." This is that other track—self-protection—safety—survival mode.

Safety

Many of us are, in these terms, living in chronic negativity: If we're honest, we are angry with our world (resentment), and/or we feel down on ourselves (shame/guilt), and/or we live under a cloud of consistent stress (or fear or anxiety). It is heart-hardening. We still keep on trying, plodding along in a daily, grudging routine. Christianity is a "grind it out" experience in which we bravely endure an unhappy life, forcing an occasional "Praise the Lord anyway," and wondering what the joy of the Lord really is.

Underneath this horribly unabundant life lurks some mistaken assumptions that have resulted in one or more of the three negative emotions. The human personality was not designed by God to

operate with negativity. Either the obstacles will give way to renewed efforts to behave differently and the wrong but temporarily satisfying goal will be reached, or eventually some form of inner meltdown will occur. The pathway to an acute “broken heart” is easily traced. At some point after the frustration is great enough or lasts long enough, we will stop trying to overcome the obstacle. We will look for a safer existence, away from the painful frustrations of never feeling good or, in these terms, of never experiencing our true identity or worth.

“...*a broken heart* crushes the spirit.” (Prov. 15:13)

The flight to safety may include any one of the many classical forms of disorder: phobia(s), sexual dysfunction, compulsion, obsession, fixation, habits, addiction, hang-ups, tics, financial headache, relational heartache, hypersensitivities, allergies, food intolerances or allergies, and many, many, many other health problems.

But—and this is the point—that is precisely what they are designed to do. That is, they are designed by ‘the flesh’ to either overcome the obstacle, or more often to help us avoid further frustration by providing us safety from bumping into the obstacle again. Our fear is not “crazy;” it seems useful as self-protection, a protection totally unnecessary for one who realizes the biblical basis for their true identity in his or her heart of hearts.

Wrong patterns of living develop from wrong philosophies of living. “For as man *thinks in his heart*, so is he...” (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV; 27:19; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23).

“Now the just shall live by faith; but *if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in them.*” (Heb. 10:38 NKJV; see also Heb. 3:12-19.)

We now are in a position to complete the progression of how problems develop.

Path I—Development Leading to Emptiness

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of

what provides my identity

4. Set a goal how to meet my identity need
5. Goal-oriented behavior
6. Goal reached
7. Partial temporary satisfaction
8. Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness

Back to Start

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. New mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my identity
4. Set a new goal how to meet my identity need
5. New goal-oriented behavior
6. New goal reached
- ~~7. Partial temporary satisfaction~~
- ~~8. Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness~~
7. Revealed orphan mindset; ‘Broken heart;’ Despair (including questioning meaning of life & death)
8. Suicide

Path II—Development Leading to ‘Safety’ and Issues

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal how to meet my identity need
5. Goal-oriented behavior

6. FRUSTRATION & OBSTACLE

<i>Type of Obstacle</i>		<i>Form of Frustration</i>
1. Unreachable Goal	→	Shame/Guilt
2. External Circumstance	→	Resentment, anger
3. Fear of Failure	→	Stress
7. Frustration; Revealed orphan mindset; 'Broken heart,' Hardened heart		
8. Safety (negativity, compulsions, addiction, hang-ups, relational heartache, financial headache, or bodily health problems)		

Our worth, our identity, has been mistakenly defined as what we do or don't do (performance, moral works) + other's opinions of us. Many of us develop symptoms as protection from feeling badly about ourselves, because of that mistaken definition. We can find some way to opt out, to escape, to draw back. Once more, our irrational pattern produces genuine emotional pain but it *seems* less painful than the suffering we would have to endure if we had to acknowledge fully our own personal worthlessness. Better to hurt badly for other reasons and to maintain some sense of worth than to be relieved of the suffering our irrational pattern produced and to feel utterly worthless. Shrink back—self-protection—safety—survival mode.

"A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart
crushes the spirit." (Proverbs 15:13)

Nearly all emotional and mental issues consist of, or stem from, mistaken identity in the form of negatives like shame/guilt, stress, resentment, feelings of personal unworthiness, lack of self-acceptance, insecurity, uncontrolled appetites, addiction, wrong priorities, and self-centeredness. Even the most casual reading of Scripture quickly reveals that it has a great deal to say about these sorts of issues.

This self-reliant (orphan), the 'old self,' thinking that is behind the problem emotions of stress, resentment, and shame/guilt (and their shadings or derivatives) has biological correlates that result over time in almost all of our physical health issues and problems.

To Summarize

"You can come across to others as nice, friendly, concerned, and helpful, believe you embrace each of those virtues, and still be mostly committed to your own well-being. The devil has many of us fooled. Self-centeredness is easily hidden beneath congeniality and, even when recognized, is often seen as necessary to personal comfort and therefore not really wrong."—Crabb, Larry, *A Different Kind of Happiness*, "True or False? It's Sometimes Hard to Tell," p 138

Our problems develop when the 'old self' mindset compels us rather than *the love of Christ*. ("For *the love of Christ compels us*. Since...we believe that we have all *died to the old life we used to live*. ...Those who receive His new life will *no longer live to please themselves*. *Instead, they will live [empowered] to please Christ*, who died and was raised for them (2 Cor. 5:14-15).") I live unto myself—trying to meet my identity need myself—rather than living to glorify Jesus who died for me—the one who has already met my true identity need.

The key element behind most issues is an obstacle that interferes with reaching our chosen identity goal. If the obstacle can be overcome by making changes in goal-oriented behavior, then the threat of negativity, compulsion, obsession, and/or phobia is averted. But most times the obstacle cannot be overcome. These stubborn obstacles remain standing despite our best efforts. They produce the three common negative emotions (and their derivatives) behind the vast amount of our personal difficulties. Many of us are living in chronic negativity, beyond our conscious level.

Most of us experience chronic symptoms of negativity as protection from feeling badly about ourselves. When the mistaken goal is reached, we are motivated to protect ourselves from the painful feelings of worthlessness. Our hurts, habits, addiction, hang-ups, health problems, relational heartaches, and financial headaches are most often the result of our compensating for the inner pains of a mistaken identity.

Gloriously, the Holy Spirit *utilizes* the testimony of the above-mentioned negativity in His personalized path to us enjoying our

truest identity. And therefore enjoying our freedom from hurts, hang-ups, habits, addiction, health problems, relationship heartache and financial headache! Be reminded of Psalm 119:67, 71, 75: “Before I was afflicted, I went astray, *but now I obey your word. It was good* for me to be afflicted *so that I might learn your decrees [ways]*. I know, O LORD, that your laws [the way things work] are righteous and in faithfulness you have afflicted me [permitted my exposure to the Afflicter].” Consider also Genesis 50:20; Job 1:12, 3:25, 32:1, 42:6.

And Romans 8:28-29 states: “And we know that God causes *everything* to work together *for the good* of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them. For God knew His people in advance, and *He chose them to become like His Son*, so that His Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters!” (See also Gen. 1:26; 1 Thess. 5:23-24.)

Freedom from hurts, hang-ups, habits, addiction, health problems, relationship heartache and financial headache ultimately comes out of the Holy Spirit’s loving redemption of our mistaken basis for feeling worthwhile, and victorious living out of our true identity.

For when we know that we know, that we know in our heart of hearts our true identity—how we are known in heaven plus what God is for us in every situation—we “count ourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus...offering less and less of our self to sin as its instrument, but rather offering more and more of our self to God as an instrument of righteousness... Our mind becomes less and less governed by ‘the flesh’...and we live more and more in accordance with the Holy Spirit...which is life and peace...and the Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children!” (Rom. 6:12—8:16)

And our personality becomes more and more as “the fruit of the Spirit: love, its joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and a firm grip. Against such things there is no law [effective opposition]!” (Gal. 5:22-25)

We now have sound answers to why we find it so difficult to take God at His word and act on the fact that in Christ we enjoy our personal worth, self-image, true identity that meets both of our needs for security (God’s unconditional love) and meaningful purpose.

“Jesus answered, ‘Love the Lord your God with every passion of your heart, with all the energy of your being, and with every thought that is within you. This is the great and supreme commandment. And the second is like it in importance: You must love your friend in the same way you love yourself. Contained within these commandments to love you will find all the meaning of the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:37-40; see also Mk. 12:31; Lk. 10:27; Gal 5:14; Jas. 2:8 TPT.)

“For as man *thinks in his heart*, so is he...” “Now the just shall live by faith; but *if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in them*. (Prov. 23:7; Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38 NKJV)” God’s New Testament original Greek word translated “grace” is “*chairis*.” It is defined primarily: “*the cheerful, divine influence upon a person’s heart [spirit] and its reflection in the person’s life; including gratitude.*” In other words, God’s grace (or *chairis*) is now the power of God’s love cheerfully transforming the person more and more into the image of Jesus from the inside-out (2 Cor. 3:18; Rom. 8:28-29; 1 Thess. 5:23; Gen. 1:26, versus the law, affecting only the external life), producing good fruit that includes true gratitude. Or in short, *His power cheerfully becomes your power!*

Once again, this valuable basic understanding and reference points will greatly help you apply God’s personalized prescription, detailed in another section.

How Relational Heartaches Develop

In this section, we will continue to apply what we've been learning. We'll better understand that we are motivated to reach whatever goal we assume will meet our personal need of identity, but in our relational lives. Remember to read the following from a stance of receiving understanding, not doing; letting go all shame, guilt, and expectation to perform.

'The Flesh' vs. The Spirit

Once again, "Eliminating our problems starts with knowing the cause." If we don't have a basic understanding of the cause, we won't believe God's prescription.

Every one of us, without exception, have experienced a level of inner pain, hurt, and disappointment in life—a type of wound described accurately in Proverbs 15:13: "A glad heart makes a happy face; a broken heart [trauma] crushes the spirit." We, with a broken heart, suffer from just such a wound in our spirit. We all develop some mistaken assumption about how to get our relationship needs met (Jas. 3:2a).

Healthy, life-giving relationships are so very important to God and therefore to our joy and victorious living. Thus, it is one of the Holy Spirit's top priorities, in relationship, to train and empower each of us in this regard. And therefore, we bear witness to the proverbial *battlefield of our mind* between 'the flesh' and the Spirit in us (Rom. 8:12-14; Gal. 5:13-24; Rom. 6:16, 7:23; 12:2; Eph. 4:23; 6:12; 1 Cor. 2:16; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Col. 3:2; Php. 4:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; 2 Tim. 1:7; Rev. 12:10b; Pr. 23:7; Isaiah 26:3).

Be strongly encouraged to utilize the progression of "how our problems develop" in the last section. We frequently manipulate others to have our inherent need of identity met. Dr. Hegstrom's research reports, "Our wounds drive our behaviors. We do not have automatic control of these reactive behaviors, because they're unthinking reactions." ⁴ *Motivation to find identity is at the core of all our behavior.*

In due course, when the schemes promoted by 'the flesh' do not fulfill our inherent identity need, we then develop symptoms as protection from feeling badly about ourselves. 'The flesh' advocates a way to withdraw into emotional and/or physical escape. "A broken heart crushes the spirit."

Relationship issues consist of, or stem from, mistaken identity in the form of negatives like shame/guilt, fear of failure, resentment, anger, or any of their derivatives: stress, anxiety, fear, phobic, vague sense of emptiness, insecurity, compulsion, obsession, fixation, hang-ups, controlling, rejection, self-rejection, unworthiness, insignificance, bitterness, self-bitterness, unloving, looking for love, promiscuity, envy, jealousy, uncontrolled appetites, broken heart, heartache, hardened heart, pride, blame, frustration, loneliness, despair, addiction, self-centeredness, or suicidal. Be strongly encouraged to consider reviewing the above discussion of negatives resulting from our early wounding on pages 40–44. We can probably agree that such negatives are relationally dysfunctional.

We each have been deceived by 'the flesh' to dismiss God freely meeting our intrinsic identity need. We are self-servingly trying to meet the need ourselves.

Jesus, Paul, and James Summarize Our Relationship Heartaches

Jesus, Paul, and James summarize our indispensable need for the healing of our hearts & souls through the Holy Spirit. Prepare your heart. Be reminded that "the truth makes us free," and it usually stings at first.

"And Jesus said, '...It is what comes from *inside that defiles you*. For *from within, out of a person's heart*, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, lustful desires, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things *come from within; they are what defile you*.'" "Do not judge others, and you will not be

judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in another's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to them, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye?" (Mark 7:15-23; Matt. 7:1-4.)

Jesus at Luke 6:45 teaches that from within, come our words, "What you say flows from what is in *your* heart."

Apostle Paul states, "You may think you can condemn others, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! *When you condemn others you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things* (Rom. 2:1)." "Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words... Instead, *be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you* (Eph. 4:31-32)."

Apostle James notes, "God blesses those who patiently endure testing and temptation. Afterward they will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. ...*Temptation comes from our own desires, which entice us and drag us away. These desires give birth to sinful actions*... So don't be misled, my dear brothers and sisters. Whatever is good and perfect is a gift coming down to us from God our Father, who created all the lights in the heavens. He never changes or casts a shifting shadow...

"Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Human anger does not produce the righteousness God desires. So get rid of all the filth and evil in *your* lives, and humbly accept the word God has planted in your hearts, for it has the power to save your souls. But don't just listen to God's word. You must *do what it says*. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves...

“Yes indeed, it is good when you keep the royal law as found in the Scriptures: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ...So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. *There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others.* But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when He judges you...

“If anyone among you thinks they are religious and does not bridle their tongue but deceives their own heart, this one’s religion is useless. ...The tongue is a small thing, but what enormous damage it can do. ...Sometimes it praises our Lord and Father, and sometimes it breaks out into curses against those who have been made in the image of God [people]. And so blessing and cursing come pouring out of the same mouth. Surely, my brothers and sisters, this is not right! ...If there is *selfish [self-serving] ambition* in your hearts, don’t brag about being wise. That is the worst kind of lie. ...Selfishness is not God’s kind of wisdom. Such is earthly, unspiritual, and motivated by the Devil. For wherever there is...selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and *every kind of evil*. But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all *pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no partiality and is always sincere. And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of goodness.*

“What is causing the quarrels and fights [disunion] among you? Isn’t it the whole army of evil desires at war *within you*? You want what you don’t have, so you scheme...to get it. And even when you ask, you don’t get it because *your motives are all wrong*—you want only what will give you pleasure. ...*The Holy Spirit, whom God has placed within us...gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires.* As the Scriptures say, ‘God sets

Himself against the proud, but He shows favor to the humble.’ So *humble yourselves before God*. Resist the Devil, and he will flee from you. Draw close to God, and God will draw close to you.

“Wash *your* hands, you sinners; purify *your* hearts, you hypocrites. Let there be tears for the wrong things you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. When you bow down before the Lord and *admit your dependence on Him*, He will lift you up and give you honor. *Don’t speak evil against each other, my dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize each other and condemn each other, then you are criticizing and condemning God’s law [of liberty (1:25)]. ...What right do you have to condemn your neighbor?*” (James 1:12-26, 2:8-13; 3:5-18, 4:1-17.)

To quote Dr. Sam Peoples: “*...The people around me in life do not make me the way I am, but reveal the way I am.*”

Without exception, we all see the world through our own lens formed by our own wounded childhoods. It warps our self-image, how we perceive God and others, and that cripples us in relationship. As a coping strategy from our inner pain, we make unspoken agreements with ourselves and others that our needs should be heard and met. So when people inevitably disappoint us and fail to meet those needs, we are sent back to that painful time we endured as children. Not always consciously, of course. People ‘trigger’ the memories of these unmet needs persistently.

Control

We seek to avoid inner pain in different ways. Husband, father, Christian counselor and author, Larry Crabb, Ph.D. has summarized on page 10 of his book entitled “Shattered Dreams” *the two most common strategies we use to avoid inner pain:*

"All of us are trapped by addiction to desire for something less than God. For many, that something less is relational control. *'I will not be hurt again, and I will not let people I love be hurt. I'll see to it that what I fear never happens again.'* They therefore live in terror of vulnerably presenting themselves to anyone and instead become determined managers of people. Primary aspects of their identity remain safely tucked away behind the walls of relational control [manipulation].

"For many others is an addiction to non-relational control. *'I will experience deep and consuming satisfaction without ever having to relate meaningfully with anyone.'* They keep things shallow and safe with family and friends and feel driven to experience a joy they never feel, a joy that only deep relating can provide. Their commitment is twofold: to never risk revealing inadequacy by drawing close to people and, without breaking that commitment, to feel powerful and alive."

"...We must face the damage done to us by other people. When we honestly acknowledge how others have failed us, we begin to see how hard we work to avoid further injury by withholding from others whatever makes us feel vulnerable. Such withholding generates a longing within us to exist more fully with all that we are, to give our tenderness to others who may trample it underfoot, to move more strongly even though we may fail." —Crabb, Larry, *Finding God*, "Darkness Before Light," pp 158-159

Be compassionately reminded of what God promises His children at Isaiah 51:12: "I, yes I, am He who comforts you..." First John 4:18 kindly informs us, "God's perfect love expels all fear. If we are in fear, it is torment, and this shows that we have not fully experienced His perfect love." See also 2 Timothy 1:7.

And it is vital to realize that addiction, like disease, has a definable onset, symptoms, and a predictable outcome. Addiction

also operates like sin as it is progressive, demands more, is denied, and happens mostly beyond our conscious level.

Spirit-Empowered Flesh-Opposed Relational Instruction

"Our adversary has a very specific strategy to destroy relationships. Whether these relationships are in friendships, matrimony, or business, the strategy is the same. He causes a conflict, judgments are made, and feelings are hurt. What happens next is the defining point of whether the enemy gains a foothold, or mercy and forgiveness originating from God covers the wrong. When a root of bitterness is allowed to be planted and grown, it not only effects that person, but it also effects the others who are involved." ⁵ It's a contagious harmful virus —"corrupting many." (Heb. 12:15)

"Don't use unwholesome [rotten; worthless; corrupt] language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them (Eph. 4:29). Galatians 6:1-2 states, "Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome in a fault, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself [and fall away]. Share each other's burdens..." (No accusing back and forth.)

Also consider this vital Spirit-empowered, flesh opposed instruction in our New Covenant to **establish love**: "Since God chose you to be the holy people He loves, you must clothe yourselves with *tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive those who offend you.* Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive each other. Above all, clothe yourselves with *love*, which binds us together in perfect harmony." "For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, *no longer counting people's sins against them.* This is the wonderful message He has given us to tell and *show* others!" "Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old self. Christ died for everyone so that those who

receive His new life will no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So *we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view*. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know Him now!" "It is the goodness and kindness of God that causes people to repent, change." "We are Christ's ambassadors; God is making His appeal through us!" Now "is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from His love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate? Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, *loving each other, and working together with one mind and purpose*." "Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then...I will know that you are standing together with *one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith*, which is the Good News." (Col. 3:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-16, 19, 20; Rom. 2:4; Phil. 2:1, 2, 27)

Perhaps it is obvious why, when we were born-again, God put each of us in Jesus and Jesus in us. The 'old self,' the self-reliant, independent (orphan) mindset cannot accomplish any of this without allowing the Holy Spirit love through us, our 'new self.' God is completely confident in His unfailing and empowering love—grace—transforming each of us more and more like Jesus! "Jesus will not leave you as an orphan [independent]." This is He at Luke 6:27-35 and Matthew 5:44: "To you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you. If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit?

Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return. *Love your enemies! Do good to them*. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be [become more and more] compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."

What Do We Want the Holy Spirit to Help Us Change?

If we are clear that we want to draw closer to God whether the immediate feelings are positive or negative, we can evaluate what we are asking God to help us change.

Shame/guilt

"The experience of *shame/guilt* sometimes is the focal point in family, friends, counselors, coaches, or ministry efforts to change things. Bruce Narramore and Bill Counts have written an excellent book on guilt from a Christian perspective. They point out that guilt is a complex emotion not always relieved by simple appeals to the forgiveness of Christ. In our model, the false accusation of shame/guilt is the result of failing to reach *an unreachable goal*. Again, the cure must involve a change in goals that requires a change in thinking about what provides our sense of worth—identity."

Resentment and Anger

"Other times family, friends, counselors, coaches, or ministry may deal directly with *resentment*. 'Let it out, express your anger.' Or perhaps they will help the person to identify the blocking circumstance responsible for the anger and assist the candidate to either change or accept the obstacle. Neither approach solves the problem. The real problem again is mistaken thinking that led to a mistaken goal. If I believe I need a job promotion for security or

significance—identity—but I am passed over, I likely will resent the company. I may, of course, beat myself over the head for failing but often the emotion of resentment will lurk underneath such self-castigation. My resentment is the product of misplaced dependency for security or meaningful purpose—identity.

“Resentment or anger is sin when it is my reaction to another blocking my need for security or meaningful purpose—my identity—because God alone has already met these inherent needs.”³

The understanding about resentment, anger, and bitterness is on pages 56-59 above. “To let loose with a violent tirade is a waste of the valuable emotion of anger. Rather, be filled with the Spirit. Use the anger as a motivator to do what you can under God’s direction to correct the anger-producing situation.”³

If your coworker, in-law, friend, family member, spouse or ____ really treats you poorly, feel angry. Honestly *acknowledge* how you feel. *Pause; “be slow to anger.” Realize the reason you’re feeling anger is because you were looking to them at some level to meet your worth/identity need, and they failed at that. Only Jesus can meet, and has met your worth/identity need—take your peace.* Honestly feel the anger, and then ‘don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry.’ Your personal goal, however, is not to change the person. If that is your goal, you will add Basic Anxiety to your problems. Partner with God to become a vehicle that He can utilize to change them (Gal. 6:1).”³

We all are completely powerless over other people. We cannot make them do what we want them to, no matter how much we care, no matter how much we want it, no matter how much sense it makes. Just like you, others must realize “truth that sets them free” by the Holy Spirit. And they won’t realize it until it makes sense to their rational understanding, and they are ready. The attempts to change other people often make us a part of the problem. (We can, however, allow God to change us. Please recall our earlier discussion about the free will that God necessarily gave each of us.)

“Whenever we set out to achieve a goal (Point 5) that responsible effort involves another human being’s free will, we experience what is

appropriately called Basic Anxiety (or Basic Stress or Basic Fear).”³ Your goal is to keep your peace; entirely reachable, Spirit-empowered, flesh-opposed goal (Matt. 5:38; Rom. 12:17; 1 Thess. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9)).

Your prayer is that God will reach your in-law’s broken and hardened heart. You’re reading this Bible study so you might already know it was much less about your in-law. It was mostly about you, your unhealed childhood wounding, conditioning, fear of rejection, and your resulting mistaken assumptions about how to get your identity need met, altogether facilitated by ‘the flesh.’

Stress

“Stress (or fear or anxiety) sometimes is the factor in our progression that coaches, counselors or ministries try to change. Drug therapy (antianxiety preparations) and behavior therapy (particularly systematic desensitization) are two direct ways of dealing with stress. But a Christian called to maturity will never stop with that. He or she will trace the stress back to an obstacle in route to a goal determined by mistaken thinking, an assumption that something other than God and what He chooses to provide is necessary to meet personal needs.

“Negative symptoms may be dealt with directly, again with behavior modification techniques, but a Christian always will retrace the reason for the goal of safety and eventually will return to the level of basic *assumptions*.”³

Despair, Broken Heart, Vague Sense of Emptiness

“Despair, a broken heart, and a vague sense of emptiness (the remaining elements in the progression) may yield somewhat to encouragement, relationship, and support. But the Christian remedy will again involve a change in wrong thinking about how to meet our true identity need.

“Hopefully it is obvious that the untaught and critical change needed to live victoriously involves altering our basic *assumption*, the third element in the progression. *Every problem in the progression can be avoided completely if the basic assumption is in line with revealed biblical Truth.* The relationally healthy person is one who depends on God alone (and who He chooses to provide in the Christian community) to give him or her their true identity. A sense of emptiness, frustration, despair, negative emotional shadings, and their symptoms can be traced directly to a mistaken assumption about how to meet our personal identity need.”³

Hebrews 10:21-26 directs us, “Think of ways to encourage one another to outbursts of love and good deeds. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other... Dear friends, if we willfully *continue sinning after we have received a full knowledge of the truth, there is no other sacrifice that will cover these sins.*”

These are tough truths when we’ve still got a self-reliant, ‘old self,’ (orphan) perspective—when we haven’t come to know that we know, that we know in our heart of hearts our true identity—how we are known in heaven plus who God wants to be for us. The Holy Spirit through Jesus, Paul, James, Peter and others summarize our relationship dynamics, and our necessity of learning to cling to, trust in, and rely on the Holy Spirit, in relationship, for our true identity.

It was author Will Bowen who wisely stated, “*Hurt people hurt people.*”

“*The enemy looks for people to yield their identity to their own circumstances.*” —Graham Cooke; see also Matt. 4:3

Jesus promises His followers, “I will not leave you as an orphan [independent].” The untaught truth is, without realizing in our heart of hearts how we are known in heaven (e.g., a dependent child of God) and who God wants to be for us (i.e., our perfect father, the perfect father to our parents, the perfect father of our brothers & sisters, the perfect father of our brothers & sisters in Christ, the perfect father of our romantic companion, the perfect father of our

in-laws, the perfect father of our children, and the perfect father to our enemies), we fall prey to what alluring counterfeit ‘the flesh’ offers instead. *We’ll look to others—even manipulate them, many times unwittingly—to provide us identity. Or, we may push them away to protect our insecurity of a broken, hardened heart.* But these times are actually cause for us to depend more and more on our gracious loving God, **in exchange for the (self) idolatry**—what ‘the flesh’ has persuaded us to depend on. In every situation the broad goal is obedience to Christ, by faith. (And it’s God’s grace that empowers us to do so. That’s good news!)

Quoting prominent Bible teacher, Derek Prince: “Christianity is much less of a religion of right doctrine, it’s much more a religion of right relationships.” www.gotchoices.net/derekprince

Prolific results of ‘the flesh’ have been unmasked in this Bible study. This is part of what Apostle Paul enunciated is “the law of sin” at Rom. 7:15-23. And it’s vital to understand that once ‘the flesh’ comes into operation, there is no certain amount of time it takes for the demonic to set in and ensnare us—as it is written in Ephesians 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Rom. 7:20-23.

Thankfully, God has graciously provided a personalized prescription for you in your relationships, detailed in another section.

Romantic Relationships and Holy Matrimony

Mistaken basic assumptions haunted by past trauma of what provides our identity produce mistaken goals on how to meet our need for a true identity. These mistaken goals compulsively produce dysfunctional thought, language, and deed as well as irrational *expectations* of our spouse. And as Dr. Paul Hegstrom confirms: “*Expectations are premeditated resentments.*”⁴ It’s important to recall that resentment for our spouse originates from us looking to them to meet our need of identity—security, unconditional love, or meaningful purpose. God alone meets these personal needs; spouses cannot. And please be gently reminded that, “almost 98% of

the issues couples struggle with are rooted in childhood wounds each of them suffered before the age of eleven.”⁴ When we look at our relationship through the lens of childhood trauma and/or fear of rejection, we might see a very different spouse than the one we married.

Authentic Unity⁶

“God reveals a very significant part of His design for holy matrimony at Genesis 2:24 (“a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and *the two are united into one*”) and Ephesians 5:21-33. In verse 32, He instructs us that holy matrimony is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are united as one. A holy matrimony that is developing all three aspects of unity—Spirit, Soul, and Body—provides a couple with a living parable of the eternal union of Christ and His bride, the church. God’s goal for holy matrimony, then, can be summarized as:

- “Genuine spirit unity: Trusting in Christ alone to meet your own personal need of worth—identity—security (unconditional love) and meaningful purpose;
- “Genuine soul unity: Ministering to your partner in a way that enhances an awareness of his or her worth in Christ;
- “Genuine body unity: Enjoying sexual pleasure as an expression and outgrowth of this personal relationship.

“A personally meaningful holy matrimony depends on the development of soul unity. And genuine soul unity cannot grow without genuine spirit unity. When both levels of oneness are present, the relationship is vital and intimate. Core parts of the personality are touched and engaged. Communication reaches far beneath the routineness of ‘What’s for supper?’ or ‘Where shall we go on vacation?’ or ‘Do you want to have sex? ...It’s been a month.’ An awareness of unusual closeness develops toward a pattern of generally increasing unity. Genuine unity is felt subjectively as a relationship so intimate that only sexual intercourse can fully express it.

“The holy matrimony relationship is one of God’s creations for helping another realize more deeply their value in Jesus Christ. It gives husbands and wives the chance to minister to an immortal human being in a uniquely intimate fashion. To enjoy the meaningfulness of holy matrimony, then, requires a once-made but ongoing commitment of mutual ministry to build up our mates. The more we see opportunities to minister to our mates and the more we seize them, the more meaning our holy matrimony will have.

“And yet while I am trying to minister to my spouse’s personal needs, I sense needs within me. It is at this point I must take very seriously the conviction that my unity with Christ—Him in me and me in Him—is my only good, that God alone is sufficient to satisfy what I need to live as I should. Upon considering what is true—that I am secure and significant in my truest identity—I must by faith approach my spouse as personally full in Christ, willing to share the love shed abroad in my heart, needing nothing in return. When my spouse reacts with loving respect, I feel great. When my spouse reacts with something else like neglect or criticism or indifference, it will sting—but I must hold on firmly to the truth that I am whole in Christ and therefore not threatened by my spouse’s response.

“God has chosen our spouses as His special instruments for helping us to experience more fully what it means to be loved and significant. All our longings for warmth, kindness, understanding, respect, and faithfulness from our spouses are real desires. We seem to feel significant and secure when these desires are met, however the Lord has not promised that He will grant these desires. This is a crucial point—what we *desire* from our spouse must not be our *goal*.

“A *goal* is an objective that does not require cooperation from another person—my spouse, in this context. When reaching an objective depends solely on *my* willingness to do certain things, it may properly be called a *goal*. I must set the *goal* of pleasing God by fully accepting and lovingly ministering to my spouse.

“Christians are wholly secure and significant in Christ whether they feel it or not and are capable of operating from fullness. They can give because they have something to give.

“A *desire* is an objective that I may legitimately and fervently want, but cannot reach through my efforts alone. To fulfill a desire requires the uncertain cooperation of another.

“If or when our *desire* [that our spouses minister to us, or treat us a certain way] becomes our *goal*, we resort to *manipulative* efforts for another—our spouse, in this case—to meet our *desires*.

“The more that spouses react to each other on the basis of their perceived fullness in Christ, the more their holy matrimony will progress toward genuine soul unity.

“Many people deal with their needs erroneously by

- a) “Ignoring the existence of their *personal* identity need and looking for satisfaction with *physical* pleasures;
- b) “Settling for counterfeit personal satisfaction through achievement, recognition, affluence, and the like, which can never provide real security or significance;
- c) “Turning to their spouses for security and significance. The result is a manipulative relationship designed to use each other for personal satisfactions. Because no human being is fully adequate to meet another's personal needs, such an exploitative relationship will inevitably experience conflict.” “Expectations are premeditated resentments.”⁴

“Only Christ can meet our personal needs, that is, provide us with identity—authentic security (unconditional love) and legitimate meaningful purpose. Personal meaning in God's world depends finally on participation in God's purposes. We therefore must depend on Him to give us what our personal natures require.

“Relationships built on manipulative efforts to enhance our own feelings of being loved, significant, or to protect ourselves against further hurt will never achieve the oneness God has for us to enjoy. *A shift from the principle of manipulation to the principle of ministry is a primary route to genuine unity.*

“It is difficult for us to grasp deeply the reality of our worth in Christ. To become subjectively and convincingly aware of our security and significance in Christ, we must

- a) “Trust His love enough to give ourselves fully to our spouses in an effort to minister to their needs and choose to continue our efforts to minister regardless of our spouses' response to us;
- b) “Honestly explore the impact we make on each other's experience of self-acceptance as worthwhile persons. Examples include:
 - “A shift from manipulation to a decisive and continuous willingness to adopt the commitment to full acceptance of the other and ministering to the other
 - “A substantial awareness of your partner's needs
 - “A conviction that you are God's chosen instrument to touch those needs
 - “What do I do when I'm angry?
 - “What do I do with my feelings?
 - “When should I tell my partner how I feel?
 - “When a barrier goes up between us, how does it get torn down? Should we talk out the problem? Who goes first? Suppose one partner won't open up?
 - “What does it mean to submit to one's husband?
 - “Does headship give husbands the right to make decisions for their wives?

“It is possible to shift from manipulation to ministry. Consider an example of how it's done. Nathan enters his home after a stressful day at work. His automatic, unplanned, and perhaps unconscious goal likely involves a desirable response from his wife, Lea, perhaps a friendly greeting, a warm hug, or a prepared dinner. After dealing with her own work challenges all day, suppose the first thing she says is, ‘Why are you so late? You said you'd be home nearly an hour ago.’ Lea has blocked Nathan's goal.

“Reflect for a moment. How do people feel when their goal is blocked? Most often, they become angry or at least frustrated. Nathan feels anger toward his wife. He admits to himself that he feels like retorting with a snappy comment like ‘Hey, thanks for the warm welcome! Sure is nice to come home!’ What should he do? His options are (1) to express his anger, (2) to defend his late arrival, (3) simply to ignore Lea’s comment and wash up for dinner, or (4) to soothe her with an apology and a warm embrace. Remember the essential point here. Soul unity depends on our motives for what we do more than on the specifics of what we do. *The question Nathan needs to ask is not ‘What should I do?’ but rather ‘What is my goal?’* Nathan’s anger should be a strong warning that his goal was manipulative. He was demanding a response from his wife that would meet his need of the moment.

“If Nathan is (1) committed to the principle of ministry, (2) aware of his wife as a person who longs to feel loved, and (3) convinced that he is God’s instrument to tangibly represent Christ’s love to his wife, then he is able—empowered by God’s grace—to change his goal. The actual operation involves replacing thoughts like ‘Why can’t she be pleasant when I come home?’ to ‘My goal right now is to let Lea know that she is loved and special to me.’

“Think of the mind as an audio recorder. The ‘auto play’ reflects our manipulative goal of changing our spouse: ‘Why can’t she greet me warmly?’ To change goals, we must decisively reject that old, dying audio and choose a new one, that is, choose a new sentence to reflect our changed goal: ‘I want her to feel loved.’

“Choosing new ways of thinking must be more than a mechanical procedure. As we replace our self-serving thoughts with giving intentions, we need to remind ourselves that we are freely choosing to minister because we believe God and His power becoming our power—grace. Although our feelings may not immediately shift from anger to compassion, we can convey noncritical acceptance to our spouses if ministry is our freely selected purpose. The crux of the matter is, Do we really want to

accept the (Spirit-empowered) goal of ministry at this moment? The more we are willing to do so, the more surely our marriage will move toward satisfying levels of Soul Unity.”⁶

How Problems Develop in Matrimony

All of us see the world through our own lens formed by our own wounded childhoods. We all make unspoken agreements with ourselves and our spouse that our needs should be heard and met. So when our spouse inevitably disappoints us and fails to meet those needs, we are sent back to that painful time we endured as children. This happens mostly beyond our consciousness. Our spouse triggers our irrational memories of our unmet needs. This is true of all couples, in one way or another.

What you are about to read regarding the romantic and matrimonial relationships is from another prominent book by husband, father, Larry Crabb, Ph.D. entitled, *Effective Biblical Counseling*, pages 119, 120, 137-142. And once again, consider referencing the above progression of “how problems develop” in our lives on page 61 and consider what we’ve learned so far but now in the context of the romantic, and holy matrimony.

The referenced progression suggests a primary way in which romantic relationship problems develop. Our goal-oriented *behavior* (Point 5) can be intelligent, realistic, and sensible or it can be misinformed, unrealistic, and utterly ineffective. When our goal (Point 6) is not reached, we will feel threatened as our needs remain unmet, and we will become stressed, resentful, or angry.

For example, if a wife believes that her identity depends upon her husband loving her, she likely will try to reach the goal of winning her husband's love. But perhaps she does not understand what predominantly turns a man on. She may help him with his business or she may take over family budgeting and do it efficiently but may become unkempt or neglect warmly greeting him when he comes home. Problems develop in this marriage. Her husband is cool to her.

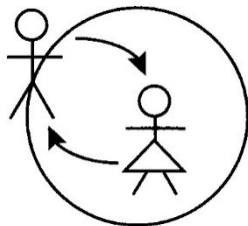
The goal is not reached (6th Point). Or what if he doesn't love her by her precise 'love language'? The goal is not reached (Point 6).

When she consults the counselor, hurt and bitter, complaining about her unaffectionate, distant husband, she may come to understand what she is doing wrong. Her 'goal-oriented behavior' (5th Point) is misinformed and ineffective. So she runs to the local bookstore and picks up a few books on becoming a complete woman, a sizzling sex partner, a feminine delight. In an attempt to win his love she learns to cook special meals, she admires his body, wears sexy lingerie and cute, frilly dresses, and on and on and on and on.

There is probably no husband alive with a single objection when his wife does all the above. Husbands like it. More wives might give it a try. But there are two real problems with an approach that seeks only to change irrational goal-oriented *behavior* (5th Point) into more intelligent and effective efforts to achieve the same goal (4th Point).

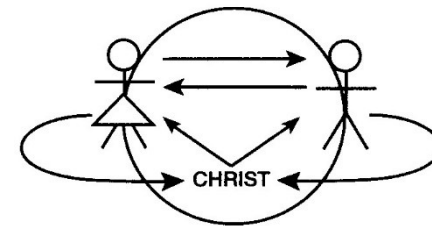
- (1) The goal of winning her husband's love may be absolutely unreachable no matter what the desperate wife tries to do. If so, then what? Is she doomed to insecurity until her husband changes or until she can find another man to 'love' her?
- (2) The wife's basic *motivation* (2nd Point) is self-centered. All the advice on how to be an effective woman has simply taught this woman how to more effectively manipulate her husband to meet her needs.

A wife (or a husband) with an unfulfilled need operates from a 'lack' or 'deficit *motivation*' (Point 2 without this Bible study's biblical insight). She is at the center of her world trying to fill her emptiness.



In the above diagram the arrow pointing to the husband represents the wife's behavior toward him. The arrow from her husband back to her indicates the desired outcome of her efforts, namely his loving her. The circle around her symbolizes her self-centered *motivation*. Sadly, she is giving to get. In reality, she is doing nothing more than using her husband to meet her needs. *Both husbands and wives are specialists in working hard to change the other in order to have their own needs better met.*

Victorious Christian holy matrimony is different. Perhaps it could be sketched like this:



In this diagram of an ideal holy matrimony, the Lord is meeting the basic needs in each spouse. Their behavior now toward each other is an *expression of Christ in them*—giving for the purpose of helping the other become closer to Christ. Both are full and operating therefore not from a lack or deficit motivation, but from *expression motivation* (Point 2; fruit of this study's endeavor). The wife may be doing most of the things the books told her to do, but now her *motivation* is different. She longs to see him come closer to Christ. If he loves her in return, that's icing on the cake. Although icing is sweet and makes the cake much more appealing, it's not the central, most substantial element.

If he does not love her, she remains secure and desires to minister to him as God directs and so she continues to willingly submit, praying that God will use her behavior to bring him closer to the Lord.

In review: Problems, then, can develop at the point of goal-oriented behavior. We can move effectively or ineffectively

toward our goal. Assistance that helps us reach a goal determined by a *mistaken* assumption actually amounts to teaching a tick how to more productively drain a dog. If we can reach a goal through more effective strategies, we will achieve a measure of satisfaction. But if it is true that only Christ can truly satisfy our needs and if our goal was determined by a mistaken assumption about true identity, those of us who reach our goal will not be thoroughly satisfied, our identity need still will be unmet, and we will be motivated to go through the cycle again and reach new goals. All our life we will chase after things that never satisfy. God told Jeremiah that His people “have dug for themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jer. 2:13).”

Jesus said that people who rely on any source of nourishment other than Christ Himself will never be content. What a tragedy to see men and women locked into a vocational structure, sacrificing their families to “make it” in business. An expensive home with a better car in the garage and a bank account that is bulging amount to nothing more than a broken cistern.

What Do We Want the Holy Spirit to Help Us Change?

The primary problem with romance, holy matrimony, and family today is misplaced dependency. We depend on everything but God to meet our fundamental needs. What then do we try to change? How we think, what we are depending on, what we believe we must have if we are to feel truly worthwhile. We must allow the Holy Spirit to change our mind. Transformation depends on renewing not our feelings, not our behavior, not our circumstances, but our minds. Jesus the Christ renews *your mind* (Rom.12:2; see also Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 7:23, 25; 8:6; 2 Cor.10:4-5; Eph. 4:23; Php. 2:5; 4:7-8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jas. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; Prov.3:5; 23:7; Isa. 26:3).

Most of us as well as most preachers, pastors, counselors, coaches, and ministries neglect this key to true Christian transformation and try to change something else. Some try to

change goal-oriented *behavior* from irrational and sinful to rational and biblical. Christians are of course interested in rational, reasonable behavior, but only on the foundation of right thinking. Right behavior without right thinking produces the labored, pressured, performing, deadly religiosity Christians are warned about most clearly in Galatians 3:3-5 and Hebrews 4:1-13. Right behavior springing from right thinking yields a joyful, natural, desired obedience to the God who makes us whole persons (Eph. 6:6). This obedience gladly flows out of our true identity, with both security and meaningful purpose.

Even if *right behavior* accomplishes the goal, if the goal is not biblical, is the Christian more free from the self-reliant ‘old self,’ orphan spirit and more like Jesus? If a woman believes that her reason for living depends on her husband's love, more effective wifely behavior may help her reach the goal of more attention from her husband, but she will not have added an inch to her spiritual stature. She must first realize that *Christ* is her reason for living (right thinking), *then* she can become a better wife (right behavior), not primarily to win her husband, but rather to please the Lord and minister to her husband (right goal). If he loves her in return, praise the Lord. She should enjoy his love thoroughly. If her husband does not return her love, she still is a whole, secure woman, capable of going on for God.

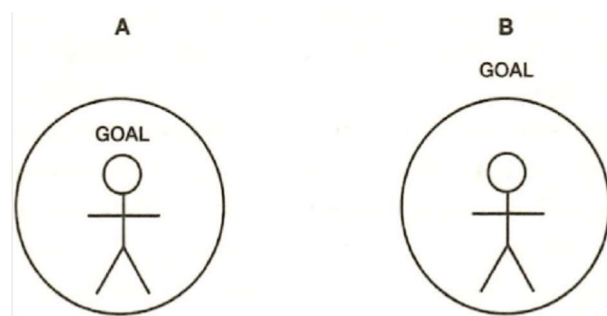
Some of us try to change the *goal*. To meaningfully change the goal, however, requires that we change our thinking. As shown in the previous section, we set goals that are perhaps unreachable. For example, in disciplining our children, we may set the goal of making our child respond properly. But that goal involves an element not totally within our control, namely, another human being. Rather than a goal of a proper response from our child, setting our goal to act responsibly according to God's principles is reachable. Before we can change our goal, however, we need to change our thinking from “I need my child to turn out right if I am to be worthwhile” to “I am worthwhile as a responsible child of God. I do, of course, want my child to turn out right so I will discipline him in what I understand to

be a biblical manner. If my child responds poorly, I will be grieved and will reevaluate my discipline procedures to make sure they are biblical, but I will not be personally threatened because my needs are not at stake. They do not depend on my child's response."

As thinking changes, goals will of course change because goals depend upon the basic *assumption* about how to meet personal needs. When our thinking is sound, and we know that meeting our true identity need *depends only on our relationship to Christ*, we are in a position to constantly set reachable goals. Again, in every situation the broad goal is obedience to Christ.

Perhaps that involves responsibly making dinner for our family. Our personal value does not depend on our family liking our dinner. Compliments are appreciated, of course, but they are not *needed*. Insults are no fun and they do provoke legitimate inner pain, but they are not *personally threatening*. Yet how many women do a slow burn when their husbands complain about dinner. Why? Because at that moment they are depending on their husband's response for their personal worth. The goal of their dinner-making behavior was really to control their husband's response.

As mentioned earlier, efforts to make the best dinner ever to elicit security-building approval is sheer manipulation. It also involves accepting a goal that involves another human being's free will—in this case, her husband's. Whenever we set out to achieve a goal that responsible effort involves another human being's free will, we experience what is appropriately called Basic Anxiety (or Basic Stress or Basic Fear).



Above, let a circle represent the limits of what you can accomplish if you responsibly choose to do your best within the limits of your ability as an empowered follower of Jesus. If your goals are within the circle, you will not experience Basic Stress. There is no fear (stress) that the goal cannot be reached. It depends on whether you're willing to put out the effort. But let your goal fall *outside* the circle. Now your goal is elusive because the Holy Spirit will not empower you in swaying another's free will. You may reach it. Your husband may smile warmly over a delicious dinner and express love for you *but deep inside, underneath the security your husband has given you, is Basic Stress*: "I need something that involves another's free will."

In Circle A it is possible for a Christian to behave *irresponsibly* and therefore not reach appropriate, attainable goals. The result is not stress but rather authentic conviction. Exhortation is the Holy Spirit's key: "Shape up and live responsibly. Your goals are consistent with right thinking. You are secure, significant, and empowered in Christ. Now He wants you to kiss your wife, play with your kids, bless your friends, go to work each day; re-present Jesus. These goals are attainable and appropriate for a Christian. Now go ahead and do it." Do what God expects because He already has given you everything you need to live responsibly.

Shame/guilt

If needed, please consider simply reviewing the discussion in the previous section regarding shame/guilt in what do we want the Holy Spirit to help us change in our relationships (page 68).

Resentment and Anger

"I'm feeling angry right now. Don't worry, I'm not going to attack you. Is this an okay time to talk?"

If not, "When is the soonest we can talk?"

If needed, please consider simply reviewing the discussion in the previous section regarding resentment and anger in what do we want the Holy Spirit to help us change (pages 68, 69).

Stress

If needed, please consider simply reviewing the discussion in the previous section regarding stress in what do we want the Holy Spirit to help us change (page 69).

Despair, Broken Heart, Vague Sense of Emptiness

If needed, please consider simply reviewing the discussion in the previous section regarding despair, broken heart, and a vague sense of emptiness in what do we want the Holy Spirit to help us change (pages 69, 70).

Control

Because our hearts are more deeply involved in the area of romance, it's worth briefly summarizing the two most common relational strategies we use to avoid the perpetual inner pain, originated by 'the flesh:'

"I will not be hurt again, and I will not let people I love be hurt. I'll see to it that what I fear never happens again."

Primary aspects of these people's indispensable identity remain safely tucked away behind the walls of relational control. They become addicted to managing people because they live in terror of vulnerably presenting themselves to another.

Often, 'the flesh' utilizes fear coupled with resentful, misplaced anger to manage (manipulate) others. And frequently pride is involved, as many times 'the flesh'

offers pride as a coping strategy covering for the inner pain of shame, also enabled by 'the flesh.'

"Anyone who loves to quarrel loves sin; anyone who trusts in high walls invites disaster (Pr. 17:19)."

This addiction to control is the origin of 'scapegoating,' 'gaslighting,' and narcissism.

And for many others is an addiction to non-relational control. *"I will experience deep and consuming satisfaction without ever having to relate meaningfully with anyone."* These people's commitment is twofold: to never risk revealing inadequacy by drawing close to people and, without breaking that commitment, to feel powerful and alive. They keep things shallow and safe with family and friends and feel driven to experience a joy they never feel, a joy that only deep relating to another can provide.

The resistance to revealing inadequacy has been a battleground for most of this co-author's family-line as well as myself because of the rejection and judgmental early family environment, courtesy of 'the flesh.' And frequently pride covering for shame is also involved, promoted by 'the flesh.'

Have you ever heard the age-old saying concerning romantic relationships, "Opposites attract"? That's also not always 100% the case but it's close. And again, this mostly happens beyond our conscious levels.

The Addicting Idol of Meaningless Sex

It is vital to understand that the deep, deep soul-level connection formed between a fantasy sex-object and orgasm sooner or later becomes a genuine idol. Even though 'the flesh' is involved, the imagined visual perfection with associated orgasm is intoxicating. This intoxication results from a hormone produced in the brain called 'oxytocin.' The research reveals that when the person makes use of

the same visual—including when the visual is imagined—more than a few times along with orgasm, the brain accepts the fantasy as reality. This becomes an extremely complex, dangerous idol, and operating at more than a physical or an emotional level. And a spouse simply cannot ‘measure up’ to it.

Although ‘the flesh’ is in operation in meaningless sex with an actual person, an intoxicating, deep, deep soul-level union is formed also. And although there may be some chance for the spouse to ‘measure up’ with this sex-object, it also becomes a very complex treacherous idol, operating at more than one level.

Codependency

This Bible study unmask the source and symptoms of the most rudimentary compulsion, addiction—self (serving) idolatry—out of which also comes addiction to alcohol, drugs, sex, food, shopping, dysfunctional relationship, people pleasing, etc., etc. Behind addiction lies insecurity from a mistaken identity. People with an addiction become master manipulators. This is because their life inevitably revolves around what (or who) they are addicted to. This is the point where emotional, mental, physical, relational, and/or financial issues and torment become painfully obvious. As long as they get their next fix it doesn’t matter who they neglect, trample over, or have to manipulate to get it (this includes self). This is an authentic form of abuse—mistreatment, neglect, exploitation, victimization, cruelty.

Codependency is enabling the addict—self (serving) idolator—by compulsively doing the prudent things that the addict is to be doing themselves. It masks evil in the name of love. Generally, both the addict and the codependent are in denial.

Love instructs the following: “Speak the truth in love. (Eph. 4:15)” “If another believer is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ [love]...We

are each responsible for our own conduct...Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. Those who plant to please ‘the flesh’ will harvest decay and death. But those who plant to please the [Holy] Spirit will harvest life from the [Holy] Spirit. (Gal. 6:1-8)” “An open rebuke is better than hidden love! (Prov. 27:5)” And perhaps in due course, “Do not associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet continues in sexual sin, or is *greedy*, or worships idols [*self-idolatry*], or is *abusive*, or is a drunkard, or *cheats people*. Get rid of the old ‘yeast’ by removing this wicked person from among you and hand them over to Satan so that ‘the flesh’ will be destroyed and they themselves will be saved on the day the Lord returns. (1 Cor. 5:7—6:10; 2 Cor. 2:6-8; Rom. 11:22; 16:17-18)”

Traits of an Abusive Spouse ⁷

The key motivational factor that defines an emotionally abusive person is ‘guiding fiction’ haunted by past trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides his or her worth—truest identity (Point 3 of how problems develop). They are trying to cope with feelings of a low sense of worth—worthlessness—produced from an orphan independent self-reliance. Because of the abuser's feelings of insecurity, inadequacy, insignificance, and their accompanying distorted beliefs about holy matrimony, they feel they must control their spouse to meet their own need of identity. The abuser will use manipulative and heavy-handed tactics to keep their spouse off balance. For example, the abuser may resort to intimidation, eliciting fear, shame, guilt, pity, or anger manipulating a person, exposing their vulnerable or helpless feelings; put-downs, criticism, or verbal abuse exposing shame or humiliation; controlling the other's schedule; keeping the other ignorant regarding themselves, the world, or others; promoting crisis, and thus occupied and off balance; conspiracy and turning others away from aiding the person; creating situations in which there is no way to ‘win;’ lying, half-truths, or gossip; threatening self-harm or suicide; possessiveness and jealousy.

Although the behaviors in and of themselves are forms of abuse, it is the constant climate of destruction that leaves a person believing they are trapped, with no confidence or hope that there is a way out. A person in an emotionally abusive matrimony does not believe they have any choices. They believe they carry the responsibility for the bad marriage and that if only s/he could change, their marriage would improve. No matter what s/he does differently, however, the marriage never seems to get better.

The abuser has a typical profile. Like their spouse, the abuser has a low sense of worth, and their identity is often tied to their performance, image, or personal charm, facilitated by 'the flesh.' They have a strong sense of insecurity that includes a fear of receiving or losing love, and/or esteem of others. They are generally distrustful of others and believe they do not have a secure place in important relationships. The self-reliant (orphan) state of mind.

The abusive person is typically self-referenced, meaning they see things from their own frame of reference rather than empathically looking at things from another's perspective. This is not quite the same as being selfish. It can be said that the self-referenced person would give you the shirt off their back, but they don't know you need it. The self-referenced person frequently violates the holy matrimony partnership by acting without thoughtfully considering their partner's point of view and needs.

The abusive individual's feelings of worthlessness also typically cause emotional dependence, feeling that they are less than complete, inadequate, or unable to live without the other person. The emotionally dependent person tends to assume responsibility for another, taking on the role of rescuer, enabler, or controller (e.g., 'I know what is best for you.'). Frequently the intent of the abuser is to prevent the loss of the partner because they feel dependent on the other for their identity. It is understandable, then, why possessiveness is another characteristic of the abuser. They typically try to monopolize the time and attention of their spouse or claim exclusivity in areas when others move close to the object of their so-

called love. "Hurt people hurt people." Often the abusive individual's haunting early traumatic wounding held by 'the flesh' will cause them to angrily push their spouse away from their broken, hardened heart; 'the flesh' convinces them to behave less 'dependent' and more 'self-reliant,' out of fear.

For anyone who works with abusive person, the most frustrating characteristic is the denial of their broken, hardened, frightened heart, their low sense of worth, insecurity, and fear of failing. When interacting with this type of individual, one is often left feeling as if he or she has just gone in circles. Issues presented are minimized, denied, or turned around to make someone else responsible, or a host of other topics are brought in to sidetrack the conversation. Because of early wounding, 'the flesh,' along with the sin-cursed world system, they've been deceived by fear of feeling hurt yet again. The process of change is most often slow or nonexistent.

Traits of an Emotionally Abused Spouse⁷

Every individual in an emotionally abusive relationship can be characterized as having low sense of worth — the 'old self' (orphan) mindset. Although low sense of worth is always characteristic of an abused person, it is not always obvious. Many with low sense of worth appear confident and in control, and many seem to 'really have their act together.'

Low sense of worth makes a person vulnerable to the controlling tactics of the abuser. Because of 'the flesh' along with the sin-cursed world system, they feel they have little value, they look to their spouse's acceptance as the measure of their worth. Instead of mirroring to them the truth about their God-given value and dignity, the abuser pulls them down even further by their critical and non-affirming posture toward their victim. They exercise a form of mind control that results in the victim's taking on the frame of reference of the abuser, developing feelings of guilt and inadequacy for not meeting the abuser's standards and needs. This is complicated even

more by the victim's perceived worth--identity--need in the marital relationship.

As discussed earlier in this Bible study (pages 40-46), a most common feature of a person's mistaken assumption of what provides their value is having a spouse, and they will do anything they can to maintain that identity. As a result, many form a false sense of dependency, believing that they cannot stand emotionally without their partner. The abuser reinforces this with criticism and condemnation. A victim of emotional abuse believes the abuser is right, or at the least they have strong doubts about themselves.

One of the most consistent characteristics of an emotionally abused individual is their feelings of loneliness, distrust, guilt, inadequacy, fear, detachment, and helplessness.

These feelings commonly result in depressive episodes alternating with reactive behavior. Discussed earlier, if a person is not taught what we're learning about God alone meeting their need of value, worth, identity, they may engage in self-deprecating behavior, or they may find expression of their negative emotions in health issues or disease. At the extreme end of the continuum, a person may plan, attempt, or commit suicide.

It cannot be emphasized enough that even if individual controlling and hurtful acts of the abuser are not extreme, the *cumulative* effect of their tactics is oppressive and destructive to the person experiencing them.

Holy matrimony is intended to be lifelong in which *God is meeting the basic needs of value in each spouse*. Each committed to allow *God to heal their individual brokenness* facilitated by their past woundings held by 'the flesh.' Their behavior toward each other is dedicated to becoming more and more an *expression of Christ in them*—giving for the purpose of helping the other become closer to Christ. Both are devoted to becoming full and operating therefore not from a *lack* motivation, but from *expression* motivation. Out of mutual reverence, each are committed to becoming more and more respectful honest communicators "in knowledge of one another"

realizing the other is a completely different person with different past life experiences. Devoted to becoming more vulnerably "quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger, communicating the truth in love, clothing each other with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, making allowance for each other's faults, and forgiving. Above all, clothing each other with [sacrificial] love, which binds together in perfect harmony" (Col. 3:12-14; 2 Cor. 5:14-16, 19, 20; Rom. 2:4; Eph. 4:15; Phil. 2:1, 2, 27; Jas. 1:19; see also Gal. 6:1-3). *And this right behavior is a fruit, not a goal* (Eph. 5:9; Jn. 14:15; 2 Jn. 1:6).

This kind of relationship and abuse are mutually exclusive. When abuse occurs in holy matrimony, the relationship becomes a setting for oppression, personal disintegration and pain rather than a context for promoting the well-being of their partner.

To suggest that a spouse continue being abused in a relationship rejects Scripture on several counts. First, God places great value on those whom He has called (1 Chron. 16:34; Ps. 6:4; 139:13-18; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Abuse is in direct contradiction to how God's children should be treated, according to His plain biblical instruction. Second, by allowing an abuser to continue in their destructive patterns, a spouse is not loving him or her. S/he enables them, permits them to continue in sin. Finally, abuse places a spouse in a relationship in which they are unequal to their spouse. The victim becomes an object to satisfy the abuser's self-serving, and their need to continually act out the unresolved inner wounding and pain for which Jesus paid the full price of healing. The victim is a means to an end—the result of a personal mistaken assumption, a guiding fiction, an attitude, of what provides their sense of worth/identity.⁷

A spouse allowing *God to heal their own individual brokenness* facilitated by their past woundings does not require their spouse's cooperation or presence at all. Once one spouse takes God's personalized prescription themselves, you'll frequently watch the other spouse change in front of your eyes wondrously. When a spouse looks at *their own* mistaken assumptions, old stories, agreements, fantasies, expectations, trauma and fears—they are able to see their

spouse with new eyes. That shift is so monumental it's enough to inspire their spouse to access their own healing from God. And they no longer felt like they had to do the heavy lifting.

When we're children, we each make an agreement with 'the flesh' that love is a commodity that we have to be good enough to earn. And it's simply not true. It's not something you have to be good enough or bargain for. There's nothing you can do to cause God to love you more, and there's nothing you can do to cause God to love you less. God *is* love.

When you recognize that God is the source of love in your life, you'll look at your spouse's role in your life differently. They are not there to be your source of unconditional love. When you look at your spouse as your source of love, they are going to let you down. They are going to fail to meet your needs. But when God is the source, His unconditional love heals your wounds from the past.

Hopefully we're gaining the understanding to stop blaming our spouses for our feelings of discontentment. You receive God's unconditional love. And you have lots of love to share. That frees your spouse from having to get it right for you. When they feel that freedom, they can choose you as their partner without feeling like they're failing to meet your needs. Thinking they're failing you causes them to shut down and hide. Knowing that there's no way they can fail you because God's the source of your love, they gravitate toward you and aren't afraid of letting you down. That lack of fear in them stokes flames of attraction.

This very same dynamic expressed about our *security* through God's unconditional love can be expressed about *meaningful purpose* in your life and your spouse's life. Only God is your source of meaningful purpose. Not you or your spouse.

Even Infidelity

For most of us, infidelity is an unforgivable offense. It doesn't have to be. It's incredibly unfortunate and causes loads of upheaval, but it can be used as a catalyst for healing and deeper love. If you were

the one who strayed and you're reading this Bible study, you might already know it wasn't really about your spouse. It was about you, your unhealed childhood wounding, conditioning, and your resulting mistaken assumptions about how to get your identity need met, altogether facilitated by 'the flesh.'

If your spouse strayed, it's not because you failed to keep them interested. In fact, it had nothing to do with you. Infidelity can trigger our deepest insecurities and feelings of not being good enough. It touches the vast inner pain that got created the first time we felt rejected by the people who were supposed to love us God's way—unconditionally—and who also were haunted by trauma held by 'the flesh.'

The remedy? Take God's personalized prescription yourself. Only then can one move to forgiveness, trust, and joy. Our God has a personalized, proven process that works. If we don't allow His healing now, it'll just crop up again later in a different way.

We cannot fix ourselves. We cannot fix another. We cannot take someone else's personalized prescription for them. And as popular as human remedies are, they cannot authentically help. God wants each of us to live free of the trauma and pain of infidelity.

God has already met each of our deepest needs of security [unconditional love] and meaningful purpose—value—through our truest identity. And as we have learned, our past wounding held by 'the flesh' promotes our chronic relational problems. **We all must exchange the self-idolatry of meeting our inherent identity need ourselves, and any manipulation,** with our truest identity. "Those who receive Christ's new life will *no longer live for themselves. Instead, they will live for Christ...*"

Please continue to avoid going into works mode. Our freedom comes only with the compassionate, all-knowing, and empowering Holy Spirit. And rest assured you will gain specific, practical understanding of God's personalized prescription for you in each of your relationships in another section.

How Health Issues and Problems Develop

In this section, you will better understand the principle that we are motivated to reach whatever goal we assume will first meet our personal need of identity as well as our emotional, mental, and physical health needs. Be reminded to read the following in peace, simply receiving understanding, not doing; letting go of any and all programming to do something. In another section we will learn to allow God's Spirit and Word to reverse the specific problems in our lives.

Be compassionately reminded that each one of us have experienced a level of inner pain, hurt, and disappointment in life—a type of wound which is very hard to bear, that is described accurately in Proverbs 18:14: “The spirit of a person can endure their malady, but a wounded spirit [trauma] who can bear?” We, with a self-reliant, independent (orphan) mindset, suffer from just such trauma in our spirit. We all develop some mistaken assumption about how to get our needs met (Jas. 3:2a). And as we have been learning, *thoughts come with emotions*. And the negative emotions of stress, resentment, and shame/guilt (and their derivatives) have biological connections that result in the vast majority of our physical health problems.

“The latest cutting-edge medical research has made a startling discovery: by our thinking and choosing, our physical brain is actually changing moment by moment. This latest research shows 75 to 98 percent of mental, behavioral, and physical issues comes from one's thought life. This staggering and eye-opening statistic means *only 2 to 25 percent* of emotional, mental, and physical issues come from the environment and genes.

“What has now been shown in research on the brain is that everything that goes on in your thought life is converted into a physical reaction. A massive body of research has now shown that the mind-body connection is real—what we think affects us emotionally, intellectually and physically.”⁴

Front-line neuroscientific research can help us affirm the Bible and

this Bible study.

Beloved, the following is not meant to condemn but to help us access everything that our loving God has purchased for us, including emotional, mental, physical healing, and health & wellness. Prepare your heart. The Holy Scriptures provide us with remarkable insight into health problems, disease, bodily healing, and health & wellness.

Mental, emotional, and physical health issues don't 'just happen.' That's good news! Other than medical accidents and accidents in general, approximately 98% of our mental, emotional, and physical health issues are the result of reaping what we have sown in thought—our basic assumptions of what provides our true identity that we have not submitted to our redemptive God.

These issues include and not limited to addiction, allergies, food intolerances or allergies, ADD, ADHD, anorexia, arthritic problems, autoimmune conditions, back problems, high or low blood pressure, chronic bowel issues, breathing issues, bulimia, cancer, cholesterol problems, circulation issues, chronic constipation, compulsions, Crohn's, diabetes & hypoglycemia, digestion issues, dementia, fibromyalgia, problems involving glands, gut issues, heart disease, headaches, migraines, hypersensitivities to chemicals, fragrance, smells, or mold, hormone issues, infertility & sterility problems, immune system problems, chronic inflammatory issues, insomnia, kidney stones and conditions, leukemia, MS, metabolic & weight problems, miscarriages, neurological problems, OCD, obesity, obsessions, osteoporosis, pain, Parkinson's, phobias, prostate problems, PTSD, respiratory issues, self-abuse/self-injuring, sinus issues, skin conditions, sleep problems, stomach problems, stroke, thyroid issues, tumors & cysts, ulcers, *"also every health problem which is not written in this book (Deut. 28:15-61)."*

It is vital to come to realize this is completely contrary to what we, as well as most health care practitioners, have been trained to believe (1 Cor. 1:18-28; Col. 2:20 - 3:7; Prov. 3:5-8). God's kingdom operates

by a whole different set of principles than the sin-cursed world around us, especially regarding our healing, and health & wellness. That's why God is merciful, patient, long-suffering, and compassionate in His steadfast devotion to training and empowering us in His journey—His ways.

We learned earlier through Romans 8:4-13, that we humans can be 'fleshly minded' and we humans can be 'Spiritually minded.' Ephesians 2:3 informs us that it is "the mind of the flesh" that is sinful because of being controlled by sin. And those who *mind* the things of the flesh will naturally fulfill them. This is part of what the apostle Paul describes is "the [tormenting] law of sin" at Romans 7:15-23.

Psalms 107:17-20 states this about God's people: "Because of their sins, many were afflicted." Jesus healed a lame man then instructed, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, that nothing worse comes upon you. (John 5:15)" Sometimes Jesus combined "you are healed" with "your sins are forgiven" when He healed (Mat. 9:1-5; Mark 2:5-10). "'O Lord,' I prayed, 'have mercy on me. Heal me, for I have sinned against you.' (Ps. 41:4)" And James 5:14-16 instructs us to "confess your *sins so that you may be healed.*" The connection between the mind, sin, and our maladies is also contrary to what most of us have been trained to believe. (Repetition can help us learn: sin is a result of continuing to choose something else besides God to fill a void in our heart. It will not change God's love for us, but it will separate us from Him (Heb. 12:1))

Let's look at a brief portrayal of what our 2,000-year-old Bible teaches about what twenty-first century neuroscience is now calling "the mind-body connection."

Proverbs 14:30 graciously informs us of the real root cause of Osteoporosis. It states: *...Envy is the rottenness [decay] of the bones.* Osteoporosis is not contagious but is a degenerative, progressive decrease in the density of bones that weakens them and makes them more likely to fracture. And it is shown in the Bible to have its origin in thought. Allow me to explain. Or, allow me to affirm your keen discernment because you already see it.

Let's let Noah Webster formally define *envy*: "To feel

uneasiness, mortification or discontent [stress], at the sight of superior excellence, reputation or happiness enjoyed by another; to repine at another's prosperity; to fret or grieve one's self [shame/guilt] at the real or supposed superiority of another, and to hate him or her on that account; to grudge; withholding maliciously [resentment]. Jealousy is nearly allied to envy, for jealousy, before a good is lost by ourselves, is converted into envy, after it is obtained by others. Jealousy is awakened by whatever may exalt others or give them pleasures and advantages which we desire for ourselves."

Incidentally, the co-author of this Bible study inserted the "stress," "shame/guilt" and the "resentment" emotions in their obvious places in Noah Webster's definition.

To make this easier to unfold, let's say that a Christian by the name of *Ishmaeley* has been diagnosed with Osteoporosis.

According to the Bible at Proverbs 14:30, *Ishmaeley* has been having feelings of envy, most likely over years since the health issue of Osteoporosis progresses over years. *Ishmaeley's* feelings of envy originate as thoughts regarding his (1) personal identity need, (2) motivation, and (3) basic assumptions concerning his sense of worth, his true identity. *Ishmaeley's* thinking then fixed on a goal. His thought-life and the feelings it produces may even feel perfectly "normal" to *Ishmaeley*.

In this case, *Ishmaeley* has essentially the physiological manifestation of unhealthy thinking over time—Osteoporosis. And be reminded that thoughts come with feelings. In this particular case, feelings of envy.

By the way, the co-author of this study knows a woman who had been diagnosed with Osteoporosis at approximately 30-years of age. At 60-years old she learned what you're learning, applied God's Word to her life, by faith, and her healing was loosed into her body "as it is in heaven" (even within the jurisdiction of this sin-cursed world). At 60 years of age, her long-time doctor documented that she no longer has Osteoporosis. Her doctor's testing reported that, in 90-days, this woman experienced bone density increase of 15 - 18%. And

although her doctor could not understand it, he reported that she now has the bone density of a 30-year-old woman.

That is good news! And this is only one example of one health problem coming out of a mistaken basic assumption for the purpose of meeting the need of our true identity.

"For as man *thinks in his heart*, so is he... (Proverbs 23:7 NKJV; 27:19; Rom. 12:2; Eph. 4:23)" Again, this is completely contrary to what we, as well as health care practitioners, have been programmed to believe (1 Cor. 3:19).

Our Number One Killer Today

Luke 21:25-26 informs us that in "latter days," "there will be signs... with perplexity...*Many people's hearts failing them from fear...*"

Be reminded *stress* is a modern term for the Bible word, *fear*, and that "75 – 90% of visits to the doctor are now related to stress." —*National Institutes of Health*

According to the CDC – *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, Atlanta, GA, "The first heart attack was diagnosed in 1912. Today heart disease is the number one killer of men and women in the United States. About 610,000 people die of heart disease in the United States every year. There are key risk factors [early symptoms] for heart disease, and about *half of Americans* (49%) have at least one of these early symptoms. Every year about 735,000 Americans have a heart attack. Of these, 525,000 are a first heart attack and 210,000 happen in people who have already had a heart attack. Heart disease has been the leading cause of death in the United States for the past 80 years *and is a major cause of disability*" (emphasis added).

Take a moment and consider that all of these large numbers and over 80 years represent an incomprehensible amount of human suffering. Much of it is ongoing. And this does not mention the expeditious number and immeasurable amount of family members' and friends' hardship and grief.

Be reminded that this is not God's plan. "Beloved, I pray above *all* things that you may prosper and *be in health, even as your soul prospers.*" (3 John 2 KJV)

What is also important to note is that most of our health issues & problems begin as a mistaken basic assumption for meeting our *personal* needs, and then they often infringe on the necessity to meet added needs—those of our physical health.

Our Critically Important Immune System

Proverbs 17:22 wisely informs us, "A joyful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit dries up the bones." The bone marrow is considered the center of our immune system. If the marrow of our bones dries, our immune system is weakened. As you may know, your immune system fights off many things from cancer to infection. A stressed immune system is also a primary key in all allergies and sensitivities—including foods, fragrances, scents, chemicals, environmental-related syndromes, maladies, illnesses, and etc., etc.

My Personal Healing Case History

The co-author of this study used to be an evangelistic health, nutrition, and fitness freak for 18-years, actively involved in the thriving business of providing herbal and nutritional remedies.

Then in November 1997, I was diagnosed with Acute Lymphocytic Leukemia (A.L.L.).

Three-and-a-half-years after my diagnosis of leukemia, I was diagnosed with a second disease that is considered "lethal & incurable," called Scleroderma.

In December 2003, I was taught many of God's health principles included in this study. Soon after learning how to participate with God and accessing His healing by faith, I received a clean bill of health from my Emory University, Atlanta, GA doctors in April, 2004.

God cannot be prejudice—what He does for one He'll do for another (Rom. 2:11; Jas. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:24). "*Healing is God's children's bread.*" (Jesus at Matt. 15:24-28)"

Additionally, I want you to know that one of my great grandfathers was diagnosed with leukemia in November 1949. Sadly, that disease killed him in five months. He entered the hospital because of leukemia on November 10th and I entered the hospital because of leukemia on November 10th, exactly forty-eight years later.

Two of that great grandfather's adult children were diagnosed with leukemia. One died because of leukemia directly, and the other died from its complications. I was unaware of any of this leukemia family history until late 2004.

What is true in the physical is true, first, in the spirit/soul. And we will gain practical understanding of God's personalized prescription for our *inherited* or *genetic* issues & problems in another section.

My Personal Allergies Case History

In addition to the above, God cured me of severe allergies.

I mentioned my history of being an evangelistic health, nutrition, and fitness freak for 18-years, actively providing (human) remedies to others. Approximately 9-years into that, I went through a heart-breaking romantic relationship experience. And about a year-and-a-half later, I experienced severe allergies to pollen and cats for the first time in my life. This happened in the early 1990's. I successfully treated my allergies with an ongoing nutritional remedy. My clients with allergies also experienced the same success from the nutritional remedy I provided.

Here's what I have learned since, what was happening when I experienced an allergic reaction: It was a result of excessive "B cell" activity in my immune system. Excessive B cell activity is a result of "T cells" in our immune system being destroyed because of

something called a “cortisol drip.” Cortisol is released in a “fight or flight” response and is a normal body function.

But when we are in fight or flight for a long period of time (weeks, months, years) this steady cortisol drip destroys our T cells and creates excessive B cell activity. This is what weakens the immune system and causes an “allergic reaction.” I learned the real problem behind allergies is chronic fear (or stress), not the environment. I actually wasn't allergic to anything.

It bears repeating that what is true in the physical is true, first, in the spirit/soul.

After I earnestly repented for not receiving His perfect love, in my agreement with fear, God delivered me from it. My immune system healed and all “allergic reactions” have completely ceased for good. Since 2004, I’ve had no reason to continue the former allergies remedy because “my allergies” are gone. *Healing is God’s children’s bread*. That aspect of God’s prescription is outside the scope of this particular section. But be reminded that 'stress' is a modern term for the biblical word, 'fear;' those with psychology or sociology backgrounds call it anxiety; see also 2 Tim. 1:7; Job 3:25; 4:14-16; Isa. 51:12; Ps. 37:8; Eph. 6:12; 1 John 4:18; Rom. 7:20-23.

And be reminded also that God cannot play favorites—what He does for one He'll do for another (Rom. 2:11; Jas. 5:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:24).

Stalking Negative Thought in Your Biology

The understanding in this section on negative thought comes from pages 180 – 197 of Dr. M.K. Strydom’s book entitled, *Healing Begins with Sanctification of the Heart*, available for your download free of charge from the resource list at: gotchoices.net/health/directory

How negative thought and stress affect our bodies:

1. Heart rate increases to pump as much blood as possible to brain, and arm & leg muscles; “fight or flight.”
2. The brain becomes highly alert for thinking clearly.
3. The liver increases sugar in blood for increased energy.

4. More blood is released into the blood stream by the spleen.
5. Breathing increases for more oxygen.
6. Blood is directed away from digestion to the brain, heart and muscles.
7. Production of saliva, stomach enzymes, and digestion decrease.
8. Two separate hormonal chemicals are released into the blood stream from two separate glands in the brain. And then two glands on top of the kidneys secrete “adrenalin” and “cortisol” to keep you alert and focused.
9. When there is enough of these specific chemicals in the blood, the two glands in the brain stop secreting the two hormones.
10. The process stops, and you go into a settled, peaceful state of processing and actually building memory. Short bursts of these chemicals for short periods of time.

Stress becomes harmful when we are in stages 1 – 8 for too long or when it is triggered by negative thought. This then causes our shift into stage 11 of stress:

11. If you shift from being alert to being worried, anxious, fearful, angry, or bitter, one of glands in the brain responds by secreting too much of one of the hormones. In large quantities, the chemical structure of that hormone changes. Because its chemical structure changes in this stage of stress, we’ll now refer to it as the “dread hormone.” The medical field calls this the chemical of negative expectation (dread).

“Dread hormone” stimulates the other gland in the brain to release the other hormone in large quantities. In large quantities, it is referred to in the medical field as the fear hormone. This is fear in physical form! The large quantities of “dread hormone” and “fear hormone” overwhelm the healthy stopping process and then cause

the overproduction of adrenalin and cortisol from the two glands atop the kidneys.

As high levels of cortisol flow over your brain, it's actually restructured and rewired. The branches of memory on your nerves temporarily shrink so that you are unable to access those memories. Your thinking becomes foggy, you begin to have difficulty concentrating, and creativity levels drop.

Lengthy living in stage 11 of stress is where we start feeling physically unwell with a variety of vague symptoms—not so sick to be bed-ridden but wake up in the morning without the joy of the Lord. We start feeling tense, anxious, overwhelmed, out of control and we begin to feel like giving up. We start getting consistent aches and pains, and our immunity decreases.

Eventually after 10 or 20 or 30 years of consistent living in stage 11, it gets very dangerous – this is where we see the major maladies appearing. When the high levels of stress chemicals are flowing through your body in stage 11, something very interesting is that they don't move randomly through your body causing damage just anywhere – they move in a very specific sequence of attack:

1. Toxic retention – our bodily cells hold on to toxins and restrict nutrition due to something called “cell wall rigidity”
2. Cardiovascular system – the heart and blood vessels are where the destructive stress chemicals generally go first. Includes high blood pressure, stroke. Our heart is very sensitive to our thought life and its emotions. Recall the CDC statistics as well as Luke 21:25-26 discussed above.
3. The next area these harmful stress hormones attack, generally, is the immune system. As you may know, this is an army of cells that defend you from harmful things such as viruses, bacteria, cancer cells, parasites, and fungus. As I mentioned in my “My Personal Allergies Case History” above, allergic reactions are symptoms of an unhealthy immune system. The same is true for asthma, food intolerances, and hyper-sensitivities including those involving smell.
4. The Brain. Fatigue, lethargy, exhaustion, sleep issues, lack of peace, type A behavior, overeating, phobias, panic attacks, poor memory, and/or fogged thinking set in. By this stage we are really feeling sick.
The quote Dr. Strydom on page 187, “I just want to make a point here: not everybody will get an illness on all 3 levels – it depends where your genetic weakness is. So if you have a great heart, then you might just get a little rise in blood pressure and maybe a bit of angina, but you won't have a heart attack. Someone who has a weak heart may have a massive heart attack or a stroke. If you have a strong heart, you might get manifestations in your immune system – hitting your pancreas or your skin, etc. In other words, wherever you have a weakness – that is where you are going to see the most problems in your body. The chain will break at the weakest link. It may bypass both your heart and immune system where you just have minor nagging illnesses, and then when it gets to your brain then the exhaustion, foggy thinking or insomnia set in.”
5. Our digestive system is the next area to be affected – indigestion, constipation, diarrhea, vomiting, nausea, cramping, stomach ulcers, reflux (heart burn), irritable bowel syndrome, ulcerative colitis and malabsorption.
6. Fertility problems, irregular menstrual periods, frigidity, impotence.
7. Affects growth of children – stress can affect the growth hormone by 87%.
8. Muscular tension – for example a tension headache, sore neck or muscle contraction backache.
9. The common cold (caused by the Rhinovirus virus).
10. High levels of the stress hormone cortisol delays healing of wounds, causes inflammation and decreases bone formation.

The list goes on and on—almost all twelve systems in your body are affected by negativity, unresolved stress, fear and anxiety. God

created and designed our immune system so that it is strong enough to kill off any infection. But there is a condition: We must be well in our spirituality. We must begin to allow God to help us renew our minds if we want to live the robust lives He purchased for us. “For as **man thinks in his heart, so is he...**” Thought becomes part of our biology (Prov. 23:7 NKJV; see also Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 7:23, 25; 8:6; 12:2; 2 Cor. 10:4-5; Eph. 4:23; Php. 2:5; 4:7-8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jas. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; Isa. 26:3).

1 John 4:18 graciously informs us: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. If we are in fear, God’s love has not been accomplished in us.”

(*Stress* being a modern term for the Bible’s word, *fear*. Psychology and sociology call it *anxiety*.)

‘There is no stress in love; but perfect love casts out stress, because stress involves torment. *If we are stressed, God’s love has not been accomplished in us.*’ (co-author paraphrase.)

Unmistakably, stress (fear) is the real root cause of many, many mental, emotional, and physical problems. And, not every malady has that root; there are also those that originate from the negative thoughts and their feelings of bitterness, self-bitterness, rejection, confusing antilove, depression, envy, shame, guilt, despair, etc. Neuroscience understands negativity’s pathway to the other maladies, likewise, involve the chemical structure changes due to hormone variations which impacts our other ten bodily systems including our immune system, cardiovascular system, nervous system, skeletal system, etc., etc.

For greater understanding of how bodily issues develop, visit: www.gotchoices.net/health/mind-body

Now that we have a true foundational understanding of the sources of nearly all bodily health issues, we now are in a position to complete the progression of how health problems develop:

Path I

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need

3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal on how to meet my identity need
5. Goal-oriented behavior
6. Goal reached
7. Partial temporary satisfaction
8. Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness
9. Emotional, mental, and/or physical health problem(s)

Back to Start

Or, how the *unsatisfied* need of our true identity might lead through health issues onto suicide; ‘assisted suicide:’

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. New mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a new goal on how to meet my identity need
5. New goal-oriented behavior
6. New goal reached
7. Revealed orphan mindset; ‘Broken heart;’ Emotional, mental issues and problems, physical health needs, despair
8. Suicide

Path II

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken basic assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal on how to meet my identity need
5. Goal-oriented behavior

6. FRUSTRATION & OBSTACLE

<i>Type of Obstacle</i>		<i>Form of Frustration</i>
1. Unreachable Goal	→	Shame/Guilt
2. External Circumstance	→	Resentment, anger
3. Fear of Failure	→	Stress
7. Frustration (negativity, compulsion, obsession, fixation, or phobia); Revealed orphan mindset; 'Broken heart,' Hardened heart		
8. Safety (emotional, mental, physical health issues and problems)		

What Do We Want the Holy Spirit to Help Us Change?

If we are clear that we want to draw closer to God whether the immediate feelings are positive or negative, we can evaluate what we are asking God to help us change.

Briefly consider Acts 3:1-11 (NKJV): "Now...a certain man lame from his mother's womb...laid daily...to ask alms [anything given as helpful charity, as money, food, or clothing]. ...Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.' And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked...with them--walking, leaping, and praising God...!" We may want ____ (a human remedy we think helps with our malady), and God wants to be our Provider with ____ (His promised remedy instead, per Prov. 3:5-6; Isa. 53:4-6)!

And then the woman's testimony recorded at Mark 5:26-34: "Now a certain woman had a flow of blood [a health issue] for twelve years and had suffered many things from many physicians [human remedy practitioners]. She had spent all that she had and was not [authentically] better, but rather grew worse...When she had heard Jesus...she touched His garment believing and saying that she shall be whole [healed]. And immediately...she was healed. ...And Jesus

said unto her, 'Daughter [identity declaration], *your faith has made you whole*; go in peace, and be healed of your affliction.'"

On the cross, "Surely Jesus took up our issues, and bore our emotional pains...and *by His stripes [wounds] we are healed*. (Isaiah 53:4-5)" "Jesus personally carried away your sins in His body to the cross so you can be rid of sin and live the right way; *by His stripes [wounds] you are healed*. (1 Peter 2:24; see also Matt. 8:15-17; 15:24-28, 3 John 2)"

Psalms 103:2-3 declares, "Praise the LORD, O my soul...He heals *all* my diseases!"

Be reminded that since this 21st century, the cutting-edge medical research shows *75 to 98 percent* of emotional, mental, behavioral, and physical issues come from one's thought life. Health issues and problems might be *managed* by prescription or over-the-counter drugs, herbal, nutritional, surgeries, and other modalities available, but genuine healing or sound health for a Christian will entail a change in thinking about how his or her true identity need has already fully been met by God.

James 5:14-16 passionately promises: "Are any among you sick [have bodily issues]? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord [dedicating them for the Lord's service alone]. And their prayer offered in faith *will heal the sick, and the Lord will make them well*. And anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. So confess your sins to each other and pray for each other *so that you may be healed*."

No one can expect to be free from health issues or problems unless they yield to God's conditions documented at the James 5:14-16 contract; and every one can expect such blessing when they yield to them (see also Ex.15:23; 20:6; 23:22-25; Ps. 66:18; 91; 107:17-20; Jas. 1:6-7).

In the context of a clear illustration of God's healing promise at James 5:14-16, let's briefly return to the aforementioned Bible precept of "envy causing the decay

of the bones” and Ishmaeley’s diagnosis of Osteoporosis (Prov. 14:30): Can we agree that upon Ishmaeley’s healing, God’s very next passion for Ishmaeley would be to help him change his thinking and renew his mind out of envy? (See also Romans 7:23; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Ephesians 4:23.)

And Psalm 66:18 teaches us, “If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.” If Ishmaeley would neglect confessing his relevant sins ‘so that he may be healed’ (i.e., envy, resentment, etc.), God’s healing hands would be tied. What if Ishmaely would get improved bone density from nutritional supplements or pharmaceuticals? He would be out of compliance with two of God’s conditions in His contract of healing: 1) Ishmaely being solely dedicated to God’s service, and 2) confessing the relevant sins of envy, resentment, etc. And would Ishmaely’s testimony be to God’s glory or to another’s glory?

Again beloved, the following is not meant to condemn but to help us access everything that our loving God has purchased for us.

Galatians 5:19-26 graciously informs us, “When we follow the desires of ‘the flesh,’ our lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, witchcraft,* hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition...and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that those who [continue to] do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.”

* At Galatians 5:20, the word translated, “witchcraft,” and in some versions translated, “sorcery,” is the New Testament original Greek word, “pharmakeia,” or human remedies (see also 1 Samuel 15:23; 2 Chron. 16:12-14; Rev. 21:8.).

In all cases of healing in Scripture, prayer, atonement, and spiritual means were used instead of human remedies (Gen. 20:7,17; Ex. 15:26; Ps. 103:1-4; 105:37; 107:20; Isa. 53:4-5; 58:8; Matt. 8:17; Acts 10:38; James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24).

Spiritual means to heal health issues and diseases is all that God has provided for people (Ex. 15:26; Ps. 91; Isa. 53:4-5; 58:8; Matt. 8:16-17; Jas. 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24).

Spiritual means is all that God has promised and commanded to be used in health issues (Jas. 5:14-16; Ex. 15:26; Ps. 91; 107:20; Isa. 53:4-5; 58:8; Matt. 8:16-17; 1 Peter 2:24).

Galatians 5:22 continues: “But when the Holy Spirit leads our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, its joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and a firm grip. Here there is no conflict with law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of ‘the flesh’ to His cross and crucified them there. If we are living now by the Holy Spirit, *let us follow the Holy Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives*. Let us not become conceited, or irritate one another, or be jealous of one another. (Gal. 5:19-26; see also 2 Cor. 10:4-6)”

Now consider that researchers estimate, “Medical error is now the third leading cause of death; it outranks respiratory disease, accidents, stroke, Alzheimer’s, and diabetes.” —*National Center for Health Statistics*

WARNING: Do Not Consider Stopping Any Medication Without the Help of Your Health Care Practitioner. We will gain practical understanding of God’s personalized prescription for our issues & problems in another section.

Now continue to prepare your heart, beloved. When the apostle Paul is teaching us about our participating in ‘Holy communion’ or ‘the Lord’s Supper’ at 1 Corinthians 11:27-30, he states: “So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily [without due reverence, awe] is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine your own attitude before eating the bread and drinking the cup. For if you [continue to] eat the bread or drink the cup without esteeming the Lord’s body, you are eating and drinking condemning judgment upon yourself. *These reasons are why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.*”

The above Scripture passages are tough when we’ve still got a self-reliant, independent (orphan) perspective—when we haven’t yet

come to know that we know, that we know in our heart of hearts our true identity, including *what God wants to be for us* (e.g., our healer). James 5:14-16 (cited above) highlights our necessity of learning to cling to, trust in, and rely on what God promises. And we're gaining some further confirmation that God's kingdom government operates by a whole different set of principles than the sin-cursed government system around us, especially regarding healing, health & wellness.

And hopefully we're gaining some real understanding of how agreement with 'the flesh' sooner or later causes emotional, mental, and physical health issues. The Bible has much to say about the dynamics of disease. The Holy Spirit compassionately, and relationally, wants to train and empower each of us, to enjoy "the children's bread"—our healing, health & wellness that Jesus already paid for in-full, being "made more and more in His image" (Mark 7:27; see also Exodus 15:26; 23:25; Psalms 30:2; 91; 103:3; 105:37; 107:17-20; Isaiah 53:4-5; 58:8; Matthew 8:17; James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:24; www.gotchoices.net/health/directory).

"The flesh' was against the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:13-26)." Be reminded that 'the flesh' continually offers attractive, tempting, counterfeits to meet our true identity need. Our agreement with 'the flesh' sooner or later produces the self-reliant, independent (orphan) mindset. In due course, the orphan mindset generates its vague sense of emptiness, frustration, shame/guilt, resentment, fear of failure, compulsion, despair, or broken heart, and related negativity (see both Paths, above). The orphan, the 'old self' negativity is most often the root cause of emotional, mental, and physical health issues. And once more, what is true in the physical is true, first, in the spirit/soul (Mk. 7:14-16; Rom. 7:15-23; 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:16; Eph. 6:12; Jas. 5:16).

Again, this is part of what Apostle Paul explained is "the law of sin" at Rom. 7:15-23.

"The enemy looks for people to yield their identity to their own circumstances." —Graham Cooke; see also Matt. 4:3

A chief priority of God is to heal your heart—you cannot unite with God without that deepest part of you (Prov. 4:23; 1 Cor. 2:14). Broken heartedness is inevitably going to produce issues.

Jesus promises His followers, "I will not leave you as orphans." The untaught truth is, without realizing in our heart of hearts how we are known in heaven (e.g., a needy child of God) and what God wants to be for us (e.g., our healer), we fall prey to what alluring counterfeit 'the flesh' offers instead. And these times are actually cause for us to depend more and more on our gracious loving God in exchange for whatever 'the flesh' has persuaded us to depend on.

It should be obvious perhaps to the point of labored repetition that the critical change needed to live victoriously involves redeeming our basic assumption, the third element in our progression detailed above. *Every problem in the progression can be avoided completely if the basic assumption is in line with revealed biblical Truth.* The truly sound, healthy person is one who depends on God alone (and what He chooses to provide in the Christian community) to give him or her their true identity. A sense of emptiness, despair, negative emotional shadings, emotional, mental, and physical health issues & problems can be traced directly to a mistaken assumption about how to meet our personal identity need, originated by 'the flesh.'

And once 'the flesh' comes into operation, opportunity opens for the demonic to ensnare us—as it is written in Ephesians 6:12; Rom. 7:20-23; 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

The primary problem with us today is misplaced dependency. Sinister spiritual dynamics have us compulsively depending on ourselves to meet our fundamental needs. Our Bible calls this (self) idolatry.

"And Jesus said, 'As you believe, be it done unto you...' and, "According to your faith be it unto you (Matt. 8:13; 9:29)."

"Confess your sins one to another so that you may be healed. (James 5:14-16)"

Again, we shall gain practical understanding of our God's personalized prescription for our issues & problems, including those inherited or genetic, in another section.

The Money Thing

How Financial Headaches Develop

James 3:2 states, “For we *all* stumble in many things.” We each have inner pain from past wounds in life that affect us every day. It distorts our identity, how we perceive God and others, and that obscures our financial acuity. And people seek to avoid pain in different ways. In this section, you will continue to apply what we’ve been learning to better understand the principle that we are motivated to reach whatever goal we assume will meet our personal needs and our perceived financial needs as well. Remember to read the following to simply receive understanding, *not doing*.

God’s kingdom economy operates differently from the sin-cursed world’s economy by which we’ve been trained. The world “sweats and toils” for their provision. But God tells us that when we, as His children, seek Him and His righteousness-in-love, all things will be provided to us (Mt 6:33; see also Php. 4:19). In God’s kingdom, provision comes as a result of our child-like obedience, not our sweat and toil. In His kingdom, we rely on Him as our source. Sure, He requires us to work (Gen. 2:15; 1 Thess. 4:11), but our work is not our provider; God is our provider. In His kingdom sometimes we will receive less than what we think we deserve. Other times we will receive more than we deserve. Our job is always in the loving response of our true identity, to follow and obey. God’s job is to abundantly meet your needs and richly bless our obedience.

When God’s people went into the wilderness after their deliverance, they had to trust Him—“Jehovah Jireh”—as their Father of provision. It doesn’t matter what circumstance you go through; God can provide regardless of the state of your circumstance.

God provided the people of Israel guidance and sustenance until they came to their promise land. (Exodus 13, 16)

“I [God] have given you [my people] a land for which you did not labor, and cities you did not build, and you dwell in them; you eat of the vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.” (Joshua 24:13)

Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...” (Ps. 127:1-2)

Those of us who have an obsession or compulsion in the area of money need our true identity. We all do. Our real problem is rather a *mistaken belief* about what gives us identity. We can effortlessly fall for the devilish myth that money and prestige make us someone and reject the Lord's teaching that in order to find oneself, we must submit our life, including our mistaken identity, to God's version of our life—"a more excellent way." (Lk. 9:23; Jn. 12:24; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:31.)

Like our other chronic issues, most financial problems serve the purpose of self-protection, 'safety,' self-reliance. And frequently, our financial headaches are the direct result of emotional unhealth. The negative emotions of stress, resentment, anger, shame/guilt, (and their shadings or derivatives), despair, and emptiness produce much of our financial problems.

God's nature, however, is to bless His children abundantly.

"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for *it is He who gives you power to get wealth*, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (Deut. 8:18)

"The blessing of the LORD, *it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow [painful, laborious toil] with it.*" (Proverbs 10:22)

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet *for your sakes He became poor*, that *you through His poverty might be rich.*" (2 Cor. 8:9)

"*Beloved, I pray above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.*" (3 John 1:2)

"*...God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*" (Php. 4:19) This applies to all areas and times of our lives, including when we're in our harshest oppression, as Paul was when he wrote this. And, the immediate context of this passage is financial.

As Christian workplace believers, God calls us to view Him as the owner of everything. (e.g., Ps. 24:1-2) We are to be stewards of all that

He entrusts to us. This is one of the hardest of all commands to keep for the Christian workplace believer because, if we work hard at business, we receive all the benefits of that work. It appears as though all that we have achieved was through our hand. Yet God says that it is by His hand that we are able to make wealth. (Deut. 8:18) He is the source of that ability. As soon as we become owners and not managers, we fall into trouble with God.

"God empowers His sons and daughters to create wealth in order to establish His kingdom upon the earth. However, that very blessing has also become a temptation for many of us, keeping us from our destiny. So-called 'success' has led us to trust in wealth and status instead of looking to God. Once again, we mistakenly derive our identity by what we do or do not possess. Therefore, we have not been able to enter into the incredible purpose and calling God has for our lives. Remember the words He spoke to Zachariah: 'This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: 'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the Lord of hosts.'" (Zech. 4:6)⁵

Our worth is defined by how we are known in heaven plus what God is for us, not by what we have or what we do.

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money." (Matt. 6:24)

"And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said unto them, 'Children, how hard it is for those *who trust in riches* to enter the kingdom of God!'" (Mark 10:24)

Consider once again that those of us who are compulsive or obsessive in the area of money actually crave the recognition, security, confidence, and/or power it seems to bring. We must realize, however, that neither money, recognition, security, confidence nor power are the ultimate goal. They are merely means to an end. Our real goal is an *identity as a basis for feeling worthwhile*. We need to be someone. That someone also needs to

feel secure. And our real problem is rather a *mistaken belief* about where, or, in whom we find our true identity, its security and meaningful purpose.

And please understand, we must not confuse the sin of pride (I want to run the show, I want my way) with the need for a true identity. Identity is a normal need, an intrinsic part of humanity as a personal being, a need that only God Himself can fill, and a need that He so wants to fill.

What is most important to note about most of our financial headaches begin as a 'guiding fiction' for meeting our true identity need.

"Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income..." (Ecc. 5:10)

"Followers of Jesus are susceptible to a trap in their spiritual lives—one to which others may not be so susceptible. That trap is wealth. Scripture tells us that if we are having our basic needs met for food and clothing, we are considered to have riches. Jesus cautioned us against living a lifestyle that required more than our basic necessities. However, it is crystal clear that Jesus was not at all against wealth, but against a dependence on wealth. Jesus continually taught that a dependence on anything other than God was evil. Whenever Jesus determined that money was an [identity] issue for an individual, He addressed it and found that the individual could not let go. This was true for the rich young ruler. When talking about what he must do to inherit the Kingdom, Jesus told him to do the one thing that would be the most difficult—to give away his wealth and follow Him. Jesus was not saying this was what every person must do, only the rich young ruler, because Jesus knew this was his greatest stumbling block. For others of us, it [our mistaken identity] could be something else Jesus would ask us to give up. (see Matt. 19:16-30.)

"In the Parable of the Sower in which He describes four types of people, Jesus also gave us another example of the problem money creates for any follower of Jesus.

"A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants. Still other seed fell on good soil, where it produced a crop—a hundred, sixty or thirty times what was sown.' (Matt. 13:3b-8)

"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.*' (Matt. 13:22)

"Much like the frog in the boiling pot, if we are not careful, we gradually begin to acquire and walk the treadmill of material gain. Those around us begin to expect more and more. Soon we begin expanding our lifestyle. Before we know it, we are worrying about how to take care of what we acquire. Our emphasis becomes what we own versus our relationship with Jesus and His Kingdom. One day I woke up and realized I had a cold heart toward God. Apathy toward the things of God became apparent. I was still going through the motions of service toward God, but with no power. We wake up to realize Christ is no longer Lord of our lives, much less of our money. The greater independence money gives us, the less dependence on God we need. Christ talked much about money in the Kingdom because He knew how much of a problem it was. This is why we have so few who are bearing 100, 60, or 30 times what is sown.

‘And [by faith] God is able to make *all* grace abound toward you, that you, *always* having *all* sufficiency in *all* things, may have an **abundance** [‘superabound, in excess’] **for every good work!**’ (2 Cor. 9:8; See also Rom. 1:17; 5:2; Heb. 11)

“Do you have the same hunger for God that you once had? Has financial blessing had an adverse effect on your passion for Jesus Christ? Ask Him today if your heart has grown cold as a result of financial blessing. Ask Him to keep you hungering for more of His presence in your life.”⁵

“Have you ever considered at what point a test becomes so difficult that you decide you can no longer trust in God and you must take over to solve the problem? The prophet Jeremiah describes a situation in which the temptation to solve a financial problem can become so great that we trust in man's way to solve it.

“God graciously informs us at Jeremiah 17:5-8: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on mere human strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in Him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.’

“Abraham and Job were two of God’s wealthy kids and David became wealthy, too. However, for some, wealth can be a noose around their neck because it becomes an idol, eventually developing into their ultimate source of trust and confidence. In such cases, there is no deliverance until God removes their finances. For our own good and His purposes, God wants each of us free from the bondage of idolatry.”⁵

“So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches?” (Luke 16:11) “As a face is reflected in water, so the heart reflects the person.” (Prov. 27:19; see also Prov.23:7; Isa.26:3; Rom.12:2; 2 Cor.10:5; Eph.4:23; Philippians 4:8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Peter 4:1; Matt. 8:13; 9:29.) We must allow God to help us renew our minds if we want to enjoy the prosperous lives He purchased for us. Rather than a severe wake-up call, this Bible study may be the only one we need.

If necessary, please consider reviewing “What This Looks Like Monday Morning” on pages 50-51 above.

Now that we have a true foundational understanding of the sources of most financial issues, we are able to complete the progression of how financial problems develop:

Development Leading to Financial Headaches

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by ‘the flesh’ of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal on how to bring identity
5. Goal-oriented behavior
6. Goal reached
7. Partial temporary satisfaction
8. Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness
9. Financial insufficiency, debt, and/or financial compulsion

Back to Start

1. Personal inherent need of my true identity...

Or, because our need for our true identity had led to a financial

dissatisfaction, we come into agreement with another strategy of 'the flesh' that then progresses through worse consequences:

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. New mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by 'the flesh' of what provides my true identity
4. Set a new goal on how to meet my identity need
5. New goal-oriented behavior
6. New goal reached
- ~~7. Partial temporary satisfaction~~
- ~~8. Vague (independent orphan) sense of emptiness~~
7. Revealed orphan mindset; 'Broken heart;' despair; financial lust, insufficiency and/or debt, hoarding money, or greed
8. Suicide

Development Leading to Misplaced Destiny

1. Inherent personal need of my true identity
2. Motivation, desire, or urge to meet that need
3. Mistaken assumption haunted by trauma held by 'the flesh' of what provides my true identity
4. Set a goal on how to meet my identity need
5. Goal-oriented behavior
6. FRUSTRATION & OBSTACLE

<i>Type of Obstacle</i>		<i>Form of Frustration</i>
1. Unreachable Goal	→	Shame/Guilt
2. External Circumstance	→	Resentment, anger

3. Fear of Failure → Stress

7. Frustration (negativity, pre- or post- financial obsession, compulsion, or phobia); Revealed orphan mindset; 'Broken heart,' Hardened heart
8. Safety (financial lust, insufficiency, debt, and/or idolatry, hoarding money, greed)

What Do We Want the Holy Spirit to Help Us Change?

If we are clear that we want to draw closer to God whether the immediate feelings are positive or negative, we can evaluate what we are asking God to help us change.

Hopefully it is obvious that the critical change needed to live victoriously involves altering our basic assumption, the third element in this progression. Every problem in the progression can be avoided completely if the basic assumption is in line with revealed biblical Truth. The truly sound, financially healthy person is one who depends on God alone (and what He chooses to provide in the Christian community) to make him or her significant and secure. Despair, frustration, a sense of emptiness, negative symptoms, resentment, stress, shame/guilt and their emotional shadings, debt, insufficiency, poverty, and/or financial compulsion, idolatry, hoarding money, greed—every issue—can be traced directly to a mistaken assumption about how to meet our personal identity need.

The primary problem with us today is misplaced dependency. We depend on everything but God to meet our fundamental needs. What then do we try to change? How we think, what we are depending on, what we believe we must have if we are to feel truly worthwhile, and what we must do to be fiscally well. We must change our mind. Transformation depends on renewing not our feelings, not our behavior, not our circumstances, but our minds. (Rom.12:2; see also Mk. 7:21-22; Rom. 7:23, 25; 8:6; 2 Cor.10:4-5; Eph. 4:23; Php. 2:5; 4:7-8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jas. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; Prov.3:5; 23:7; Isa. 26:3.)

Most of us as well as most preachers, financial planners, ministries, and coaches neglect this key to true Christian transformation and try to change something else. Some try to change goal-oriented *behavior* from irrational and sinful to rational and biblical. Christians are of course interested in rational, reasonable behavior—without credit cards and debt headache, for example—but only on the foundation of right thinking. Right behavior without right thinking produces bankrupt religiosity—a labored, performing, legalistic, counterfeit obedience. Change is a fruit, not a goal. (Eph. 5:9; Jn. 14:15; 2 Jn. 1:6) Right behavior springing from love-ly, right thinking yields a joyful, natural, desired obedience to the God who makes us whole persons, both significant and secure.

Even if right behavior accomplishes the goal, if the goal is not biblical, has Christian maturity been advanced? Jesus compassionately informs us: “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.” And, “Unless *the Lord* builds the house, they labor in vain who build it...” (Ps. 127:1-2)

Those are also tough passages when we’ve still got a self-reliant, independent, orphan, ‘old self’ perspective—when we haven’t come to know that we know, that we know in our heart of hearts our true identity, including *what God wants to be for us* (e.g., our provider). Jesus Himself summarizes the dynamics of our financial issues, and our necessity of learning to relationally cling to, trust in, and rely on what the Holy Spirit promises. We’re gaining some further confirmation that God’s kingdom operates by a whole different set of ‘laws’ than the sin-cursed world system around us, especially regarding provision & finances.

And hopefully we’re gaining some real understanding of how agreement with ‘the flesh,’ in time, causes emotional, relational, and financial issues. The Bible has much (more) to say about the dynamics of finances, as well as Who compassionately wants to train and empower each of us to receive “the blessing of the LORD, it makes rich, and He adds no sorrow [painful, laborious toil] with it.” (Prov. 10:22; Php.

4:19; 3 Jn. 2 KJV) ...becoming more and more like His Son, “made more and more in His image.” (Jn. 1:12; Rom. 8:28-29; Gen. 1:26)

“‘The flesh’ was against the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal.5:17-26).” Be reminded that ‘the flesh’ continually offers attractive, tempting, counterfeits to meet our true identity need. Our agreement with ‘the flesh’ sooner or later produces the self-reliant, orphan mindset. In due course, that mindset generates its vague sense of emptiness, frustration, shame/guilt, resentment, fear of failure, despair, and/or related negativity (Points 3, 7, 8, both Tracks, above). And the orphan, the ‘old self’ negativity is most often the root cause of financial headaches, debt, poverty, despair, compulsion, obsession, and greed.

This is part of what the apostle Paul describes is “the law of sin” at Rom. 7:15-23. Sin will not change God’s love for us, but it will separate us from Him (Jas. 1:14-15).

“The enemy looks for people to yield their identity to their own circumstances.” —Graham Cooke; see also Matt. 4:3

Jesus promises His followers, “I will not leave you as an orphan [self-reliant].” The untaught truth is, without realizing in our heart of hearts how we are known in heaven (e.g., a needy child of God) and what God wants to be for us (e.g., our every, abundant, provider), we fall prey to what alluring counterfeit ‘the flesh’ offers instead. And these times are actually cause for us to depend more and more on our gracious, loving, wealthiest Father God, in exchange for the self-idolatry ‘the flesh’ has promoted.

Consider that you walk in favor, that the nature of God is *for you* not against you and that your true identity is already nestled in the heart of God through the Lord Jesus Christ. “God changes not (Malakai 3:6).” And “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8)!”

We will gain practical understanding of God’s personalized prescription through “the law of liberty” (Rom. 14:1-13; Jas. 2:12) and “the royal law of love” (Rom. 14:14-23; Jas. 2:8) in another section.

The Deliverance from 'the Flesh'

As we are now aware (pages 30-35), there are many stunning aspects of the atonement – what took place when Jesus died on the cross! Adopted from Derek Prince's superb book, *Bought with Blood*: There are five different deliverances listed in Galatians that God offers us through the application of the cross within us:

1. Deliverance from this present evil age (Galatians 1:4)
2. Deliverance from the law (Gal. 2:19)
3. Deliverance from self (Gal. 2:20)
4. Deliverance from 'the flesh' (Gal. 5:24)
5. Deliverance from the world (Gal. 6:14)

Wonder-filled! Now let's look at the fourth deliverance, found in Galatians 5:24:

"Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of 'the flesh' to His cross and crucified them there."

Confirm for a moment what deliverance from 'the flesh' means. It does not mean we are delivered out of our physical bodies. 'The flesh' can be interpreted, as the way the old nature, the old self (the rebellious inclination that each one of us has inherited by descent from Adam), expresses itself in and through us. 'The flesh' and the old self (and the orphan spirit) are closely tied together. (Reference also the last 57-pages!) Please also see Galatians 2:20.

The original Greek word in Galatians 5:24 interpreted, "crucified" means "denied." We as Christians are empowered to "just say 'No!'" to the thoughts and therefore, their accompanying emotions, that are offered-up by 'the flesh.'

God wants us to have a wide variety of emotions. He does not want us to be *led* by our emotions; God wants us to be led by His Spirit: "For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons and daughters of God." (Rom. 8:14)

Since Galatians 5:24 says that "those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of 'the flesh' to His cross and crucified them there," we have a distinguishing mark of those who

belong to Christ. In 1 Corinthians 15:23, speaking of the order in which the dead are to be resurrected, Paul uses the same phrase:

“But there is an order...Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all *who belong to Christ* will be raised when He comes back.

Christ is coming back, and He will take only those who belong to Him.

Returning to Galatians 5:24, we discover the kind of persons for whom Jesus is coming: Those who “have nailed the passions and desires of ‘the flesh’ to His cross and crucified [denied] them there.”

Belonging to Christ, then, is not a denominational matter. Jesus is coming back not specifically for Protestants or Catholics or Baptists or Pentecostals, but for people who voluntarily yielded to a particular condition: They have denied ‘the flesh’ with its passions and desires.

Works of ‘the Flesh’

Earlier in Galatians 5 the Bible gives us a list of works of ‘the flesh’—ways the fleshly nature expresses itself in our lives. Works of the flesh “are evident.” All too evident, we all could say. Not always evident to the one who practices them, but evident to everybody else. “These works are (verses 19-21):

“adultery, fornication, uncleanness [original Greek word: *akatharsia*, whatever is opposite of purity; including sodomy, homosexuality, lesbianism, pederasty, bestiality, and all other forms of sexual perversion],

“lasciviousness [original Greek word: *aselgeia*: the promoting or partaking of that which tends to produce lewd emotions, anything tending to foster sex sin and lust],

“idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries *and the like [not an exhaustive list]*; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that *those who [continue to] do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.*”

You can search in vain for anything good in this list (as well as in the prior 57-pages of real-life accounts). Nothing good ever comes out of ‘the flesh.’ It is incapable of producing good. It is clear that you cannot live according to ‘the flesh’ and inherit the Kingdom of God. They are mutually exclusive.

The key word that describes the old self: corrupt. Anything ‘the flesh’ produces is corrupt. It cannot produce anything good.

Listed in Galatians 5:19-21, above, are four main categories of works of ‘the flesh:’ sexual impurity, the occult, division, and self-serving. Those who practice or repeatedly do these things are excluded from the Kingdom of God.

Sexual Impurity

Those who practice sexual impurity “will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Consider reviewing the original Greek words describing ‘sexual impurity’ at Galatians 5:19 listed just above.

Once ‘the flesh’ comes into operation, the demonic moves in and ensnares us. “For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood [ourselves; peoples]; we wrestle against...unseen evil spirit forces in the heavenly realms. (Eph. 6:12)” 2 Corinthians 2:11b indicates our “not being ignorant of Satan’s schemes.” And Hebrews 5:13-14 explains, *For someone who lives on ‘milk’ is still an infant and unskilled in righteousness. Spiritual ‘solid food’ is for those who are mature, who through application and practice have the skill to recognize the difference between good and evil.* See also Rom. 7:20-23; James 4:7; Mark 16:17.

Counterfeiting—The Occult

The second category of works of ‘the flesh’ is the occult: sorcery. An alternative translation for sorcery is witchcraft. Initially witchcraft, though a satanic activity, is a work of ‘the flesh.’ Its objective is to manipulate and control. Once ‘the flesh’ comes into operation, however, the satanic moves in and entraps us.

Recall that the first desire of Adam and Eve that led them into trouble was *to know*. That is a desire of 'the flesh.' Uncounted millions are captivated by the occult because they want to find out things God has not permitted them to know—the knowledge of the evil of “the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” Going to a fortuneteller, for example, is motivated by the fleshly desire to know—a work of 'the flesh.' The same applies to consulting the horoscope.

Gene B. Moody writes: “Occult means unseen, so all the occult practices are unseen traps to involve humans in Satan’s evil world, to make the human think that s/he, the human, has it all.”

Sometimes people are inclined to plead ignorance as an excuse, saying, “I didn't know there was anything wrong with that.” But ignorance is no excuse. In 1 Timothy 1: 13-15 Paul acknowledges that he was the chief of sinners for things he did “ignorantly in unbelief.”

The original Greek word translated sorcery or witchcraft in Galatians 5:20 is *pharmakeia*, the word from which we get *pharmaceutical*, or human *remedy*. It may be important to note that the remedies of which the Bible warns us includes all-natural remedies, as pharmaceutical chemical remedies were not invented until nineteen centuries later.

The cult of remedies is sorcery. Those who practice or repeatedly do these things are excluded from the Kingdom of God, unless we simply, earnestly turn back to God’s ways in attitude and deed, renounce, and confess it as such. www.gotchoices.net/derekprince

WARNING: Do Not Consider Stopping Any Medication Without the Help of Your Health Care Practitioner. We will gain practical understanding of God’s personalized prescription for our issues & problems in a future section.

For additional understanding of Satan’s counterfeit program, consider visiting www.gotchoices.net/occult

“Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness...” (James 1:17) Understand deliverance, redemption from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of Light here: www.gotchoices.net/yield

Self-idolatry and Division

These other two categories of works of 'the flesh' (self-idolatry, and division) have been pragmatically and systematically exposed in pages 39–97, page 99, above, and Galatians 5:20-21 as well. And it is important to understand that, 1.) “Those who regard lying vanities [self-idolatry] forsake their own mercy... (Jonah 2:8 KJV)” 2.) “Just as I also told you in time past, that those who [continue to] do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Gal. 5:21)” And 3.) *Once ‘the flesh’ comes into operation, the demonic moves in and that’s who influences us in these areas, and any area, of our lives.* Hebrews 4:12-13 explains, “For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than the sharpest two-edged sword, cutting between soul and spirit, between joint and marrow. It exposes our innermost thoughts and desires. *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God. Everything is naked and exposed before His eyes,* and He is the one to whom we are accountable.” This passage is profound because it unmasks our denial, the deception, and counterfeits of *our unseen adversary’s kingdom*, and shows us the power of the living Word of God in our lives so we can overcome our unseen adversary.

Ephesians 4:7-24 states: “...Unto every one of you is given [empowering] grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. ...Put off concerning the former conduct of the ‘old self’ which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [your ego]; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind [meaning the whole course of life now flows in a different direction]; ...*Be renewed in the attitude of your mind* [by renouncing its vanity, its darkness and blindness and learning of Christ], and embrace the ‘new self,’ who after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.” The ‘old self’—the ego; self-reliant orphan—is the spirit and nature of the devil. (Eph. 2:2-3) And the ‘new self’ is the Spirit and nature of God in renewed persons. The new self must be embraced and it manifests righteousness-in-love and true holiness. (Eph. 4:23-24; Rom. 8:9,14-16; 2 Cor. 5:17-18; 2 Pet. 1:4)

The Circumcision of Christ As You Have Never Been Taught —Disarming the Unseen Opposition

Believe it or not, we've got to begin this vitally important lesson with a brief look at Genesis 17:10. This is when God states the following to the father of our faith—Abraham—enunciating a condition that his covenant-heirs must meet: "This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you *must be circumcised*."

Genesis 12:3; 17:6-10 states: "I [God] will make you [Abraham] extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! *I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you.* And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession *forever, and I will be their God.* I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you. Then God said to Abraham, 'Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. *You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.* This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: *Each male among you must be circumcised.*'"

Abraham's natural generations must continue forever, else there could not be an everlasting covenant with them.

What circumcision represented in the Old Testament, *water baptism* has become in the New Testament. When the mark of circumcision is upon you in both the Old and New Testaments, it is forever on you:

Colossians 2:11-15 graciously explains to you and me: "When you came to Christ, you were 'circumcised,' but not by a physical procedure. ***Christ performed a spiritual circumcision—the cutting away of your old self.*** For you were buried with Christ ***when you were baptized.*** And with Him you were raised to new life because you trusted the mighty power of God, who raised Christ from the dead. You were dead because of your sins and because your old self was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ, for He

forgave all our sins. He canceled the record of the charges against us and took it away by nailing it to the cross. ***In this way, He disarmed the [unseen] spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross!***

Galatians 3:26-29 graciously confirms this for both sons and daughters, “For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And ***all who have been united with Christ in baptism have put on Christ***, like putting on new clothes. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. And now that you belong to Christ, you are the true children of Abraham. You are his heirs, and God’s promise to Abraham belongs to you!”

Romans 6 confirms this good news as well: “Have you forgotten that when we were ***joined with Christ Jesus in baptism***, we joined him in His death? For we died and were *buried with Christ by baptism*. And just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glorious power of the Father, *now we also may live new lives*. ...So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God...” (Rom. 6:4-14)

First Peter 3:20-21 graciously validates, “***Noah’s terrible flood water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience***. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

Recorded at Matthew 3:15: “Then Jesus came from Galilee to John [the Baptist] at the Jordan to be water *baptized* by him. And John tried to prevent Him [Jesus], saying, “I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?” But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘***Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness***.’ Then he allowed Him.” Notice Jesus did not state it was only for Him, it is for *us*.

And “*Anyone who believes [trusts in, relies on, clings to] and is baptized will be saved*. But anyone who refuses to believe [trust in, rely on, cling to] will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

Quoting Wayne C. Anderson: “For the early church baptism was a line of distinction. Open the book of Acts and every time the Spirit

fell and people believed, water baptism came next. Acts 2, 10, and 19 the apostles call for the new believers to be baptized; circumcised.” It is perhaps one of the first of many *acts of faith*. For James 2:14-26 graciously informs us, “Unless faith produces works, it is dead.”

“Baptism has become of little importance to so very many who are to be Abraham’s covenant-heirs (circumcised, baptized followers of Jesus) and fallen far from the truth of God’s Kingdom. When the mark of the flesh in circumcision was upon you in the Old Testament, it was forever on you. And as it is written (above), we are no longer circumcised by the hand of a human, in the flesh, but rather the hand of God circumcises our heart through water baptism, male or female. When the mark of the heart in circumcision is upon you in the New Testament, it is forever on you. You are under new ownership—Jesus the Christ.” He voluntarily paid the price in full!

And “*In this way, He disarmed the [unseen] spiritual rulers and authorities. He shamed them publicly by His victory over them on the cross!*”

Submersion

If you have not been water baptized, if you were sprinkled, or if you were baptized before you were conscious of what sin really is (a result of continuing to choose something else besides God to fill a void in your heart) then be urged to be water baptized by submersion at your earliest convenience.

The New Testament original Greek word *Baptizo* is derived from *bapto*: to overwhelm; make wholly wet; immerse; submerge; sink; plunge; to dip under; and to baptize. It appears 80 times in the New Testament. The original Greek word *Baptisma*; immersion, submersion is used 22 times and always translated “baptism.”

If you were circumcised—baptized by submersion—after you were conscious of what sin really is, please do not experience this as being required to be re-water-baptized.

God is Willing and Able to Reverse and Prevent All Our Issues

Life can be hard. Over the years, recurring enemy assaults lead us to erect and reinforce walls around our hearts to insulate us in hopes of protecting ourselves from future hurt. This is not good for both you, and your relationship with God. It always leads to independence from God as Father and from those around you because you think no one is there to protect your heart but you. You become calloused to God's work in you and hardened to those close by. We become posers, living for other's perception and acceptance. We start "performing" for others.

God's Holy Spirit wants to train you, relationally, in exchanging your own carnal security from what you think you can do for the security of who He is for you! As you seek God and yield those places that have become places of hurt, God promises to mend your heart (Ps. 147:3). He has already begun this process. Our progressive conformity to Jesus eliminates our hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches, and financial headaches. All you must do is follow God's personalized prescription in a future section—allow Him to demonstrate His continual goodness, His constant trustworthiness, and invite Him into the places where the wounds need His loving touch. I AM the Great Heart Surgeon.

Jesus promised, "I will not leave you as an orphan [independent]"

Ephesians 3:20 declares: "God can do anything—superabundantly, far over and above all that we dare ask or think, infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams!" Not only is God *able*; not only is God *willing*; God is *yearning* to do far more than you could ever imagine or request beyond your dreams!

"The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and great in mercy. The Lord is good to all, and *His tender mercies are over all His works*" (Psalm 145:8-9).

"...I know the plans I have for you," says the LORD. They are *plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope*" (Jeremiah 29:11).

"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them. Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your God." (Ezekiel 36:26-28)

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all His benefits; *who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your issues*" (Ps. 103:2-3 NKJV).

"...Jesus saw a great multitude, and He was *moved with compassion* for them, *and healed those with issues*" (Matt. 14:14).

"Now a leper came to Jesus, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying to Him, 'If You are willing, You can make me well again.' *Moved with compassion*, Jesus touched him and said, '*I AM willing. Be healed!*' Instantly the leprosy left him and he was *healed*. ...And then people came to Jesus from every direction (Mark 1:40-45).

"...Out of Jericho, a great multitude followed Jesus. And behold, two blind men sitting by the road ... cried out, saying, 'Have mercy on us, O Lord, Son of David!' ... even though the multitude warned them that they should be quiet. ...Jesus stood still and asked them, 'What do you want Me to do for you?' They said, 'Lord, that our eyes may be opened.' *Jesus had compassion* and touched their eyes. And *immediately they could see!* Then they followed Him" (Matt. 20:29-34).

"Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching ... preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and wherever He went, *He healed people of every sort of issue*. When He saw the multitudes, He was *moved with compassion* for them because their problems were so great and they didn't know where to go for help. They were like sheep without a

shepherd. ...And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out and to *heal all kinds of issues*" (Matt. 9:35-10:1).

Jesus' compassion and powers haven't changed, for we read in the days thirty-years after He ascended to the Father "...*All* the people with issues came and were cured ... *every one*" (Acts 5:16; 28:9; the very last chapter of the Book of Acts).

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Heb. 13:8)!" "God changes not (Malakai 3:6)."

Beloved, if Jesus can reverse all manner of emotional, mental and physical maladies, He can certainly reverse all manner of relational and financial issues too. Jesus gave you an entire new way of seeing, thinking and perceiving yourself so that you can live as the new, true you in Him; free of hurts, hang-ups, habits, health problems, relationship heartaches and financial headaches. Our Bible clearly proves that no issue is irreversible! (Rom.12:2; 7:23, 25; 8:6; 2 Cor.10:4-5; Eph. 4:23; Php. 2:5; 4:7-8; Col. 3:2; 2 Tim. 1:7; Jas. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:1; Prov.3:5; 23:7; Isa. 26:3)

"Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all you ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within you!" (Eph. 3:20)

Understanding Through Audio

Please be strongly encouraged to begin listening to the audio portion of this Bible study at your earliest convenience. I believe you will whole-heartedly agree that it is so very enjoyable, encouraging, and important. The author of the audio lessons is Bible teacher, author, and successful businessman, Graham Cooke. If you're not used to listening to audios, consider listening while driving, while you're doing another menial task or chore, or simply listen in-place of a TV show or a social media session. Consider listening in your devotional time. Listen to the two audio lessons entitled, "AUDIO LESSON 1A" and "AUDIO LESSON 1B" at www.gotchoices.net/successful/audios

Summary

“My people have gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge [or have rejected it]...” (Isa. 5:13; Hos 4:6)

At last, the indispensable knowledge of what steals the joy and emotional, mental, physical, relational, and financial health that God paid for in-full with the blood sacrifice of His own Son, Jesus, is unmasked. At last, sound biblical understanding of how our problems develop is now ours.

There are profuse voices telling us that we can live victoriously in one way or another without relying on God. This is the most common deception. God knows we are incapable of doing this—He is crystal clear that aside from Jesus Himself, we can do nothing good. We cannot in any way heal or renew ourselves to become acceptable to God. His reversal of our issues comes through surrendering our lives to Him and trusting Him for the power to change once that surrender happens. He is the one who lovingly empowers us to become more and more like His Son, Jesus. If you want to come to Him, come just as you are, and He will be the One with the strength to become a new creation in Jesus.

The biblical foundation has now been laid for God’s prescription of becoming more and more like Jesus in our heart of hearts. And in His process of our becoming more like Jesus, the bondage of shame, guilt, stress, fear, anxiety, unforgiveness, resentment, retaliation, anger, hate, emptiness, despair, insecurity, insignificance, addictions, hurts, hang-ups, habits, emotional, mental, physical, relational, financial issues, and all the other bondages of sin go back to Jesus who paid for them in-full. Freedom becomes ours!

Since you’ve been born again, God Himself is not dealing with your ‘old self’ because your old self is dead, co-crucified with Jesus. There’s no use in counseling, coaching, or pastoring your old self—it’s dead (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 2:20). Since you’ve been born again, God Himself is only dealing with your righteousness that He gifted you. God loves you one hundred percent, one hundred percent of the time; He loves you as you are one hundred percent, and He loves who you are becoming one hundred percent. “God is love.” That’s good news!

God's Personalized Prescription for You Begins

Your Personal Freedom Prayer Ministry Session

May God richly bless you as you continue in this journey of victorious joyful living!

“Do not let sin control the way you live; do not give in to sinful desires. Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin...” (Rom. 6:12-13; Ps. 19:13)

Jesus states at Mark 16:17: “These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name...” “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but *against...the unseen evil spirit forces in the heavenly realms*. (Ephesians 6:12; see also Rom. 7:15-23; 2 Tim. 1:7; 2:24-26)”

“Flesh and blood” includes ourselves, spouses, in-laws, ex’s, parents, children, organizations, etc.— our struggle is not against peoples but unseen evil spirit forces.

Taking Your False Accuser to Court

“The great dragon—the ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan—was thrown down to the earth with all his angels. Then I heard a loud voice shouting across the heavens, ‘It has come at last—salvation and *power* and the Kingdom of our God, and the *authority* of His Christ. For *the accuser of our brothers and sisters* has been thrown down to earth—the *one who accuses them [our brothers and sisters] before our God day and night*. (Rev. 12:9-10)” Who falsely accuses whom, and how often?

Complete your personal freedom prayer ministry session request here:
www.gotchoices.net/freedom/request

Victorious Living

AS YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN TAUGHT Volume II

Your personal freedom prayer ministry session will catapult you in your journey of joyful victorious living! And you will enjoy the practical application of God’s personalized prescription with Volume II.

End Notes

- ¹ McGee, Robert 2003. *The Search for Significance*, Thomas Nelson.
- ² Section based on *Effective Biblical Counseling*, Crabb, L. 1977, 2nd Edition. Zondervan Publishing, pp 112-123. Crabb was the spiritual director of the American Assoc. of Christian Counselors and co-led the School of Spiritual Direction, Larger Story Ministries
- ³ Section based on *Effective Biblical Counseling*, Crabb, L. 1977, 2nd Edition. Zondervan Publishing, pp 124-134.
- ⁴ Hegstrom, P. 2006. *Broken Children, Grown Up Pain*. Beacon Hill Press. 27-50. www.lifeskillsintl.org
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 A study by the American Medical Association found that stress is a factor in 75 percent of all illnesses and diseases that people suffer from today. The association between stress and disease is a colossal 85 percent, Brian Luke Seaward,
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- ⁵ Hillman, O. *Daily Workplace Inspiration* at www.todaygodisfirst.com
- ⁶ Crabb, L. 2013. *The Marriage Builder*. 2nd Edition. Zondervan Publishing. pp 83-86, 101-102.
- ⁷ Section adopted from *Healing the Hurting*, Baker Book House Company, 1998. Clark, C., Kroeger, Beck, J

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A payment of \$15 covers the cost of materials, printing, binding, getting it to you, and etc. This is until it is formally published.

If for some reason you choose to forgo your personal freedom prayer ministry session and would like to request the printed version of Volume II of this Bible study, please email me at Darrell@gotchoices.net
A payment of \$15 covers the cost of materials, printing, binding, getting it to you, and etc. This is until it is formally published also.

Unmasking What Steals the Joy *and* **Emotional, Mental, Physical, Financial and Relational *Health* and Wellness**

Motivation to find identity is at the core of all our behavior.

We've been deceived by 'the flesh' to dismiss God freely meeting our true identity need. We are compulsively trying to meet the need ourselves.

That sustains a self-reliant (orphan) mindset.

The inner pain from a self-reliant mindset stresses us to counterfeit measures to meet our identity need ourselves. Continued inner pain from a self-reliant mindset sooner or later stresses us to a counterfeit safe place. And the self-reliant (orphan) mindset often defends each counterfeit with aggression.

The orphan (self-reliant) mindset is the real root cause of our chronic issues. The really good news is Jesus promises His followers He "will not leave you as an orphan!" (John 14:18)