

Victorious Living

AS YOU HAVE NEVER BEEN TAUGHT

Unmasking What Steals the Joy

and

Emotional

Mental

Physical

Financial

Relational

health

God Purchased for You

FREE SAMPLE CHAPTER

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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.)

How Problems Develop Part I²

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, the following questions, answers, and progression describing the basics of human functioning is extremely helpful footing.

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* 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. As long as we entertain the hope that more money, prestige, sex, fame, vanity, travel, whatever will provide us with identity, we keep going. 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.

Early in this study we established that Satan counterfeits our identity. He cunningly convinces us Christians that our identity is based on trying to live up to how God wants us to live, and our ability to please others. And that this equation reflects Satan’s primary lie:

Identity = Performance [good works] + Others’ Opinions¹

Then we contrasted Satan’s identity equation with God’s established 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)**

When we come to know that we know, that we know the truth in our heart of hearts [the revelation] 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 passages on pages 16-35 above.)

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 normally 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 motivation and that of the Holy Spirit 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 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 most of us 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 (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 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 broad, guiding idea. 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: verbal abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, fright, sexual abuse, or rejection that was obvious or veiled. This is consistently when our self-reliant (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 self-reliant, 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 leadership in authority. We feel unsure about what is true. ‘The flesh’ deceives us away from accepting the protection and provision leadership in authority bestows. And even though our wounding was not our fault, we *all* believe it must be our full 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 came 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, independent (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 deceptively convincing lie* that determines much of our feelings and behavior.

The Anatomy of Our Assumptions, Attitudes, and Actions ⁴

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 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 all feel fully responsible for the 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 a self-reliant, independent (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 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 apostle Paul’s rebuke to the Galatian Christians (Gal. 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 Love²

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 self-reliant, 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 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 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; 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 what 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 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 a person *thinketh in his heart*, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7 KJV).

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:

“Christ’s love compels us. ...Those who receive His new life will no longer live [behave] for themselves. Instead, they will live [behave] for Christ, who died and was raised for them.”—the one who has already met our true identity need (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

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’ 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. 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.)

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 Bible provides the unique solution. And 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.

We will also learn, in relationship with the Holy Spirit, 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 the *revelation* of our true identity. 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. Then our issues are reversed and we behave right.

You now have a simple progression of human behavior and a few ways in which life-problems develop. In the next section you will have one more very key element in the progression.

End Notes

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 - 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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 - 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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Handbook of 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 inevitably leads 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)