

LIFE RECOVERY

A Christ-Centred Bible-Based Recovery
Programme from Life's Hurts, Habits &
Hang-ups!

Pastor Robert Boysens

LIFE

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COMMITMENT

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LIFE RECOVERY:
A CHRIST-CENTERED/BIBLE-BASED RECOVERY PROGRAM
FROM
LIFE'S HURTS, HABITS, AND HANG-UPS

By

Pastor Robert (Bob) Boyens

Temecula, California

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To My Lovely Wife Lou Boyens,
And My Children,
Terry, Mitzi, Charlie, and David,
Who Have Stuck With Me
Through Thick And Thin
For 48 Years!
I Love You All Very Much!

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PREFACE BY REV. DR. JUSTIN G. PROCK

Pastor Bob's motto was a simple one: "Commitment is when you eliminate all other options!" He would also tell us that, "Information without application is mere conversation." Another good piece of advice was, "Never get too Hungry, Angry, Lonely, or Tired (H.A.L.T.). At the end of every meeting, he would remind us to do a daily inventory to see how our thoughts and actions lined up with God's Word, and he always said to us as we were leaving, "Put a smile on your face, a skip in your step, and a Praise the Lord on your lips." This was a man who had truly been there, done that, only on a magnitude 1,000 times worse than me. I thought I had achieved a gold medal for my devilry in life, but I was wrong. For his devilry, Pastor Bob had suffered three heart attacks and two strokes, and suffered from acute Neuropathy, (a direct result of 31 years of drugs and alcohol), while taking 16 different types of medication to keep him alive. In the Book of Revelation, John refers to this sort of Devilry as Sorcery, which in the Greek is the word *Pharmakeia*, from which we get our English word, Pharmacy, i.e. DRUGS!

In January of 2020, I was able to meet with my mentor and best friend of 15 years, while he lay in a hospital bed at the V.A. in Loma Linda, California. I was able to say "goodbye" to him on that trip face to face because I realized that I would probably never see him again in this world. Unfortunately, I was right. On April 8, 2020, Pastor Bob went to be with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. He was my mentor, best friend, and a great listener! He always told me to remember that to be absent from the body was to be present with our Lord Jesus Christ!

Pastor Bob had been dealing with drugs and alcohol since he was 14 years old when he first got drunk, and after 31 years of abuse, he found himself one afternoon in his home in Poway, California, after a three day binge of Scotch, Marijuana, Amphetamines, and Quaaludes, holding his .44 Magnum and getting ready to commit suicide in his living room, when he heard a preacher on the TV say put your hands on the screen and repeat after me, and he gave the "Sinner's Prayer." Bob instantly dropped his Magnum, put his hands on the TV screen, said the "Sinner's Prayer," and was saved by the Lord Jesus Christ at that very moment! On top of that, he was instantly sober and clear-headed; it was a miracle because they had never watched Christian TV programs!

After that, Bob phoned his wife, "Mama Lou," who told him to call his Pastor, whom he met with for four hours, after which the Pastor put Bob in touch with Gary Craig, the founder of Alcoholics for Christ, and his wife, Betty. After eight months of 24 hours-a-day Bible study and landscaping with Gary and Betty, God raised Bob up as a leader in the program, and eventually Bob went on to start his own program after Gary died in 2011. Since that time, Pastor Bob changed the format from Gary's 12 Step Program to a 3 Step Program and has changed much of the Scripture verses that Gary used. Pastor Bob had been blessed to teach the Life Recovery Program to as many as the Lord God sent his way.

I knew "Pop" for over 15 years, and I was blessed to be one of those that The LORD God sent his way...Thanks Pop! I love you for what you did for me, and I miss you very much!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS BY PASTOR ROBERT “BOB” BOYENS

I would like to personally thank the LORD Jesus Christ for saving my life, and for putting me in touch with Gary and Betty Craig on February 18, 1982. IF it were not for Gary Craig and his 12 Step Program, Alcoholics for Christ, as well Alcoholics Anonymous from which Gary’s program was based upon, back then, I would not be here today, teaching Life Recovery: A Christ-Centered, Bible-Based Recovery Program from Life’s Hurts, Habits and Hang-Ups! I thank God for that day, and for the 30+ years of teaching Recovery to all the people who God has put in my life since then. What a blessing it has been to share our lives together for the glory of God!

I would also like to thank all of the Pastors who have given me the freedom to teach this Life Recovery Program in their churches: Pastor Gary Craig; Pastor Ronald Snider; Pastor Tim Zemanek; Pastor Steve Strickman; Pastor Scott Treadway; Pastor Mike Murphy; and Pastor Steve Slater! Thank you very much for all of your support!

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE PART 1 - ADDICTION

THE SECULAR DEFINITION OF ADDICTION

The world broadly defines “addiction” as the “persistent *compulsive* use of a substance known by the user to be harmful.” This definition should be problematic for Christians. Why? To label addictive behavior as purely “compulsive” is wrong because the Bible teaches that each person is individually responsible. Acts of drunkenness or over-indulgence are often carefully planned prior to the actual usage of the substance. Something that is planned cannot be described as “compulsive,” because a compulsive behavior is defined as “an *irresistible* impulse to perform an irrational act.” We can agree that the act is irrational because it:

1. Does not make sense;
2. Gives only temporary pleasure; and
3. Often results in heartache once the please disappears.

However, *the impulse to perform the act is not “irresistible.” Irrational, yes; irresistible, no.* The use of the word, “*compulsive*,” implies that you cannot the behavior at all. In the early stages of addiction, wrong choices are often made with a planned purpose to escape from the sorrow of life. According to the definition of the world, you are hopelessly out of control in your addiction because you cannot stop yourself. *That is not true for a Christian filled with the Holy Spirit.* Early in the addiction process, you have made a deliberate choice to use a harmful substance, and thus, you are responsible.

This worldly definition of compulsive behavior wrongly allows you to be free from responsibility for your actions, because your addiction is “*irresistible*.” Simply put, you cannot ever resist the temptation to use the addictive substance. The word, “*compulsive*,” implies that even God Himself cannot stop the addict from using. The helpless addict, who as the unfortunate circumstance of being created with this compulsive nature, is without recourse. By this definition, not only is the compulsive, addicted person free from accepting responsibility for his actions, but, in addition, God can be blames for the addictive behavior. Since God created the compulsive addict to live in an uncontrollable manner due to the “irresistible impulses” to act “irrationally,” then God Himself is responsible for the “compulsive” addict’s sinful behavior according to society’s inaccurate definition! This is not a Biblical view of addiction! The word, “compulsive,” wrongly allows the addicted person to:

1. Deny responsibility;
2. Deny God's power to change him/her;
3. Blame his/her parents' genetic make-up;
4. Blame his/her parents for his/her poor upbringing as a child; and
5. Blame God for making him/her in this manner.

These ideas are not true! They cannot be derived from God's Word. In fact, if you believe these worldly ideas, then you are hindering the forgiveness that God can bestow upon you. These lies prevent you from taking full responsibility for your actions and allow you to remain a victim of your addiction and to continue living a self-destructive lifestyle. Secular treatment modalities, and even some "Christian" mixture programs embrace and perpetuate these lies that are contrary to the Word of God. Do you believe some of these lies right now?

The addict, as defined by society's terms, is similar to the ungodly and unrighteous persons the apostle Paul wrote about in Romans 1:18-23 (NLT):

"But God shows His anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness. They know the truth about God because He has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see His invisible qualities—His eternal power and divine nature. So, they have no excuse for not knowing God. Yet, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship Him as God or even give Him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshipping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles."

Do you know the truth about our Sovereign Creator, yet deny and "*suppress the truth*," according to Romans 1:18 above? Are you deceiving yourself into thinking that you are a helpless victim of your own harmful and "*compulsive*" behaviors, and that you are being victimized by parents, spouse, society, or even God Himself?

IS IT REALLY COMPULSIVE BEHAVIOR?

The truth of the matter is that you are responsible and accountable to God for every thought, word, and behavior (deed). Furthermore, behaviors (deeds) the world labels as "compulsive" are rooted in your old sinful thoughts and habit patterns. The "compulsive" label makes it easy for you to shift the blame, and to refuse to take

responsibility for your own actions. Do not be deceived by the worldly label of “compulsive” behavior by wrongly thinking that you are not responsible for your sinful actions and habit patterns. The behavior is habitual sin that is so *automatic* that it appears to be “compulsive,” but the behavior is really *pre-planned in advance* and *rooted in your own thought-life*.

To change your thoughts and behaviors, a distinction must be drawn between the words “compulsive” and “habitual.” They are similar to each other; however, one word conveys a lack of hope, while the other gives hope. “Habitual” is a more accurate word used in the definition of addiction because it gives you hope. At first glance, because of a wrong view of habits, you may think that habits give you no hope for change. For example, if you smoked cigarettes and have tried to quit, you have probably experienced much difficulty in quitting, and not just for physical reasons.

Certainly, there is a physical component to any substance addiction, including nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol. However, thousands of people have *completely* overcome the physical withdrawal symptoms of a substance, only to find themselves enslaved to the very same substance again later in their lives. Detoxification from a substance alone is not enough. Habits are not designed to be “broken” as the world believes. Instead, according to God’s Truth, habits must be replaced. Poor habits must be, and can be, replaced by good habits. It is not sufficient for the cigarette smoker to simply “break the habit” after “detoxing” from the physical dependence of nicotine. You must replace smoking cigarettes with something constructive. In the Bible, this is called “putting off” and “putting on,” and it can be applied to many areas of your life.

Quite simply, physical addiction occurs when you repeatedly satisfy a natural appetite and desire with a temporary pleasure until you become the servant of the temporary object of pleasure, rather than its master. This is called idolatry.

Romans 6:16-19 (NLT) tells the Christian that one is either a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness unto God:

“Don’t you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living. Thank God! Once you were slaves of sin, but now you wholeheartedly obey this teaching we have given you. Now you are free from your slavery to sin, and you have become slaves to righteous living. Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the

illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.”

You are to present your body as a slave that does what is right in God’s eyes, which is the practice of Godly habits in the sanctification process of “putting on.” You are to work at becoming “Godly,” so that your good, righteous habits become second nature to you. Godliness requires self-denial and training. The prize is well worth the training as it profits both in this life, and in the eternal life to come according to 1 Timothy 4:8 (NLT):

“Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”

ADDICTION REDEFINED

If you eliminate the word, “compulsive,” from the worldly definition for “addiction,” and replace it with “habitual,” then you can better use this word, “addiction.” When you make this change, “addiction” is redefined as the “*persistent habitual use of a substance known by the user to be harmful.*” Once this new definition is in place, addiction becomes a word more closely resembling the life devastating sin of drunkenness described in the Bible. This new definition of addiction also brings more hope to the suffering Christian addict. Because ungodly, destructive habits can be replaced by Godly, productive habits, there is hope, and real and lasting change can and will occur in your life.

PRAYER OF HEART CHANGE AND APPLICATION

Dear Heavenly Father,

I want real hope in my life. Help me to understand Your terminology for my addiction. Help me to become willing to embrace Your thoughts and Your Word, knowing that You alone can be trusted. Help my habits to become Godly and not self-serving. Help me to think of others and not just myself. Teach me about Your love and Your power. Help me to trust in You by faith.

Amen!

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE PART 2 - MENTALITY

THE PERISHING MENTALITY: DRINKING

Proverbs 31 is a passage of Scripture familiar to Christians because it is often used to teach the character of a Godly wife. But what many Christians do not realize is that verses 4 and 7 teach some powerful truths about the purpose and power of alcohol and drugs. Let's look at this text and see what dwells in the heart of someone who is addicted in verses 4 and 5 (NLT):

“It is not for kings, O Lemuel, to guzzle wine. Rulers should not crave alcohol. For if they drink, they may forget the law and not give justice to the oppressed.”

These two verses are straight forward warnings to those in leadership positions, such as kings and rulers, to abstain from even taking the first drink of a strong, intoxicating substance. The reason is clearly stated that drinking alcohol makes one “forget” to do what is right. Does the law change? No! What changes? The leader changes, and he becomes someone who is not thinking of others but is primarily concerned with pleasing himself. The leader's judgment becomes cloudy, and he is not concerned with doing what is right in the sight of God as evidenced by the statement that he “*may forget the law and not give justice to the oppressed.*” He ceases to be a loving servant of God and of the people he oversees.

Now, apply this Biblical principle of abstaining from alcohol and drugs to your situation: When you drink alcohol or use drugs, do you make decisions that are righteous or self-righteous? When you drink or use, do you think of those you have been given the responsibility to oversee? For example, the husband who goes to the bar after work on Friday nights has been given the responsibility to love his wife in a sacrificial and giving way. If she is waiting for him at home, wondering where he is, and worried about whether or not he is safe, is he being a responsible, loving husband? No, this husband is being unloving, self-centered, and neglectful of his responsibility to love his wife.

Drinking excessively and drugging are selfish behaviors regardless of how they are explained, rationalized, or justified. People drink together at parties, houses, and bars, but they are not having self-less fellowship. They may be laughing, talking, and dancing, but everyone at that function is primarily consumed with pleasing him or herself. After a few hours of prolonged drinking, people at the party “forget” what is right and “forget” to consider the needs of others.

This passage of Scripture is talking to kings and rulers, but as you can see, it can be applied to any leadership position such as: husbands, fathers, mothers, employers, elders, deacons, pastors, presidents, and you!

THE PERISHING MENTALITY: DESPAIR AND HOPELESSNESS

The Bible teaches that a central heart problem for the substance abuser is that he often has a “*perishing mentality*.” The common worldly label for this mentality is “**stinking thinking**.” Although he may not be physically dying, the addict who continues to be enslaved to his abuse of a substance believes the lie that he is “perishing.” He tells himself such things as the following:

1. My life is a waste.
2. No one loves me.
3. Life has been unfair to me.
4. God has been unfair to me.
5. My family would be better off if I were dead.
6. I would be better off dead.

These are grave and serious lies as they demonstrate the suicidal and despairing thoughts the addict believes in his heart. In reality, he is perishing mentally and spiritually. The addict believes his life is a waste and he has been dealt a “bad hand” in the card game of life. His discontent, and he is pessimistic because he chooses to focus upon the problems that have occurred in his life rather than the blessings. He sees the glass as half-empty, rather than half-full; therefore, out of his pessimism, he is “perishing” in the thoughts of his mind. His mentality is like that of a non-Christian who has no eternal hope and is resting on his deathbed. His bitterness and emotional pain are very real, but they are rooted in this “perishing” mentality that must be put-off and eliminated from his life. He continues to live for himself, but is never completely satisfied, so he despairs.

The substance abuser is suffering in the sheer agony of the circumstances of his life. He wants pain relief from his terminal “cancer of the soul,” and he knows that alcohol and drugs temporarily relieve the emotional pain just they do for a true cancer patient. Even though the emotional pain may go away for a while, the circumstances still remain the same, and will often worsen. Just as the cancer is not cured by the pain medications given to the cancer patient, the serious, spiritual (or heart) problem of the substance abuser is not cured by the drug of his or her choice.

SELF-PITY = PRIDE

Self-pity is at the root of this “perishing” for the substance abuser. Self-pity is the energy force that fuels the engine of this defeatist mentality. Many people do not understand that self-pity is really a manifestation of pride. It is not the typical form that pride takes.

You may think of a prideful person as someone who is bold, loud, confident, arrogant, and cocky. However, self-pity is the prideful idea that “I am not getting what I deserve; I deserve better.”

Pride drives a person full of self-pity because the person is overly focused upon self and has unrealistic expectations of how life *should be* treating him or her. The person full of self-pity thinks that he/she knows better than God what he/she needs. He thinks that God is not giving him/her what he/she deserves so he/she is discontent. He is overly absorbed with himself/herself. Who is truly sovereign in a mindset like this? The sovereignty of God means that no person or thing is bigger and more powerful than God, who is at the top of the list. The Christian substance abuser’s “perishing” mentality fueled by prideful, self-righteous, and self-pitying thoughts often leads to destruction. The addict begins to act, think, and talk as if he/she is God. The addict who thinks like this is his/her own god. This is the definition and very epitome of **Idolatry**.

PRAYER OF HEART CHANGE AND APPLICATION

Dear Heavenly Father,

I have been guilty of having a perishing mentality at times in my life. Help me to take my pain to Your Throne, and not attempt to escape it. I want You to replace that attitude with a “joyful” mentality. I want to have a joyful spirit that rejoices in the fact that I have eternal life and fellowship with you, regardless of my current circumstances. Though this life is full of trials and problems, I want to maintain a joyful attitude because you are not going to leave me or forsake me regardless of my sin. Remind me of Your good promises to me and to my family, Lord, and help me to keep your commandments in my everyday walk.

Amen!

INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE PART 3

LIFE RECOVERY

All of us can benefit from the truths that emerge from LIFE RECOVERY, because all of us are, to some degree, co-dependent. What does that mean? We define co-dependency as being an effort to control interior feelings by manipulating people, things, and events on the outside. Much of the need to do this arises from our own childhoods and/or from the experiences we have had in our own families of origin. Perhaps our most basic needs for love and nurturing were not met in those early family encounters, or over jealous caretakers who did not allow us to mature emotionally, spiritually, and mentally, who may have smothered us. Such dysfunctional families, whether they involved open or veiled abuse, may be the original source of our co-dependent pain. This early co-dependent vacuum becomes the root of our later adult addictions.

Our loss of closeness within our own families may extend to a feeling of alienation from a second important family, i.e. the spiritual family. We may not feel comfortable with God as Father and we may feel a lack of acceptance from those who should be our brothers and sisters in God's family. After all, if we cannot experience healthy, loving relationships within our own families, why should God or people on the outside love and care for us? Therefore, our healing must progress across several dimensions:

1. We have to heal our human relationships, which means healing both the past painful memories from the dysfunctional family of origin, and our contemporary relationships as well.
2. We must choose a recovery family, which is new to us and healthy.
3. We need to rejoin and grow closer to God in a spiritual family.

It is critical that we heal our dependencies, not only for ourselves, but also for the sake of our children. Psychologists believe that co-dependency is a love hunger that can be transmitted from generation to generation. Emotionally dysfunctional families beget co-dependent adult children, who then create their own dysfunctional children.

There are healing solutions to this love hunger. Both THE BIBLE and LIFE RECOVERY speak to the human hunger and neediness that result from co-dependency-hunger that is emotional and spiritual in nature.

HOW WE LEARN

In order for learning to occur, the student must be actively involved in the process. The only learning that endures is self-appropriated. The only learning that results in changes of feeling and doing is that which the student has accomplished himself. To understand this idea better, consider the statements below:

STUDENTS WILL LEARN UP TO 10 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY HEAR.

STUDENTS WILL LEARN UP TO 30 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY SEE.

STUDENTS WILL LEARN UP TO 50 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY HEAR AND SEE.

STUDENTS WILL LEARN UP TO 70 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY HEAR, SEE, AND SAY.

STUDENTS WILL LEARN UP TO 100 PERCENT OF WHAT THEY HEAR, SEE, SAY, AND DO.

Students taking part in a group that requires students to read, share, listen and then do a planned activity, can be expected to learn about 90 percent of the content. So, students must get involved. The student is the center of the learning process, not the teacher.

To better understand this process, we will preview the first Three Steps:

STEP 1: ADMITTING WE ARE POWERLESS...

Admitting powerlessness runs contrary to many of our cultural messages that say, "Be strong! Be the master of your own destiny!" The admission of powerlessness also conflicts with the addictive message, because the addiction itself will tell us, "You have a high tolerance! Use more of me! You can handle it!" Nevertheless, the central paradox of Step 1 is that the admission of complete defeat permits a life-transforming victory through recovery. The admission of powerlessness over an addiction actually becomes the foundation for the strength to eventually overcome the dependency.

STEP 2: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER US...

Step 2 is a logical outgrowth of Step 1 because, if in Step 1, we have admitted our own powerlessness, then the next step is to seek a new source of strength or power to take charge for us and to make us well and whole. For some people, spiritual conversion is dramatic as it was for the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). For most, however, it is very gradual. As one grows and matures emotionally, one also grows spiritually. As we commit ourselves to a lifetime of recovery, our starting point may be our recovery literature. And that literature makes a valuable

contribution toward the opening of spiritual doors. But, if we really want to fill the void, if we really want to break down the barriers hindering our progress, we need to turn to the ultimate source of God's Word and discover what the Scriptures have to tell us. By exploring the Bible, we will learn more about God, we will draw closer to Him, and we will discover more about His will for us.

STEP 3: TURN OUR LIVES OVER TO JESUS CHRIST...

For the recovering person, this means turning over to God's care not only the major, conspicuous addictions like alcoholism, but it also means turning over every aspect of life. Step 3 invites us to get out of the center of our universe and hand that place back to God.

Breaking out of this bondage of self does not mean that we ignore or deny our needs. In fact, quite the opposite is true. If we can discover healthy, God directed ways to meet our emotional and physical needs, then we become less needy, less selfish, less self-preoccupied individuals. This is another recovery paradox. Discovering what our needs are and asking to have those needs met may be one of the most unselfish things we do.

All of us have needs, and all of us have choices as to how those needs are to be met. Addictions, compulsions, and co-dependencies are counterfeit means of trying to meet our most basic physical, emotional, and spiritual hungers. With God's help, we can find genuine ways of satisfying them.

We want to turn ourselves over to God, but how? How do we get out of the driver's seat? The key is willingness, if we crack the door just a little bit, then God will direct us in the process. Revelation 3:20 (NLT) says, "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends."

The **THIRD STEP PRAYER** is an excellent way to formalize our commitment to this new willingness:

GOD, I OFFER MYSELF TO YOU—TO BUILD WITH ME AND DO WITH ME AS YOU WILL. RELIEVE ME OF THE BONDAGE OF SELF, THAT I MAY BETTER DO YOUR WILL. TAKE AWAY MY DIFFICULTIES, THAT VICTORY OVER THEM MAY BEAR WITNESS TO THOSE I WOULD HELP OF YOUR POWER, YOUR LOVE, AND YOUR WAY OF LIFE. MAY I DO YOUR WILL ALWAYS!

AMEN!

INTRODUCTION TO STEP ONE
STEP ONE: ADMITTING I AM POWERLESS OVER:

This step helps me to admit my need for God’s help. I am very powerless over _____, and now I need to trust God.

I would like to take a few minutes to reflect with you on Step One. This Step asks me to honestly admit to who I am and the way I do things. It asks me to own my life, my lifestyle, and my problems. It asks me to face my life as it really is. This step urges me to surrender to God those things, circumstances, and people that I am powerless over.

This Step invites me to slow down, gently shed my masks, and get into my heart. It invites me to come to God, who loves me and who longs to embrace me just as I am. This is not a self-help step or a self-help group.

This group is for people who have had a taste of powerlessness and know that only God can help them. The first step in getting help is admitting that I am powerless and that I need God’s help.

POWERLESS

This word may be resented by some of you. It may make you feel like you are supposed to give up, lie down like a rug and let everybody walk all over you. You may not want any more powerlessness; the word may make you angry. Let’s experience its real meaning. Powerlessness is not weakness, but strength (2 Corinthians 12:10; 13:9). You will feel strong because you have chosen to surrender to God.

We must learn appropriate detachment. “Detachment is letting go, surrendering, and turning things over to God. Detachment for me, is admitting powerlessness and accepting things as they are. Jesus Christ is the ultimate model of self-surrender and powerlessness for me.” We are all powerless over some thing, person, or situation that comes uninvited to our minds and seeks to dominate, control, or be in the center of our lives at any present moment.

The key to overcoming these “addictions” is to identify the areas that you are powerless over (90 percent of the solution to any problem is proper diagnosis) and then admit them to yourself and someone else. It’s one thing to know our problems and addictions. It’s quite another to admit that we have them, and that we are powerless to change them. I still admit, daily, my need for God’s help. Life would

be hopeless without God’s intervention and ultimate control in my life. I need His help, today, more than ever, in little and big things.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

To help you get started, please check which of the following areas seem to be problems, addictions, or challenges for you right now. You may check one, or several, but hopefully not all!

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-Dependency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drugs | <input type="checkbox"/> Denial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pornography | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sex/Affairs/Fantasies | <input type="checkbox"/> Fear |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gambling | <input type="checkbox"/> Being Preoccupied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoking | <input type="checkbox"/> Excited/Excitement |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV/Movies/DVDs | <input type="checkbox"/> Complacency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Being Overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work | <input type="checkbox"/> Anxiety/Worry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Food | <input type="checkbox"/> Fixing Myself |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chocolate/Sweets | <input type="checkbox"/> My “Dream” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Caffeine Drinks | <input type="checkbox"/> My “Helping Others” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Keeping up with “The Jones” | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Material Things | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stability/Security | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Houses/Properties | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Money | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clothes | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jewelry | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Credit Card Debt | |

STINKIN THINKIN¹

Our (1) thoughts stir up our (2) emotions; our emotions then cause our (3) desires; our desires finally produce our (4) actions. Romans 12:1-2 (NIV) states:

“Therefore, I urge you, [your name] in view of God’s mercy, to offer your body as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed [How?] by the renewing of your mind. Then, you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Therefore, again, our efforts to change should not be focused on our wrong actions, but on our wrong thinking. Only be constantly taking “captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,” (II Corinthians 10 :5b - NIV); thereby putting off the debris of the old man and putting on the Mind of Christ (exchanging our mind for His). Only then will we be able to win the battle against the enemy for our soul and be able to walk anew the victorious Christian life.

WE MUST WE STRIVE FOR CHANGE

Without change, our habits will continue to persist. Change must involve more than just saying “NO!” Change isn’t just a matter of willpower, human resolve, or sheer determination. It isn’t turning over a new leaf or making bold promises to quit. Quitting is not change; it is only a halfway response which only provides hallway results. Scriptural change involves a two-fold process. Real change isn’t just stopping sinful habits, but replacing them with godly actions, i.e. changing our thoughts. Paul points out this two-fold process in Colossians 3:8-10 (KJV/NKJV). He exhorts us to “put off” our old practices, and then encourages us to “put on the new man” (Colossians 3:10). This putting “off” is the negative side of change. While this is important; it is in itself, insufficient. We must also apply the positive side of change which involves the putting “on” of Biblical alternatives (changing our thinking). This is the key to successful change. We must begin to restructure our lives according to the Word of God. We must change our thinking!

TALKING TO GOD

Speech is an effective filtering agent. Many things flood our minds, but talking sifts our ideas to separate the chaff from the wheat. Through discussion, we rid ourselves of poisonous feelings and pent-up emotions. After we have aired our thoughts, we

¹ Albert Ellis, one of the fathers of Cognitive Behavior Therapy, came up with the term, “Stinkin Thinkin.”

see things differently. Even the world about us seems to take on a more pleasant atmosphere.

We need to develop a regular program of spiritual development.

1. A daily plan of communication with God.
2. A daily plan of reading God's Word.
3. A plan of regular church attendance.
4. A plan to become involved and participate in a Bible Study.

DOING STEP ONE

“The most difficult part of doing Step One for me is admitting to what leaves me powerless. I don't know why for sure, but it's real hard for me to admit to anything,” one person in the group said. “I was raised to solve my own problems. I was taught to depend on no one except myself. I am a self-reliant person. It's hard for me to trust God or anyone with my problems,” another participant said.

“So what does all this admitting stuff mean to you?” a workshop participant asked me directly. I stated, “From my perspective, admitting to who we are and admitting to our need is essential to having a healthy life.”

To me, **admitting** means several things:

1. **Admitting** means I am willing to be who I am. I stop playing games. I get out of denial and stop pretending that I can do life on my own. I accept my humanness, my struggles, and my pain.
2. **Admitting** means I can be where I am. I don't have to work so hard to be somewhere else. Most of my life has been spent in being where I thought I should be, rather than being where I am. This is a subtle form of denial.
3. **Admitting** is surrendering. I can let go, turning the struggle over to God, and letting the outcome be His. It can be reflected in a prayer like this: God, this is what life is like for me right now. Here is what I am feeling. This is who I really am. I am coming in for a landing here. Thank you for giving me the courage to be who I am.
4. **Admitting** is a form of trusting. The only way I can really make progress in life is to learn to trust myself, others, God, and my circumstances. That means

saying to myself, the way life is for me now, is the way life is supposed to be for me now.

5. **Admitting** is accepting things as they are, not as I would like them to be. Before I can do anything to change things, I need to accept them as they are. When I do not accept reality, I am living in denial. I am looking for a fix before I have dealt with why the problems are there in the first place. This Step allows me to relax and let God do what needs to be done without me and my intervention.
6. **Admitting** means I confess my sins, failure, and need. I sometimes resent my powerlessness. I would like to be in better control of some of the events in my life. This is sin. It is competing with God. Only God can be God, and He is ultimately in control!
7. **Admitting** is rediscovering that Jesus Christ is with me and that He will never leave me, nor forsake me, as He has promised! He is present, whether I like it or not. The sooner I admit to His presence and acknowledge it, the healthier I become.

PREPARATION FOR THE STEPS

All Scripture is from The Life Recovery Bible New Living Translation with page numbers matching the 1998 and 2017 Editions. I, as the group leader/sponsor, would provide Bibles for the group and/or the individuals as needed. Below, all of the Steps are coordinated with both Bible Editions, and they do match up with regard to the page numbers. I believe that page numbers are important for you, so that you can navigate your new Bible easier, and get to know it better as you study God's Word!

Make the Statement: Step One, Step Two, or Step Three

Read the Question: Question #1, #2, #3, or #4

Answer the Question with Scripture.: Use your new Life Recovery Bible

ALWAYS:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP ONE: ADMITTING I AM POWERLESS OVER: _____
**QUESTION #1: WHAT IS THE FIRST STEP TO TAKE TOWARDS
GOD'S CONTROL?**

Page 1445

ROMANS 10:13:

“For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.””

A man must not only believe in his heart, but he must also confess with his lips. Christianity is belief plus confession; it involves witness before men. Not only GOD, but also our fellow men, must know what side we are on. All who call upon the name of the LORD shall be delivered. There is no limitation there; the promise is to EVERYONE! (Please read the Commentary on Romans 10:8-15 at the bottom of page 1444.)

Page 874:

ISAIAH 26:3-4:

“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the LORD always, for the LORD GOD is the eternal Rock.”

The doing of verse 4 will give us the promise of verse 3. (Please read the Commentary on Isaiah 26:3 at the bottom of page 874.)

Page 762

PSALM 118:8:

“It is better to take refuge in the LORD (grab on to) than to trust in people.”

Every day, commuters place their confidence in trains, cars, or buses to get them to their destinations safely and on time. Each day, we must put our confidence in something or someone. If you are willing to trust a plane or a car to get you to your destination, then are you willing to trust GOD to guide you here on earth and to your eternal destination? Do you trust HIM more than any human being? If not, why not?

Page 789

PROVERBS 3:5-6:

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will show you which path to take.”

Bring your decisions to GOD in prayer, use the Bible as your guide, and do what is right. (Please read the Commentary on Proverbs 3:5-6 at the bottom of page 788, as well as the Text above Proverbs 3 on page 789.)

Page 1408

ACTS 16:31:

“They replied, “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household.””

(And let your household also receive it, and all of you will be placed in the sure way to final salvation.) (Please read the Commentary on Acts 16:25-34 at the bottom of page 1407.)

Page 700

PSALM 32:5:

“Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And you forgave Me! All my guilt is gone.”

Confess and be forgiven. Confession is much more than saying that you’re sorry for your sins. It involves a commitment to follow God and a sincere desire to seek GOD’s guidance in your life. (Please read the Commentary on Psalm 32:5-9 at the bottom of page 700.)

Page 1490

2 CORINTHIANS 10:3-5:

“We are human, but we don’t wage war as humans do. We use God’s mighty weapons, not worldly weapons, to knock down the strongholds of human reasoning, and to destroy false arguments. We destroy every proud obstacle that keeps people from knowing God. We capture their rebellious thoughts and teach them to obey Christ.”

1. Be aware that God knows every thought and that nothing is hidden from Him (Psalm 94:11; 139:23-24). We will have to give account to God for our thoughts as well as for our words and deeds (2 Corinthians 5:19; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:35-37; Romans 14:12).

2. Be aware that the mind is a battleground. Some thoughts originate with us, while others come directly from the enemy. To take captive every thought requires warfare against both our sinful nature and satanic forces (Ephesians 6:12; Matthew 4:3-11). Steadfastly resist and reject evil and unwholesome thoughts in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 4:8). Remember, that we as believers overcome our adversary by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of our testimony, and by persistently saying “NO!” to the devil, temptation, and sin (Titus 2:11-12; James 4:7; Revelation 12:11; Matthew 4:3-11).
3. Be resolute in focusing your mind on Christ and heavenly things rather than on earthly things (Philemon 3:19; Colossians 3:2), for the mind-controlled spirit is life and peace (Romans 8:6-7). Fill your mind with God’s Word (Psalm 1:1-3; 19:7-14, 119), and with those things that are noble, excellent and praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8-9). (Read the Commentary on Philippians 4:4-9 on the bottom of page 1526.)
4. Always be careful what your eyes see and your ears hear. Resolutely refuse
 - a. to let your eyes be an instrument for lust (Job 31:1; 1 John 2:16), or
 - b. to set any worthless or evil thing before your eyes, whether in books, magazines, pictures, television programs, or in real life (Psalm 101:3; Isaiah 33:14-15; Romans 13:14).

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP ONE: ADMITTING I AM POWERLESS OVER: _____
**QUESTION #2: WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT BEING UNDER
GOD'S CONTROL?**

Page 1617

1 PETER 5:6-8:

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time He will lift you up in honor. Give all your worries and cares to God, for He cares about you. Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.”

(Please read the Commentaries on 1 Peter 5:7 and 1 Peter 5:8-9 at the bottom of page 1616.)

Page 1611

1 PETER 1:13-16:

“So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the gracious salvation that will come to you when Jesus Christ is revealed to the world. So you must live as God’s obedient children. Don’t slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn’t know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, “You must be holy because I am holy.””

(Read the Commentary on I Peter 1:10-13 at the bottom of page 1610, as well as the Commentary entitled “Hope” on page 1611.)

Page 1541

1 THESSALONIANS 5:6-8:

“So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded. Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.”

(Please read the Commentary on 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 at the bottom of page 1541.)

Page 1570

TITUS 2:11-14:

“For the grace of God has been revealed, bringing salvation to all people. And we are instructed to turn from godless living and sinful pleasures. We should live in this evil world with wisdom, righteousness, and devotion to God, while we look forward with hope to that wonderful day when the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be revealed. He gave His life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us His very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds.”

(Please read the Commentary on Titus 2:11-15 at the bottom of page 1570.)

Page 1236

MATTHEW 24:42-51:

“So you, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. Understand this: If a homeowner knew exactly when a burglar was coming, he would keep watch and not permit his house to be broken into. You also must be ready all the time, for the Son of Man will come when least expected. A faithful, sensible servant is one to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his other household servants and feeding them. If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I tell you the truth, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns. But what if the servant is evil and thinks, ‘My master won’t be back for a while,’ and he begins beating the other servants, partying, and getting drunk? The master will return unannounced and unexpected, and he will cut the servant to pieces and assign him a place with hypocrites. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

(Please read the Commentary on Matthew 24:36-51 on page 1234.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP ONE: ADMITTING I AM POWERLESS OVER: _____
QUESTION #3: HOW DO I CONTINUE TO SEEK GOD'S CONTROL IN MY LIFE?

SELF-CONTROL

The word, "self-control," carries the connotation of being "sober," watchful, and calm, being on guard, and being alert. The Greek word for "sober," *nepho*, had two meanings in New Testament Times: (1) The literal meaning, as given by various Greek lexicons, is "to abstain from wine," "to be free from the influence of all intoxicants," or "to be sober." (2) It also carried the additional meaning of "being free of all intoxicating thoughts."

Page 579

2 CHRONICLES 33:12:

"But while in deep distress, Manasseh sought the LORD his God and sincerely humbled himself before the God of his ancestors."

(Please read the Commentary on 2 Chronicles 33:12-13 at the bottom of the page 579.)

Page 795

PROVERBS 8:5-9:

You simple people, use good judgment. You foolish people, show some understanding. Listen to me! For I have important things to tell you. Everything I say is right, for I speak the truth and detest every kind of deception. My advice is wholesome. There is nothing devious or crooked in it. My words are plain to anyone with understanding, clear to those with knowledge.

(Please read the Commentary at the top of page 791.)

Page 818

PROVERBS 29:23:

“Pride ends in humiliation, while humility brings honor.”

(Please read the Commentary on Proverbs 29:23 at the bottom of page 818.)

Page 910

ISAIAH 55:6-7:

“Seek the LORD while you can find Him. Call on Him now while He is near. Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong.”

(Please read the Commentary on Isaiah 55:6 at the bottom of page 910.)

Page 1148

MICAH 6:8

“No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what He requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.”

(Please read the Commentary on Micah 6:6-8 at the bottom of page 1147.)

Page 1329

LUKE 21:34:

“Watch out! Don’t let your hearts be dulled by carousing and drunkenness, and by the worries of this life. Don’t let that day catch you unaware.”

(Please read the Commentary on Luke 21:34-36 at the bottom of page 1329.)

Page 1517

Ephesians 6:14:

“Stand your ground, putting on the belt of truth and the body armor of God’s righteousness.”

(Please read the Commentary on Ephesians 6:13-20 at the bottom of page 1516.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP ONE: ADMITTING I AM POWERLESS OVER: _____
QUESTION #4: HOW CAN I ABSTAIN FROM: _____

Page 1582

HEBREWS 4:15:

“This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for He faced all of the same testings we do, yet HE DID NOT SIN.”

(Please read the Recovery Themes at the top of page 1578.)

Page 1366

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.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 15:1-8 at the bottom of page 1366.)

Page 1526

PHILIPPIANS 4:13:

“For I can do everything through Christ, who give me strength.”

[Barclay states that, “He (Jesus) infuses His strength into me.” From the root word, *Dynamis, Dunnamoo*, from which we get our word Dynamite.] (Please read the Commentary on Philippians 4:12-13 at the bottom of page 1526.)

Page 744

PSALM 91:1-4:

“Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; He is my God, and I trust Him. For He will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. He will cover you with His feathers. He will shelter you with His wings His faithful promises are your armor and protection.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 91:1-4 at the bottom of page 744.)

Page 778

PSALM 145:2:

“I will praise You every day; yes, I will praise you forever.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 145:1-7 at the bottom of page 778.)

STEP TWO: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER ME

INTRODUCTION TO STEP TWO

Step Two is a logical outgrowth of Step One because, if in Step One, we have admitted our own powerlessness, then the next step is to seek a new source of strength or power, to take charge for us and to make us well and whole. For some people, spiritual conversion is dramatic, as it was for the Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). For most, however, it is very gradual. As one grows and matures emotionally, one also grows spiritually. As we commit ourselves to a lifetime of recovery, our starting point may be our recovery literature. And that literature makes a valuable contribution toward the opening of spiritual doors. But, if we really want to fill the void, if we really want to break down the barriers hindering our progress, then we need to turn to the ultimate source of God's Word and discover what the Scriptures have to tell us. By exploring the Bible, we will learn more about God, we will draw closer to Him, and we will discover more about His will for us.

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP TWO: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER ME
QUESTION #1: HOW CAN I BE DELIVERED FROM: _____?

Page 1344

JOHN 3:15-21:

“So that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent His Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through Him. There is no judgment against anyone who believes in Him. But anyone who does not believe in Him has already been judged for not believing in God’s one and only Son. And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 3:16-18 at the bottom of page 1344.)

Page 1445

ROMANS 10:9-13:

“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved. As the Scriptures tell us, “Anyone who trusts in Him will never be disgraced.” Jew and Gentile are the same in this respect. They have the same Lord, who gives generously to all who call on Him. For “Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved.””

(Please read the Commentary on Romans 10:8-15 at the bottom of page 1444.)

Page 763

PSALM 119:9-11:

“How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word. I have tried hard to find You-don’t let me wander from your commands. I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 119:9-16 at the bottom of page 763.)

Page 717

PSALM 55:22:

“Give your burdens to the LORD, and He will take care of you. He will not permit the godly to slip and fall.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 55:20-22 at the bottom of page 717.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP TWO: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER ME

QUESTION #2: WHEN CAN I BE DELIVERED FROM: _____?

Page 1607

JAMES 5:16:

“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results.”

Page 1629

I JOHN 2:1:

“My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who please our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous.”

Page 1354

JOHN 8:31b-32:

“You are truly my disciples if you remain faithful to my teachings. And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Remember that being a disciple means to be an imitator of JESUS CHRIST! (Please read the Commentary on John 8:31-36 at the bottom of page 1354.)

Page 1365

JOHN 14:6:

“Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.””

(Please read the Commentary on John 14:5-11 at the bottom of page 1364.)

Page 1438

ROMANS 6:1-3:

“Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more of his wonderful grace? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? Or have you forgotten that when we were joined with Christ Jesus in baptism, we joined Him in His death?”

(Please read the Commentary on Romans 6:1-3 at the bottom of page 1438.)

So, then how can we be delivered?

1. When we confess and pray.
2. When we sin not.
3. When we know the truth.
4. When we follow Christ in death and resurrection.

We can never win God’s battles without God’s Book! The greatest weapon we have is prayer! (Please read Romans 6:13; James 4:6-7; 1 Peter 5:8-9 and 1 John 4:4 together below as a prayer.)

“Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, give yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. But He gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Stay alert! Watch out for your great enemy, the devil. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour. Stand firm against him, and be strong in your faith. Remember that your Christian brothers and sisters all over the world are going through the same kind of suffering you are. But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people, because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world.”

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

STEP TWO: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER ME

QUESTION #3: WHEN CAN I BE DELIVERED FROM: _____?

Page 1442

ROMANS 8:33-34:

“Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for His own? No one-for God Himself has given us right standing with Himself. Who then will condemn us? No one-for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.”

(Please read the Commentary on Romans 8:31-39 at the bottom of page 1442.)

Page 695

PSALM 25:7:

“Do not remember the rebellious sins of my youth. Remember me in the light of your unfailing love, for you are merciful, O LORD.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 25:1-7 at the bottom of page 695.)

Page 702

PSALM 34:11:

“Come, My children, and listen to Me, and I will teach you to fear the LORD.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 34:8-14 at the bottom of page 702.)

Page 791

PROVERBS 4:11-12:

“My child, don’t reject the LORD’s discipline, and don’t be upset when He corrects you. For the LORD corrects those He loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights.”

(Please read the Commentary for Proverbs 4:11-19 at the bottom of page 790.)

Page 1562-1563

2 TIMOTHY 2:22:

“Run from anything that stimulates youthful lusts. Instead, pursue righteous living, faithfulness, love, and peace. Enjoy the companionship of those who call on the Lord with pure hearts.”

(Please read the Commentary for 2 Timothy 2:22 at the bottom of page 1562.)

Page 766-767

PSALM 119:101-105:

“I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word. I haven’t turned away from your regulations, for you have taught me well. How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey. Your commandments give me understanding; no wonder I hate every false way of life. Your Word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.”

(Please read the Commentary for Psalm 119:124-128 at the bottom of page 767.)

Page 1564

2 TIMOTHY 3:16:

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.”

(Please read the Commentary for 2 Timothy 3:14-17 at the bottom of page 1564, as well as the Recovery Themes for Numbers Chapter 1 on the top of page 172.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

**STEP TWO: BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST CAN AND WILL DELIVER
ME**

**QUESTION #4: WHEN CAN I BE DELIVERED FROM: _____
WHEN I (BELIEVE), (CONFESS), AND (BECOME HUMBLE)!**

WE MUST BELIEVE:

Page 1402:

ACTS 13:39:

“Everyone who believes in Him is declared right with God-something the law of Moses could never do.”

Comment: Through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins: The promise is that, because of who Jesus is, and what He has done for you and me, forgiveness is offered to us freely, in Jesus. You and I may be justified from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses. **BELIEVE!**

Page 1344

JOHN 3:15-16:

“So that everyone who believes in Him will have eternal life. For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

(Please read the Commentary for John 3:16-18 at the bottom of page 1344, as well as the first paragraph of Step 11’s Commentary entitled “Friends of the Light” on page 1345.) **BELIEVE!**

Page 1352

JOHN 7:38:

“Anyone who believes in Me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from His heart.’”

Comment: We define co-dependency as being an effort to control interior feelings by manipulating people things, and events on the outside. (Please read the Commentary on John 7:37-39 at the bottom of page 1352.) **BELIEVE!**

WE MUST CONFESS:

Page 700

PSALM 32:5:

“Finally, I confessed all my sins to You and stopped trying to hide my guilt. I said to myself, “I will confess my rebellion to the LORD.” And You forgave me! All my guilt is gone.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 32:5-9 at the bottom of page 700, as well as the Commentary entitled, “Honesty,” on page 701.) **CONFESS!**

Page 1552

1 TIMOTHY 2:3-5:

“This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and humanity-the man Christ Jesus.”

(Please read the Commentary on 1 Timothy 2:3-5 at the bottom of page 1552, as well as the Commentary entitled, “Spiritual Exercises,” on page 1553.) **CONFESS!**

Page 850

ISAIAH 1:18-20:

“Come now, let’s settle this,” says the LORD. “Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool. If you will only obey Me, you will have plenty to eat. But if you turn away and refuse to listen, you will be devoured by the sword of your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!”

(Please read the Commentary on Isaiah 1:9-20 at the bottom of page 848.) **CONFESS!**

WE MUST BECOME HUMBLE:

Page 774

PSALM 138:6:

“Though the LORD is great, He cares for the humble, but He keeps His distance from the proud.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 138:6-8 at the bottom of page 774.)

BECOME HUMBLE!

Page 922

ISAIAH 66:2:

“My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the LORD, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my Word.”

(Please read the Commentary on Isaiah 66:2 at the bottom of page 922.)

BECOME HUMBLE!

Page 1307

LUKE 9:48:

“Then He said to them, “Anyone who welcomes a little child like this on My behalf welcomes Me, and anyone who welcomes Me also welcomes My Father who sent Me. Whoever is the least among you is the greatest.””

BECOME HUMBLE!

Page 1316

Luke 14:11:

“For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

BECOME HUMBLE!

Page 1605

JAMES 4:6:

“But He gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.””

(Read the Commentary on James 4:6-10 at the bottom of page 1604.)

BECOME HUMBLE!

Page 1617

1 PETER 5:5:

“So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and at the right time He will lift you up in honor.”

(Please read the Recovery Themes at the top of page 302 and the Recovery Themes at the top of page 1520, as well as the Commentary entitled, “Perseverance,” on page 1521.)

BECOME HUMBLE!

INTRODUCTION TO STEP THREE: FREEDOM

There is one more general blessing of knowing God that I would like to point out. It is found in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Those Galatians had a problem with legalism. Their Christian lives were a grind: "I've got to do this, I've got to do that, I can't go here, I can't say that." They lived in constant fear that they had not done enough to please God, and that led to overwhelming feelings of guilt. The only way to compensate for their guilt was to try harder. They were probably saying, "I must grit my teeth and give it all I've got. But I really don't feel like it. I wish God would get off my back." So, along with the fear and guilt, there was probably resentment against God for the pressure they were feeling. One word sums up that kind of Christian life – **BONDAGE**.

God never intended us to live like that. Knowing Him truly, personally, and intimately delivers us from bondage. Paul wrote to them, "So now that you know God (or should I say, now that God knows you), why do you want to go back again and become slaved once more to the weak and useless spiritual principles of this world?" (Galatians 4:9). They came to know God and their knowledge had delivered them from bondage. But as sad as it was, they had willfully chosen to put themselves back under the very bondage from which they had been delivered. Why? What was their problem?

Trying to please God without growing in our knowledge of Him will put us under bondage every time. We think we have to perform to be accepted. So, we struggle and strive to please Him, never sure we have succeeded, frustrated over the pressure we think He is putting on us, and yet afraid to stop trying. That kind of life is sheer misery.

When we understand His love, His grace, His forgiveness, and His unconditional acceptance of us in Christ, obedience is no longer a struggle or a grind. It is free, natural, and joyful. In fact, it is actually fun. We obey Him, not because we think we must do it in order to gain His approval, but, because we want to. We consider it a delightful privilege. We love the one who has already accepted us, undeserving though we are, and we enjoy pleasing Him. Paul pleads with the Galatians and with us: "So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don't get tied up again in slavery to the law" (Galatians 5:1). The only way we can do that is to get to know Him better.

There is actually no end to the blessings of knowing God. As Peter put it, "By His divine power, God has 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” (2 Peter 1:3). Everything we need to assure us of eternity in God’s presence is found in our knowledge of Him. Everything we need to help us live godly lives here and now is found in our knowledge of HIM. EVERYTHING! It sounds again as though getting to know God could be the most important aspect of our Christian lives. What are we waiting for? Let’s begin to grow in our knowledge of Him. Action to take: Begin think about God at frequent intervals throughout the day. In each new situation, as yourself, “What difference would it make if I knew God’s perspective on this?”

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

**STEP THREE: TURN MY LIFE OVER TO JESUS CHRIST
QUESTION #1: HOW DO I TURN MY LIFE OVER TO JESUS CHRIST?**

Page 1605

JAMES 4:7-10:

“So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be tears for what you have done. Let there be sorrow and deep grief. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up in honor.”

(Please read the Commentary on James 4:6-10 on page 1604.)

In the King James Version, the terms used are “submit” and “subject,” which are military terms, which mean to rank under or to subject one’s self to; to be in subjection to; to submit oneself under the control of; owing allegiance to; to yield to the power or control of another. “Resist” is another military term which means to stand firm against; to rage in battle against.

Page 746

PSALM 95: 6-7:

“Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the LORD our maker, for He is our God. We are the people He watches over, the flock under His care. If only you would listen to His voice today!”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 95:1-7 at the bottom of page 746.)

Page 1629

1 JOHN 1:9:

“But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.”

(Please read the Commentary entitled, “Recurrent Sins,” on page 1629.)

Page 1510

EPHESIANS 1:4-8:

“Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. God decided in advance to adopt us into His own family by bringing us to Himself through Jesus Christ. This is what He wanted to do, and it gave Him great pleasure. So we praise God for the glorious grace He has poured out on us who belong to His dear Son. He is so rich in kindness and grace that He purchased our freedom with the blood of His Son and forgave our sins. He has showered His kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.”

(Please read the Commentary on Ephesians 1:3-6 at the bottom of page 1510.)

Page 1450

Romans 14:11:

“For the Scriptures say, ‘As surely as I live,’ says the LORD, ‘every knee will bend to Me, and every tongue will confess and give praise to God.’”

(Please read the Commentary on Romans 14:10-12 at the bottom of page 1450.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

**STEP THREE: TURN MY LIFE OVER TO JESUS CHRIST
QUESTION #2: WHAT DO I DO NEXT TO KEEP A GOD-CONTROLLED
LIFE?**

Page 232

DEUTERONOMY 8:3:

“Yes, He humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors. He did it to teach you that people do not live by bread alone; rather, we live by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.”

(Please read the Commentary for Deuteronomy 8:2 at the bottom of page 232.)

Page 910

ISAIAH 55:10-11:

“The rain and snow come down from the heavens and stay on the ground to water the earth. They cause the grain to grow, producing seed for the farmer and bread for the hungry. It is the same with My word. I send it out, and it always produces fruit. It will accomplish all I want it to, and it will prosper everywhere I send it.”

(Please read the Commentary entitled, “Redeeming the Past,” on page 909.)

Page 1348

JOHN 5:24:

“I tell you the truth, those who listen to My message and believe in God who sent Me have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life.”

Page 1366

JOHN 15:7:

“But if you remain in Me and My Words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted!”

(Please read the Commentary on John 15:1-8 at the bottom of page 1366.)

Page 1534

COLOSSIANS 3:16:

“Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom He gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts.”

(Please read the Recovery Themes at the top of page 1530.) It is interesting to see, that from the beginning, the Church was a singing Church. It inherited that from the Hebrews, for they would often spend the whole night in hymns and songs.

Page 953

JEREMIAH 15:16:

“When I discovered your words, I devoured them. They are my joy and my heart’s delight, for I bear your name. O LORD God of Heaven’s Armies.”

(Please read the Commentary entitled, “Hope,” on page 955.)

Page 763

PSALM 119:9-11:

“How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word. I have tried hard to find you – don’t let me wander from Your Commands. I have hidden Your Word in my heart, that I might not sin against You.”

(Please read the Commentary on Psalm 119:9-16 at the bottom of page 763.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

**STEP THREE: TURN MY LIFE OVER TO JESUS CHRIST
QUESTION #3: WHO IS THE WORD?**

Page 1340

JOHN 1:1-5:

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through Him, and nothing was created except through Him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and His life brought light to everyone. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 1:1-13 at the bottom of page 1340.)

Page 1341

JOHN 1:9-14:

“The One who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He came into the very world He created, but the world didn’t recognize Him. He come to His own people, and even they rejected Him. But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, He gave the right to become children of God. They are reborn – not with a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan, but a birth that comes from God. So the Word became human and made His home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 1:14-18 at the bottom of page 1340, as well as the Recovery Themes at the top of page 1340.)

Page 5

GENESIS 1:26:

“Then God said, “Let us make human beings in our image, to be like us. 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.””

(Please read the Recovery Themes at the top of Page 4.)

Page 1531

COLOSSIANS 1:16:

“for through Him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth. He made the things we can see and the things we can’t see – such as thrones, kingdoms, rulers, and authorities in the unseen world. Everything was created through Him and for Him.”

(Please read the Commentary on Colossians 1:15-17 at the bottom of page 1530.)

ALWAYS REMEMBER:

- 1. MAKE THE STATEMENT;**
- 2. READ THE QUESTION; AND**
- 3. ANSWER THE QUESTION WITH SCRIPTURE.**

**STEP THREE: HOW DO I TURN MY LIFE OVER TO JESUS CHRIST?
QUESTION #4: LEARN TO TRUST IN THE LORD!**

Page 1206

MATTHEW 7:7:

“Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you.”

(Please read the Commentary on Matthew 7:7-11 at the bottom of page 1206.)

Page 1230

MATTHEW 21:21-22:

“Then Jesus told them, “I tell you the truth, if you have faith and don’t doubt, you can do things like this and much more. You can even say to this mountain, ‘May you be lifted up and thrown into the sea,’ and it will happen. You can pray for anything, and if you have faith, you will receive it.””

(Please read the Commentary on Matthew 21:18-22 at the bottom of page 1230.)

Page 1365

JOHN 14:9-13:

“Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father! So why are you asking Me to show Him to you? Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I speak are not My own, but My Father who lives in Me does His work through Me. Just believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen Me do. I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in Me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father. You can ask for anything in My name, and I will do it, so that the Son can bring glory to the Father.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 14:5-11 at the bottom of page 1364.)

Page 1366

JOHN 15:4-10:

“Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in Me. Ye, 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. Anyone who does not remain in Me is thrown away like a useless branch and withers. Such branches are gathered into a pile to be burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, you may ask for anything you want, and it will be granted! When you produce much fruit, you are my true disciples. This brings great glory to My Father. I have loved you even as the Father has loved Me. Remain in My love. When you obey My commandments, you remain in My love, just as I obey my Father’s commandments and remain in His love.”

(Please read the Commentary on John 15:1-8 at the bottom of page 1366.)

Page 1605

JAMES 4:2-11:

“You want what you don’t have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous of what others have, but you can’t get it, so you fight and wage war to take it away from them. Yet you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for 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. You adulterers! Don’t you realize that friendship with the world makes you an enemy of God? I say it again: If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God. What do you think the Scriptures mean when they say that the spirit God has placed within us is filled with envy? But He gives us even more grace to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God opposes the proud but favors the humble.” So humble yourselves before God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and God will come close to you. Wash your hands, you sinners; purify your hearts, for your loyalty is divided between God and the world. Let there be sadness instead of laughter, and gloom instead of joy. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up in honor. Don’t speak evil against each other, dear brothers and sisters. If you criticize and judge each other, then you are criticizing and judging God’s law. But your job is to obey the law, not to judge whether it applies to you.

(Please read the Commentaries on James 4:1-4; James 4:6-10; and James 4:11-12 at the bottom of page 1604.)

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

VICKI EATON: *BOXES OF MY MIND:*

Jesus gave me emotions to feel pleasure and pain.
So why do I lock them in BOXES...given no name?
Boxes...buried so deep that I can't find
Those hidden chambers in the depth of my mind.

Not even I know what's in my innermost part,
Or can discover what lies deep in my heart,
I can't look there...for if I should see
There would be things I can't accept...about me.

But Jesus accepts me...and to each box holds the key.
With my permission He will empty them, setting me free.
But I protect "self" and to me...tightly hold.
If I yield to Him...I...I will be out of control.

Then came His question 'Who do you love most, Me or your sin?
If I'm your choice...then you must let me in.'
Then gently He showed me the names...now so clear,
And the boxes, once hidden, began to appear.

The name on the first box was...Pride.
I had kept it hidden so well because of the "junk" inside.
Judging, condemning others...while promoting me.
I just couldn't be like that. How could it be?

The label on the next box was...Fears.
The contents are insecurities, rejections and tears.
But I stuffed and packed that one so well.
That no one by looking at me...could tell.
Boxes, so many boxes, holding memories from long ago.
Hurt feelings I nurtured and wouldn't let go.
Some boxes I saved just to make me feel good,
When the world treated me unjustly, as I knew it would.

But Jesus You knew me before I was formed.
You chose me and loved me and now I'm reborn.

So please empty the boxes, I'm will but don't know what to do.
And Lord, when they are empty, please fill them with you.

I lay my life down before You as I open the Book.
And together we face it and You help me look.
As we walk through the pages of disappointments and pain.
You cleanse me and bathe me, in Your gentle rain.

Now the pain is gone and in its place comes Your Peace.
For You take those things as far away as west is from east.
No longer do I have to feel the guilt and the shame.
All that is left in my boxes are ashes, sweet smelling ashes, in Your Holy flame.

You have given me knowledge and the tools it will take.
They are called choices, "contrary choices," that I must make.
When negative thoughts creep in, now I know I have the choice
Not to follow them with actions or give them a voice.

I choose too, to be transformed by the Light, not bound to sin.
I don't have to fill my boxes with "junk"...ever again.
Now You can fill the empty space Lord, but each day I must ask.
Please fill me with Your Love, equipping me for the task.

Of helping others see their boxes they have hidden away.
Showing them how they may be emptied, Your Perfect Way.
Having Your Mind in place of my own is the Good News!
By submitting to You we are truly free to choose.

C. S. LEWIS: THE TROUBLE WITH X:

You know, in fact, that any attempt to talk things over with 'X' will shipwreck on the old, fatal flaw in 'X's' character. And you see, looking back, how all the plans you have ever made always have been shipwrecked on that fatal flaw – on 'X's' incurable jealousy, or laziness, or touchiness, or muddle-headedness, or bossiness, or ill-temper, or changeableness. Up to a certain age, you have perhaps had the illusion that some external stroke of good fortune – an improvement in health, a rise of salary, the end of the war – would solve your difficulty. But you know better now. The war is over, and you realize that even if the other things happened, 'X' would still be 'X,' and you would still be up against the same old problem. Even if you became a millionaire, your husband would still be a bully, or your wife would still nag or your son would still drink, or you'd still have your mother-in-law to live with you.

It is a great step forward to realize that this is so; to face the fact that even if all external things went right, real happiness would still depend on the character of the people you have to live with, and that you can't alter their characters. And now comes the point. When you have seen this, you have, for the first time, had a glimpse of what it must be like for GOD. For, of course, this is (in one way) just what GOD Himself is up against. He has provided a rich, beautiful world for people to live in. He has given them intelligence to show them how it can be used, and conscience to show them how it ought to be used.

You may say it is different for GOD because He could, if He pleased, alter people's characters, and we can't. But this difference doesn't go quite as deep as may at first think. GOD has made it a rule for Himself that He won't alter people's character by force. He can and will alter them, but only when people let Him. He would rather have a world of free beings, with all its risks, than a world of people who did right like machines because they couldn't do anything else.

I said that when we see how all our plans shipwreck on the characters of the people we have to deal with, we are 'in one way' seeing what it must be like for God. But only in one way. There are two respects in which GOD's view must be very different from ours. In the first place, He sees (like you) how all the people in your home or your job are in various degrees awkward or difficult; but when He looks into that home or factory or office, He sees one more person of the same kind, the one you never do see. I mean, of course, that you also are just that sort of person. You also have a fatal flaw in your character. All the hopes and plans of others have again and

again shipwrecked on your character just as your hopes and plans have shipwrecked on theirs.

It is no good passing this over with some vague, general admission such as ‘Of course, I know I have my faults.’ It is important to realize that there is some really fatal flaw in you: something which gives the others just that same feeling of despair which their flaws give you. And it is almost certainly something you don’t know about, like what the advertisements call ‘halitosis,’ which everyone notices except the person who has it. But why you ask, don’t the others tell me? Believe me, they have tried to tell you over and over again, and you just couldn’t ‘take it.’ Perhaps a good deal of what you call their ‘nagging;’ or ‘bad temper’ or ‘queerness’ are just their attempts to make you see the truth. And even the faults you do know you don’t know fully. You say, ‘I admit I lost my temper last night;’ but the others know that you’re always doing it, that you are a bad-tempered person. You say, I admit I drank too much last Saturday; but everyone else know that you are a habitual drunkard.

That is one way in which GOD’s view must differ from mine. He sees all the characters: I see all except my own. But the second difference is this. He loves the people in spite of their faults. He goes on loving. He does not let go. Don’t say, ‘it’s all very well for Him; He hasn’t got to live with them.’ He has. He is inside them as well as outside them. He is with them far more intimately and closely and incessantly than we can ever be. Every vile thought within their minds (and ours), every moment of spite, envy, arrogance, greed and self-conceit comes right up against His patient and longing love, and grieves His spirit more than it grieves ours.

The more we can imitate God in both these respects, the more progress we shall make. We must love ‘X’ more; and we must learn to see ourselves as a person of exactly the same kind. Some people say it is morbid to be always thinking of one’s own faults. That would be all very well if most of us could stop thinking of our own without soon beginning to think about them. Whenever the thoughts come unnecessarily into one’s mind, why not simply shove them away? And think of one’s own faults instead? For there, with God’s help, one can do something. Of all the awkward people in your house or job there is only one whom you can improve very much. That is the practical end at which to begin. And really, we’d better. The job has to be tackled some day: and every day we put it off will make it harder to begin.

What, after all, is the alternative? You see clearly enough that nothing, not even GOD with all His power, can make ‘X’ really happy as long as ‘X’ remains envious, self-centered, and spiteful. Be sure there is something inside you, which, unless it

is altered, will put it out of GOD's power to prevent your being eternally miserable. While that something remains, there can be no Heaven for you, just as there can be no sweet smells for a man with a cold in the nose, and no music for a man who is deaf. It's not a question of GOD 'sending' us to Hell. In each of us, there is something growing up which will of itself be Hell unless it is nipped in the bud. The matter is serious; let us put ourselves in His hand as once – this very day, this hour.

RICHARD I. STRAUSS: *THE MINDSET*:

We have learned that one part of GOD’S strategy for our spiritual growth is for us to forget the past, but that is easier said than done. More than once I have talked with an earnest seeker who desired to grow, but who with anxiety on his face and anguish in his voice has pleaded, “Please tell me how I can stop thinking about my sinful past.”

There is no easy solution to that problem, but there are some helpful suggestions. For one thing, we can learn to alert ourselves to destructive thoughts. One way would be to devise some sort of startling signal to use on ourselves as soon as we realize that we are reflecting on past sins or other harmful thoughts. Some folks speak right out loud and say, “STOP!” in order to jar themselves back to reality. For them, that is a reminder to turn off those injurious ponderings and put their minds back into gear for more profitable things. Once we alert ourselves to what we are doing, then, by an act of our wills, through the power of the HOLY SPIRIT, we can eliminate those injurious mental meanderings and learn to control our thoughts.

But we all know from experience that we will not keep those damaging thoughts away very long unless, we replace them with wholesome thoughts. Just as air rushes to fill a vacuum, so unwholesome thoughts rush back into an empty mind. What we need is a grid to screen what we let settle down in our minds and become part of our lives. A measuring rod, or testing device, to examine and filter our thoughts. If we could evaluate every thought by such a standard, then discard those that do not measure up, and accept only those that make a profitable contribution to our lives, we would be able to keep our minds free, of what is damaging

IS IT LOVELY?

The word lovely refers to what is attractive, pleasing, winsome, amiable, or agreeable. Even sinful things can be attractive to us, so maybe amiable would be the best word to sum up its meaning. This word represents the pleasantness and graciousness that foster peace and harmony. If we are mulling over matters that increase tension and strife with someone, we are not growing in the Lord or enjoying peace of mind. If we keep thinking about a nasty remark somebody made about us, or a dirty trick he played on us, it will keep us tied in knots. We need to forgive! And every time that disagreeable thought comes back to our minds, we need to ask God to help us forget. Then we should begin thinking about something in that person, which inspires love and harmony.

We ought to go out of our way, to be pleasant and kind. It will do wonders for our mental health, as well as for our relationships with the Lord, and with others. Test that thought! Is it amiable?

IS IT OF GOOD REPUTE?

The phrase good repute comes from a word that means, literally, “to speak well of.” In other words, we are to think of the good things in other people, the things that speak well of them, that put them in a good light. If we want to maintain a healthy, happy, growing mind, we should not even listen to things that put others in a bad light. Our old sin nature relishes such information, because it makes us feel superior, in that we are not like them, as well as knowledgeable, in that we have inside information which others do not have. Knowing uncomplimentary things about them, also gives us the upper hand, and causes us to get puffed up, with self-righteousness and pride. But in the end, it brings nothing but spiritual decline, and mental distress. For one thing, it affects our attitude toward the person in question, which they probably sense, and which in turn, causes tension between us and them. And if we think about it long enough, we eventually tell someone else; and that usually gets back to the persons we gossiped about, complicating our problems even more. Some will protest, “But I thought it was gossip only if it wasn’t true.” No! It is gossip when it puts someone else in a bad light, whether it is true, or false. If we know something derogatory about another believer, God wants us to talk to that person about it, before we breathe a word, to anyone else (Matt. 18:15; Gal 6:1). After that, our only reason for telling others would be to solicit their help, in restoring the erring Christian, or to protect him from something that would be damaging, to his spiritual progress.

What a giant step we would take toward harmonious relations with others, toward spiritual growth, and toward mental stability if we would commit ourselves, to thinking and talking only about things, of good repute!

IS IT EXCELLENT?

Paul adds two more traits to his mind screen. He changes the format here and uses nouns instead of adjectives: “If there is any excellence and if any thing worthy of praise, let your mind dwell - think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). The Greek word translated “excellence” is a difficult word to interpret. It is only used four times in the New Testament, the other three being in Peter’s epistles (1Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3,5). In the early Greek world, this word meant excellence of achievement or manly courage. During the time of the Maccabees, it referred to the steadfastness of the martyrs unto death. Later it came to be applied to God, His splendor, and His

might. The word seems to refer to that which rises above the mundane, transitory, hollow things of this world, to that which is of moral excellence. It involves things that have eternal value. Do you want to have a stable, spiritual vigorous mind? Stop dwelling on second-rate matter, things like material possessions, bank accounts, and status with friends. Much mental distress and spiritual defeat can be directly related to the failure to get the things you want in life. If you fix your attention on eternity's values, then live to glorify Christ, and to know His resurrection power, you shall escape that satanic pitfall. And that is true excellence.

IS IT PRAISEWORTHY?

This could mean, "Does it deserve your praise?" Others say the word praise worthy means, "Does it have the praise of God? Does God look on it with approval?" It does not matter a great deal which view we take, for nothing deserves our praise unless it has God's approval. And that just about sums it all up. Everything else on the list could be included with this one. If we want healthy, happy, spiritually robust minds, we need to ask ourselves this question before letting our minds dwell-think on anything: "Is this something that God would want me to be thinking about? Does it please Him? Would it bring praise from Him?" Some folks are going to object to this. "That's too rigid. I can't live that way." We don't have to. It's our choice to make. But we should know that most mental and emotional disturbances, as well as most debilitating sins, begin by allowing our minds to dwell on things that God would never condone. We can go on suffering spiritual mediocrity and mental distress if we so choose; or we can begin to enjoy spiritual growth and mental stability God's way, by filtering every thought through God's mind screen and allowing only those thoughts that please Him to settle down and remain. We will enjoy healthy, happy and spiritually flourishing minds when we think on things that:

- 1-are true and real
- 2-are worthy of respect
- 3-are conforming to the principles of God's word
- 4-are morally pure
- 5-foster peace and harmony
- 6-speak well of other people
- 7-rise above the mundane; and
- 8-bring praise from God.

Thus, we would enjoy mental health and happiness as well as spiritual growth.

Did you know that GOD has provided us with just such a mind screen? It is revealed

in one penetrating verse of Scripture:

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy think about such things.” (Phil.4:8)

There is one finite verb in this verse, and it is a command. Let your mind dwell-think on these things. In other word' think! Some folks don't like that. They did not know that the Christian life required them to use their brain cells. They would be more comfortable if Paul had said, “FEEL!” But he wanted us to use our heads. And the word he chose, means more than merely to keep something in our minds. DWELL-THINK means to consider, ponder, and reflect; to mull it over and meditate on it. It involves focusing our attention on something, letting our minds linger on it. The verb occurs in the present tense, which emphasizes continuous action. We are to keep on focusing our attention on these things, continuously.

If the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD tells us to fix our attention on certain things, we must be able to do it. GOD made us with volition, and we can choose what we think about. Fleeting thoughts may invade our minds periodically, but GOD has given us the ability to cast them aside-or let them linger. That is our decision to make. If we make the right decision, and then replace the unwholesome thoughts with those that fit into GOD'S eightfold grid, we will be able to protect our minds from the thoughts that keep us spiritually static and stunted. Here then, are eight questions by which we can sift our thoughts.

IS IT TRUE?

The word true, refers not only to what is true in contrast to what is false, but to what is true, in the sense of **being real or genuine**. A Christian should obviously refuse to dwell on things he knows to be false. Dwelling on falsehoods perverts our outlook on life and tangles our lives with complicated problems of our own making. Lies destroy us. They have no place in a healthy Christian mind. Since GOD is true (John 3:33) and His Word is true (John17:17), we should think a great deal about Him, and let the concepts of His Word dominate our minds.

But, there is that further idea of being real or genuine. Too many Christians seek to escape reality. They avoid coming to grips with their limitations, weaknesses, and sins. They seem to think that if they close their eyes to the truth, it will go away; so they devise clever ways to keep from facing the facts. Some escape to the world of make-believe. They spend excessive amounts of time watching television or reading

unwholesome novels. They identify with soap opera heroes and heroines; they fill their minds with fantasy and illusion, and then wonder why they cannot cope with the real problems of real life.

One Christian woman acknowledged to me how much more irritable she acted toward her husband when she watched soap operas regularly. Everything in the story was beautiful. While the characters had their problems, the bills were always paid; the woman never had to cook, do housework, or care for the children; and the problems themselves somehow seemed glamorous and inviting. She found herself envying the people in the stories, resenting her own responsibilities, and taking this resentment out on her husband. She had violated the first principle of GOD'S mind screen: "Is it real?"

This is not to imply that a Christian can never enjoy fiction of any kind. JESUS told fictional stories to illustrate truth. But there was spiritual reality in said. When we fill our minds with the hollow and illusive philosophy of Satan's world system, we are sowing the seeds of future mental distress.

IS IT HONORABLE?

The word honorable refers to what is worthy of honor or inspires respect. It actually comes from a word that relates to worship, and refers to being **dignified, noble, serious, or valuable**. It is the opposite of flippant and frivolous. Paul is not implying that Christians can never have fun. Christians can have more real fun than non-Christians because their fun is not a desperate attempt to compensate for a gnawing emptiness or loneliness. Christians don't become frustrated and depressed when the party is over. Having fun is part of the fullness of life they experience in Christ. But the healthy mind is not always occupied with foolishness and nonsense, with fun and games. It is a mind that has seriousness of purpose and self-respect in conduct. As such, it inspires respect from others. One reason some of us are experiencing mental turmoil is our belief that nobody respects us. Respect can be earned, not by demanding it, but by occupying our minds with things of real significance and value. Things such as knowing and doing the will of God.

That will soon become evident to others around us and it will inspire their respect. What do we think about most of the time? Are these thoughts about things of honest value?

IS IT RIGHT?

The word right means upright, righteous, and conforming to the principles of God's Word. It refers to the right way of looking at things, and is, looking at things from God's perspective. Paul used this same word earlier in his letter to the Philippians. He told them he was confident that God would continue to perform the good work He had begun in them, then he said, "It is right for me to feel this way about all of you?" (Phil 1:7) It was right, in that it was consistent with the character of God, as revealed in the Word. When thoughts came to Paul's mind, he evaluated them from God's viewpoint, according to the standard of His Word. If his thoughts were right, he embraced them; if they were wrong, he rejected them.

Every day Satan seeks to feed his false philosophy into our minds, through the media, through unbelieving friends, relations, teachers, and fellow workers. But God wants us to develop the habit of asking, "Is that right? Is it consistent with God's Word?" We need to identify Satan's lies for what they are, then reject them.

If we use this grid when we watch television, we may decide to quit watching it altogether. There are very few programs in which we cannot identify something contrary to the Scripture. In a few weeks of soap opera watching, someone cataloged the following list of occurrences: wife beatings, child abuse, rape, a favorable view of the occult, beautiful extramarital affairs, and easy divorce's that never seemed to affect the children adversely. And incidentally, these comments about soap operas are not directed solely to women. One survey revealed that half the viewers are men, some retired, some out of work, some on welfare, and others merely on their lunch hour. Why do we keep exposing our minds to Satan's propaganda? It only confuses us, and keeps us from growing in our walk with God.

IS IT PURE?

The word pure has reference to moral purity, the absence of anything that stains, defiles, contaminates, or corrupts, particularly in sexual matters. And God labels all premarital and extramarital sex, as well as homosexuality, impure. I know some professing Christians who have become slaves to unclean thoughts. Their impure thoughts have led to immoral acts, and shame, accompanied by, feelings of worthlessness and despair, which are conducive neither to spiritual growth, nor good mental health. That downward spiral invariably began when they willfully chose to let their minds dwell on impure things: lewd literature, music with suggestive lyrics, movies with immoral themes, and television programs that aroused sexual thoughts. There came a time when they could not seem to help themselves any more. They

grew to hate their immorality; it brought no real satisfaction to their lives, but they could not escape from its clutches.

If you find yourself in a similar predicament, God has grace available for you right now to forgive and to deliver. But you will need to begin screening every thought from this moment on and refusing to dwell on those that are impure. I have talked with parents who are concerned about questionable behavior in the lives of their teenagers.

But they have overlooked the incisive truth of, that we often reap in our children the fruits of our own impurity. When we are careless about what we feed our mind, our children notice it, and it affects their own moral perspective. We may have nobody to blame but ourselves when our teenagers get into moral difficulties. Before we let our eyes gaze on it, our ears listen to it, or our minds think about it, we need to ask ourselves, "Is it pure?" There we have it-God's grid, to filter our thoughts

RICHARD I. STRAUSS: A PEACEFUL MIND:

Troubled minds are the great plague of our time. Nearly one out of every ten Americans seeks professional help for emotional distress. Some doctors estimate that better than 75 percent of their patients are suffering from symptoms that are induced by the effects of stress. North Americans spend over half a billion dollars a year on drugs to relieve their anxieties. Suicide ranks as the third leading cause of death among American teenagers. Anxiety is reaching epidemic proportions.

Did you know that anxiety is a sin? Any disobedience to the clear command of God's Word is sin, and His Word tells us not to worry. I am not calling attention to this for you to have something else to worry about. Please don't start worrying over the fact that you have been worrying lately. But one of the best ways to make progress in your Christian life is to first of all admit where you are spiritually and what you are from God's perspective; then you must absolutely refuse to rationalize sin. Here is the clearest statement in the Bible on the subject of a peaceful mind "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made know to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil.4:6-7.

THE PROHIBITION (FORBIDDING BY THE LAW):

"Be anxious for nothing." This is not just a helpful suggestion but also a firm command. And nothing means just what it says, absolutely nothing. Don't worry about anything. "You've got to be kidding," some people protest. "Nobody can live in this topsy-turvy world without worrying about anything at all. Paul must have had his head in the sand." No! He knew how difficult it was, and he knew how much Christians worry. In fact, he did a bit of worrying himself (2 Cor. 2:12-13). That was why he said, literally, "Stop worrying about anything." If this is the way God wants us to live, then we ought to examine it closely.

The word translated 'be anxious' means, literally, "to draw in different directions" or "to be of a divided mind." It pictures harassing, distressing, distracting thoughts that keep us tense, unsettled, and confused. It is the same word that Jesus used one day in Martha's house. "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things" (Lk. 10:41). She was inwardly disturbed and agitated, hot and bothered. This is the kind of emotion that ties our stomachs in knots, puts deep wrinkles on our brow's raises out blood pressure, and makes us irritable and hard to get along with.

Anxiety preys on our minds and keeps us from functioning normally. Jesus instructs us to never let anything get us into that frame of mind. Worrying does not accomplish one bit of good. It never solves any of our problems.

It never improves our circumstances. But rather than helping the situation, worrying hinders our ability to think constructively and act wisely. Jesus used this same word six times in one brief section of the Sermon on the Mount where he listed some of the things people are prone to worry about.

“Therefore, I say to you, do not be anxious for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; nor for your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?” “Which of you *by* being anxious can add one cubit to his stature? And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow. They do not toil, nor do they spin,” “Therefore do not be anxious, saying, what shall we eat? Or, what shall we drink? Or, with what shall we be clothed?” “Therefore, do not be anxious about tomorrow; for tomorrow shall be anxious for its own things. Sufficient to the day *is* the evil of it.” Matthew 6:25, 27, 28, 31, 34, MKJV.

Most of the things Christ mentioned could be summed up for us in one word: BILLS! Money is one of our favorite things to worry about. “Do you know how much the cost of living is going to rise this year? We’ll never find a place we can afford. We can’t even afford to put groceries on the table. How are we ever going to make it!”? Jesus said not to worry about things like that. Worrying reveals a basic lack of trust in God. It denies that God can take care of our needs, and so it belittles him. In a sense, it is a subtle form of blasphemy because it speaks against God. Jesus said that our heavenly Father knows what we need, and he will see that we get it (Matt. 6:32-33). Do you believe that? You cannot say you believe it, then turn around and worry. That would be totally inconsistent with your profession of faith in God.

Are you beginning to see why worry is a sin? Once again, the reason for establishing this point is not to add to your burden of guilt. It is to challenge you to admit that you’re worrying is sin so that you will confess it to God and experience His gracious forgiveness. You will never begin to get victory in this area until you acknowledge it is a sin and receive the assurance of God’s forgiveness. If you keep on excusing it, then you will just keep on worrying, living in a state of frenzy, feeling more guilt and emotionally distressed, and experiencing more physical symptoms all the time. You may be telling yourself that you have good reason to worry, but that will not eliminate its debilitating effects. The Apostle Paul wrote this for you. Stop worrying about anything!

Now it is one thing to know that worry is wrong, but something entirely different to stop it. How many times have you said, “But I’ve tried to stop worrying and I can’t”? Evidently you have not tried to stop by using god’s way. He has a foolproof plan; it is 100 percent effective. Here is how to stop worrying.

THE PLAN:

“In everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God” (Phil. 4:6). The introductory words tell us How to do it, but what we are supposed to do is actually summed up in the statement: “Let your requests be made known to God.” God’s plan for us to overcome our anxieties is to present our requests to Him. Our requests are our petitions and our needs.

“But doesn’t God already know our needs?” Of course, He does. Yet He asks us to make them known to Him, reveal them to Him. He wants us to come into His presence with an open heart and share the whole problem with Him just as though He didn’t know anything about it. He wants us to express our confidence in Him by sharing that need in detail and by committing it to His care.

Somebody wrote:

It is God’s will that I should cast on Him my care each day;
He also bids me not to cast my confidence away.
But, oh! I am so stupid, that when taken unawares,
I cast away my confidence and carry all my cares.

Prayer Is:

Communion
Conversation
Worship
Devotion
Submissive
Adoration

Supplication Is:

Emphasizing
Our Specific
Requests For
A Specific Need

Thanksgiving Is:

Thanking God For
Who He Is
His Loving Care
Past Blessings

THE PROMISE:

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:7). This is a fantastic promise. “The peace of God” that is, the perfect peace which finds its source in the God of all peace, a sense of inner rest, of contentment, tranquility, confidence, assurance, and happiness, a freedom from all anxious care “shall guard your hearts and minds,” to

guard is a military expression meaning to keep watch, to guard or garrison. This is quite a picture. If we follow God's plan, then His battalion of peace will be stationed all around our minds, standing guard against every anxious thought, every temptation to worry, fret, or fear, against anything that would tend to harass us or distract us. Then we will be able to obey the prohibition. God will see to it. We will not worry about anything. And with our new peace of mind, we will save the money we might have to spend on hospital bills, doctor bill, and drugstore bills. What a pleasant bonus!

Notice that God's peace will guard our hearts and minds. The heart often expresses the essential nature of man, including both his emotional and intellectual capacities. The heart often includes the functions of the mind. But then Paul mentions the mind itself, using a word that relates to thoughts, designs, or purposes, referring to the thinking faculty with which we work through the problems of life. The eternal, almighty, God of the Universe is going to protect our minds from all anxious care if we talk to Him about everything, ask Him to meet every specific need, and thank Him for whatever He does. His provision for a peaceful mind is there, waiting to be used. If we refuse to use it, we are denying the God we claim to know and trust.

Said the Robin to the Sparrow; I should really like to know,
Why these anxious human beings rush about and worry so.
Said the Sparrow to the Robin, Friend, I think that it must be,
That they have no heavenly Father such as cares for you and me.

We need to follow the plan and be a living testimony to those around us. There is one other thing we need to mention. This peace that garrisons our minds is called a peace that surpasses all comprehension, and the word translated "comprehension" is actually the most common word for mind in the New Testament. Paul is calling God's peace quite literally, "a peace that surpasses the mind." A modern way of saying it could be, "It blows my mind." When God's peace is guarding our minds, it is more than the mind itself can conceive; it is a super-natural peace. I have heard Christians in time of deepest trial say to me, "I just can't believe the peace I've had through this problem." That is exactly the way the Christian life was intended to be lived.

If we Christians cannot understand it, the unbeliever will never be able to, figure it out. He may even scoff, "Nobody can be that peaceful with that kind of problem. You need a Psychiatrist!" But in spite of all the unbelievers' unkind accusations and insinuations, our supernatural peace will leave a deep impression on his soul that may eventually attract him to the Person of Jesus Christ, who alone can give him true peace as well.

RICHARD I. STRAUSS: A WILLING MIND:

Has anyone ever told you that you were stubborn? Most of us have a stubborn streak in us, and somebody usually musters up the courage to point it out to us somewhere along the way. But we love to make excuses for our stubbornness, don't we? One of our favorites seems to be blaming it on our ancestors. "I'm German, or I'm Dutch, or some other nationality, that's why I'm so stubborn." So, we go on our merry ways, persistently ignoring other people's opinions, feelings, and needs; tenaciously following our own course of action in spite of reasons, arguments, or persuasions to the contrary; and refusing to give in to others on any issue. We are right, though the whole world be wrong. We may even refuse to give in to God.

Stubbornness is a mental attitude, a mind-set. We are obstinate toward others and resistant to change because we choose to be. Our reasons may be pride, self-centeredness, desire for personal convenience, insecurity, lack of self-esteem, love of sin, or any number of other things. But stubbornness is still an attitude which we choose in our own minds. And it is totally contrary to the mind of God.

There is a distinct emphasis in Scripture on a willing mind, a mind that is open to God's thoughts, ready to do His will, and eager to please Him rather than stubbornly being set on its own way. Let's explore some specific biblical areas in which God wants us to have a willing mind. The first one is found in the book of Nehemiah.

WILLING TO WORK FOR THE LORD:

The Book of Nehemiah is about building. God burdened Nehemiah, the cupbearer of the Persian king, with the tremendous task of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. Those broken-down walls were an open invitation to the enemies of God's people to attack the city. Furthermore, the piles of rubbish and trash from the ruins were keeping their morale at low ebb. City walls were a symbol of solidarity, security, and systematic living.

Without them, life was in danger and disarray. So, Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem in 445 B.C. with a mandate from the Persian king to rebuild those walls. Let him tell his own story.

Then I said to them, "You see the bad situation we are in, that Jerusalem is desolate, and its gates burned by fire. Come, let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem that we may no longer be a reproach."

And I told them how the hand of my God had been favorable to me, and also about

the king's words which he had spoken to me. Then they said, "Let us arise and build." So, they put their hands to the good work. Neh.2:17-18.

It was a good work because it was God's work. Building broken-down walls does not sound exceptionally spiritual. But if God wanted it done, then it was His Work. Even building walls can be a spiritual ministry if God directs it. But the going was tough. All the rubble had to be cleared away by hand. No bulldozers or dump trucks were available to make the work easier. Besides that, jealous pagan neighbors taunted the Jews and threatened to attack them. But they worked faithfully and diligently. There were 42 separate crews. Each worker was assigned to the portion of the wall nearest to his own home. Each was working shoulder to shoulder, praying as he labored, and watching for his enemies day and night. Neh. 4:9.

"So, we built the wall and the whole wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work." Neh. 4:6. Again, the mind is actually the Hebrew word for heart; but as we have seen, the Jews used the heart to describe the center of man's reasoning faculties. These people thought through the issues and became convinced that they ought to do the will of God even though it would demand strenuous physical effort and back-breaking work. They had a mind to work.

Not that all people in Jerusalem wanted to work for "their nobles would not put their shoulders to the work." Neh.3:5. Perhaps they reasoned that those walls weren't necessary. After all, it had been 93 years since the first contingent of exiles had returned to Jerusalem and they had lived without walls all that time. I can hear them complaining: "Look, Nehemiah. We've gotten along just fine without walls for nearly a century. So, what makes it so important now? It's not worth the effort. Forget it. You don't realize how big a job this is going to be. Besides, it's not fair for us nobles to have to do this manual labor." It did not matter what God had said. They stubbornly resisted. The rest of the people just ignored them and kept right on working. They had a mind that was willing to work for the Lord.

People have not changed much in 2,500 years. There are still some with a mind to work and others who balk at every new job that needs to be done. "That's too much like work," they grumble. "Count me out. I'd rather pay somebody to do it." If they have the money to pay somebody, they could give it to missions and come out and help anyway. Often, when something needs to be done for the Lord, people say that their first obligation is to their secular job. That would seem to be an acceptable excuse, especially when they are following biblical principles for handling their finances. But lots of times, people just don't want to be bothered, or don't want

anything to interfere with their own selfish plans. They probably have not yet allowed the Lord to deal with their stubbornness and give them a willing mind. These people need to prayerfully cultivate a mindset that is open and eager to do God's work.

WILLING TO GIVE TO THE LORD:

Another great Old Testament illustration of a willing mind is found in the Book of Exodus. God was talking with Moses on Mt. Sinai. "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring Me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart you shall take My offering." Ex. 25:2. The building of the tabernacle would obviously necessitate a large supply of materials: metals, fabrics, animal skins, spices, and precious stones. There were no lumberyards, hardware stores, fabric centers, or gem shops in the wilderness; so, the only source of supply would be what the people themselves actually owned. But God did not want them to give unless they could do so with a willing mind without coercion and without reluctance. He wanted His people to give with a *joyfully ready mind*.

Look at this illustration again as Moses relates God's instructions to the people: "Take from among you a contribution to the Lord; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the Lord's contribution: gold, silver, and bronze. Ex. 35:5 He emphasized again that the offering had to be given with a willing mind. And that is exactly how the people gave. "And they came, both men and women, as many as were willing-hearted. The children of Israel brought a willing offering unto the Lord, every man and woman, whose heart made them willing to bring for all manner of work, which the Lord had commanded to be made by the hand of Moses." Ex 35:22,29. The results were overwhelming. "And they spoke unto Moses, saying, "The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work, which the Lord commanded to make." Ex 36:5.

The same thing happened when David gathered materials for Solomon to use in building the temple. After David explained what he himself had given he asked, "Who then is willing to consecrate himself this day to the Lord?" 1 Chron.29:5. The people responded enthusiastically. "Then the rulers of the fathers' households, and the princes of the tribes of Israel, and the commanders of thousands and of hundreds, with the overseers over the king's work, offered willingly; and for the service for the house of God they gave. Then the people rejoiced because they had offered so willingly for they made their offering to the Lord with a whole heart, and King David also rejoiced greatly." 1 Chron. 29:6-9.

Years later, when King Hezekiah led his people in a great revival, cleansed the temple, and restored its worship, we can find the same emphasis. The king encouraged the people who had consecrated themselves to the Lord to bring sacrifices and thank offerings to His house. “And the congregation brought in sacrifices and burnt offerings.” 2 Chron.29:31. The words *free heart* are the same ones we have seen before, meaning a “a willing mind.” These Old Testament believers had minds that were willing to give to the Lord.

One thing that causes many of us to stiffen our backs in stubborn resistance is when somebody messes around with our wallets. We balk at that quicker than almost anything, clutching our money selfishly and bucking anybody who tries to tell us what to do with it. That wallet can become an obstacle to a life of total surrender, and the symbol of our subtle rebellion against God and of our reluctance to do His will.

The Corinthians had that problem. They had promised Paul they would give generously for the poverty-stricken believers in Jerusalem, and they did begin to carry out their promise. But when it was time to complete the job, they resisted. They probably said something like, “We can’t give it, Paul. It’s too much of a hardship on us. We just don’t have it.” That is why Paul said, “Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which you have. For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.” 2 Cor.8:11-12. The word translated “readiness” in the first sentence is the same word translated “a willing mind” in the second. Paul wanted more than just money from the Corinthians. He wanted them to have minds that were willing to give as well.

And God wants the same from us today. He does not want our money if we give it grudgingly. He wants to see a joyful and enthusiastic readiness to share our possessions in His work. He does not expect us to give what we do not have. While we may need to restructure our priorities and rethink our true needs so that we have more to give, God is delighted to receive whatever we are able to give if the willingness is there. The key to biblical giving is a willing mind.

RICHARD I. STRAUSS: *MOLDING THE MIND:*

By now we should be convinced, that what we feed into our minds could well be the most crucial aspect of establishing a happy, successful Christian life. Most of us want to feel good about our relationship with the Lord; we want to have warm feelings about His love and care, happy feelings over His personal presence in our lives, confident feelings about His sovereign control over every circumstance of life. But psychologists say that our feelings will be largely affected by our actions. And our actions, in turn, will be determined primarily by the way we think, by our mental perspective.

The Apostle Paul teaches us that our lives will be transformed, not by trying to develop certain kinds of feelings, but by renewing our minds. . . Rom 12:2. If our mental computer is playing the right tape in any given situation, it is far more likely that we will do the right thing. And if we consistently do the right thing, we will begin to enjoy those good feelings we cherish so much. So we are back to the matter of what we program into our minds. The only way we can play the right tape at the right moment is, first of all, to have it in the computer. What we feed into our minds is the key to triumphant and joyful Christian living. One of the basic reasons for failure and defeat in our spiritual lives is that we neglect to program our minds with God's Word and bring our thoughts into conformity with His.

Maybe we neglect programming our minds with God's Word, because we do not know how to do it. It might be profitable, to conclude our study of the mind, by learning how to reprogram our thinking process, so that we can view life from God's perspective, and make the choices that both please the Lord, and bring us genuine satisfaction in living.

TAKE IT IN . . .

It stands to reason that if we want the Word of God to mold our minds, we must first get it into our minds. We must have a daily intake of the Word. It is interesting to note that the authors of Scripture compare the reception of God's Word to eating. The Word itself is likened to food, such as meat, milk, bread, and honey; and appropriating the Word is like eating food. Job 23:12; Jer 15:16. So, we need to have ourselves a feast. But how? There are several ways.

HEARING IT TAUGHT...

We should attend a church where we will get a good meal, where the pastor expounds, or explains, the Scripture and applies it to daily living. It is the responsibility of the shepherd to feed the sheep with God's Word. Ezra and the Levites performed that ministry to God's Old Testament sheep and thereby set a good example. "They read from the Book of the Law of God, making it clear and giving the meaning so the people could understand what was being read."

Neh. 8:8. We grow spiritually under that kind of ministry. So, we must find a shepherd who feeds his sheep in order for us to have a spiritual feast.

READING IT PERSONALLY...

One meal a week is not enough, however. In fact, four meals are not enough. (If we take in Sunday School, the Sunday evening service, and midweek service as well.) We need to do some eating on our own. We need to establish a program of daily Bible reading, set a regular time for it, and then organize our lives around it. If we just try to fit Bible reading in when we have time, we will seldom do it. Bible reading needs to be as important as eating, and we need to do it as regularly as we eat our meals. Unless we approach it with that attitude, we may live our entire lives on good intentions alone.

STUDYING IT...

Just reading will not be enough, however. We must understand the meaning of what we are reading, and that requires study. If there is something we do not understand, we should not skip over it. Rather, we need to study it through; consult an English dictionary, a Bible dictionary, a Bible encyclopedia, a concordance, a Bible doctrine, word studies, and other helps.

And we shouldn't read into the passage what we want it to mean. Rather, we need to find out what God meant when He said it. Some unusual things have been derived from the Bible in the guise of "getting a blessing." The Bible must speak for itself.

MEMORIZING IT...

Hearing, reading and studying are all necessary elements of building the Word into our minds. But none of them will help us recall the Word when we need it as much as this fourth element will. The Word needs to be committed to memory. When

that unexpected bill comes in, or that irritating interruption shatters our schedule, or that devastating news of a terminal illness first strikes our ears, there may be no Bible within reach. We need to have God's truth permanently stored in our minds so that we can call it to remembrance.

Scripture itself encourages us to memorize. "Accept instruction from His mouth and lay up His words in your heart." Job 22:22. "I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You." Ps 119:11. "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly". . .Col 3:16. Let it settle down and be at home in you abundantly. Be comfortable with it. Let it make its valuable contribution to your life. Fix it firmly in your mind, assimilate it into your storehouse of knowledge, make it a permanent addition to your memory bank. To do less, may be like tasting food, and then spitting it out again.

A few of you will protest, "But I can't memorize. I'm too young, or too old, or too busy, or too dumb." That's nonsense! You can remember your street address, zip code, and telephone number, can't you? Do you know why you remember those things? Because of repetition! And the same principle can help you remember God's Word. Write it on a small card. Carry it with you when you go out. Tape it on the bathroom mirror. Learn one phrase at a time; repeat it over and over. Whenever you find a spare minute, repeat it again. The key to memorization is review, review, and more review. Anyone can do it. And if you want your spiritual life to prosper, you will do it too.

CHEW IT UP...

Now that we have fed the necessary spiritual food into our minds, there is a second important step to renewing the mind with God's thoughts. God wants us to meditate on the Scriptures we have memorized. Josh 1:8; Ps 1:2. The Hebrew word meditate (hagah) has the basic idea of muttering. It pictures someone mentally searching, deep in thought, turning something over in his mind, even mumbling to himself about it. Some have likened the meaning of this Hebrew word to an animal chewing the cud. While the Hebrew word does not actually have that meaning, it is a helpful analogy. An English synonym for meditate is, ruminant, and that word if used, to refer to an animal that chews its cud. It is called a ruminant animal. This animal consumes a great amount of food rapidly, stores it in a separate stomach compartment, then lies down in the shade and re-chews the food thoroughly bit by bit before swallowing it, digesting it, and absorbing it into the bloodstream. The ruminating or chewing of the cud prepares the food to become part of the animal's body.

When we meditate on the Word, we chew on it, mutter it to ourselves, muse on it, ponder it, and mull it over in our minds. We also digest the Word, extract spiritual nourishment from it, and absorb it into the bloodstream of our spiritual lives where it becomes part of us. We turn the truth over and over in our minds, then allow it to sift into our memories and consciences where the Holy Spirit of God can use it to guide our choices, empower our actions, and remodel our behavior. When our minds are saturated with God's mind as revealed in the Word, we can think as He thinks and view things as He sees them, and that is crucial to a happy, successful Christian life.

If we were to read books by the same author every day, over a long period of time, or talk to the same person in depth, day after day, eventually we would begin to think like that person. The Bible is God's word. He is speaking to us in its pages. If we let His thoughts occupy our minds, day after day, we will grow in His likeness, and begin to view life from His perspective. That brings inner peace, which leads to increased effectiveness, which results in greater success and happiness. Things go better, when we meditate on God's Word. So, let us see how it is done.

THERE ARE THREE BASIC ELEMENTS TO SPIRITUAL RUMINATING:

1. ANALYZING THE MEANING.

In our study time, we have determined generally what the passage means; but now, we want to examine it more closely, see the nature of its separate parts, and their relationship to each other. We are going to take the verse apart piece by piece, look at the pieces individually, consider their implications, think through their connection to each other, then put the verse back together again. We will want to consider questions like who, what, when, where, why, and how. Suggesting answers to our questions will bring us into a deeper understanding of the meaning.

Memorizing words that have no meaning will be of little value to us. A parakeet can repeat words, but to my knowledge it doesn't have much of a spiritual life. True meditation is not emptying our minds of all conscious thoughts. It is focusing our thoughts on a specific object, so as to understand it more completely.

Suppose, for example, you have recently memorized those great words of our Lord Jesus in John 10:27. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." Now you're lying in bed thinking before you drop off to sleep, or you're walking to the store, or cutting the grass, or ironing the clothes. (All of which are ideal times to meditate on the words you have committed to memory.) And you are thinking about that verse, word by word: "My"- I belong to the Lord Jesus; I am His

“Sheep”- -why does God call me His sheep? What characteristics should I have that resemble sheep? “Hear”- He communicates with His sheep and He wants them to listen. I would probably rather talk than listen, but I am ready to listen to what God has to say to me through His Word. “My voice”- -what does the Shepherd’s voice mean to the sheep? What is the voice of Christ? How does He speak to me today? As you think through questions like these, and answers begin to dawn on your consciousness, you will find yourself thinking more and more as God thinks, and become capable of looking at life from His Perspective. And you can chew on just about any portion from the Bible like that.

2. PONDERING THE APPLICATION.

As you analyze the meaning of the verse, you will also want to be thinking through its various applications to your life. In other words, what does this passage mean to me? What difference should it make in my life? What should I be thinking, what ought I to be saying, and how does God want me to be acting in the light of this verse? Here are some specific areas of application to consider when meditating on God’s Word: an action to take, an example to follow, a matter for prayer, a promise to believe, a sin to confess and forsake, a truth to enjoy, or a warning to heed.

Now go back to your meditation on John 10:27 for a moment. “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them.” “I know them”- -what a fantastic truth! The Lord knows me in a unique, personal, saving relationship, in a special, intimate friendship. He knows all about me, my weaknesses, my failures, and my sins. He knows what a stubborn sheep I am. Yet He loves me, accepts me, and cares for me anyway. What a wonderful Savior! “And they follow Me”- -Are there areas in my life where I am not following my Shepherd closely enough? How about His unselfish concern for others? I really didn’t express much concern for my neighbor who lost a loved one last week. I need to show him Christ’s love, and by grace, I will do it. It might be profitable to get a pencil and paper at an opportune time and write down what God has impressed on you to do and the changes He has asked you to make. Read back over them periodically and check up on your spiritual progress. If you do that consistently, you can be sure there will be growth in your life.

3. RESPONDING WITH WORSHIP.

It is impossible to ponder the great truths of God’s Word without developing deep feelings of love and gratitude to Him. So, express those thoughts in prayer and praise. Let your meditation about Him lead you into direct communion with Him. Thank Him for who He is and what He has done for you. Quote what you have

learned back to Him in praise. From John 10:27, for example, you have learned about Christ's omniscience. He knows you. Lord, You are wonderful, You know me, and You love me anyway. Thank You for the immensity of Your love and for the faithfulness of Your care to one of the least of Your sheep. Then mention those matters for prayer that were brought to your attention through the Word, and enjoy a meaningful and precious time of communion with the Lord

LIVE IT OUT...

Now it is time to translate the truth which the Spirit of God has etched on our minds into concrete action. We have begun to develop new perspectives, new priorities, and new purposes as we have meditated on the Word. Now we must determine to follow through with new confidence and conviction and put that truth into daily practice. The response God wants is not just knowledge, but obedience. And the Bible never suggests that it will be easy to obey. We may not feel like doing what God wants us to do. We may not feel like visiting that neighbor, for example. We would rather stay home and relax. We may not feel like treating our spouse with tenderness and kindness after that brow up between us. We would rather sulk for a while. We may not want to accept a tragedy with thanksgiving. We would rather complain. We may not want to believe that our sovereign, loving Lord is in control of our circumstances and will work them out for good. We would rather feel sorry for ourselves.

That is when we need to go back to the truth we have learned through memorization and meditation and play it over again in our minds. Then we must consciously, willfully choose to act in accord with the Word, depending on the power which the Spirit of God provides. That is how we grow. That is how we attain new heights of victory, joy, and blessing. God promises those exciting benefits as a direct result of meditation on His Word and obeying it. Some of those promises need to be considered.

The first one was given to Joshua shortly after the death of Moses. God had commissioned Joshua to take Moses' place and to lead the chosen people in the conquest of their Promised Land. It was an awesome responsibility! They were greatly outnumbered by powerful enemies. How could Joshua be sure the campaign would succeed? "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be prosperous and successful." Josh 1:8. Success would not come by building bigger and better weapon systems, by staying up all night for strategy sessions, or by moving through the ranks giving inspiring pep talks to his men. It would come by meditating on the Word of God and by doing

what it said. What an incredible promise! To be prosperous meant that Joshua would succeed in what he was called to do. To be successful actually meant that he would act wisely. By meditating on God's Word, Joshua would know the wise thing to do, the thing that would bring him the achievement, accomplishment, and success that God wanted him to have.

The next such promise comes through the inspired Psalmist: "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sits in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and on His Law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers." (Ps 1:1-3) These verses describe a happy person. That is what the Blessed means. The happy person does not take counsel from ungodly men, but rather from God's Word. He delights in it and meditates on it day and night. He mulls it over in his mind and enjoys following its advice.

And look at the results. He is like a tree beside streams of water. There is stability in his life. Nothing shakes him. He draws deeply on the resources which God continually supplies. And he brings forth fruit. The fruit of a tree is produced by nourishment over and above what is required to sustain life and produce growth. It is the product of excess life, the over and above, the added dimension. Fruit is the life of the tree at its best. So, the fruitful Christian has that added dimension in his life. He enjoys life at its best, peace, joy, satisfaction, and abundant living. Furthermore, his leaf does not wither. There is a steadfastness about him. Even when the dry spells come, he keeps right on producing. And everything he puts his hand to, within the will of God, enjoys the success God wants it to have.

A third such promise was made through the Apostle Paul to Timothy. Paul was referring to Timothy's relationship to the Scriptures when he said, "Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear to all." (1Tim 4:15) This particular word translated "meditate" can mean "to think about, meditate on, or ponder." Paul seems to be using it in that latter sense here, consistent with the Old Testament concepts we have just seen. If Timothy would keep on thinking about the doctrines of the Word and their application to his life, his spiritual progress would be obvious to all. People would see the blessing of God in his life.

James promised much the same thing: "But the man who looks intently into the perfect Law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25) The word

meditate does not appear in this verse, but the same process is graphically depicted. To look intently is to stoop down beside and take a long, careful look. And the person James is describing continues to let the truth of God's Word linger in his mind. That is a beautiful explanation of meditation. And it is followed by obedience; he practices what the Word says. We are not surprised to see that the result is blessing, spiritual success and genuine joy.

It almost sounds too good to be true, doesn't it? Yet it is genuinely offered to us by the unchanging God who inspired this infallible Word. These wondrous benefits are available to us if we will feed on God's Word daily, meditate on it regularly so that it molds our minds into His thought patterns, and then obey it faithfully to His glory. Our lives will be transformed as our minds are renewed. What keeps us from enjoying these blessings? Let's make up our minds to feed and meditate on God's word and then obey it.

UNKNOWN AUTHOR: PRIDE:

“These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him:

A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.” Proverbs 6:16-19.

Notice what the Lord lists as the number one thing He hates. **Pride** has a thousand different faces. We call **pride** by many different names.

VANITY: We call it that when we find it in someone else. When we see it in ourselves we call it self-respect. Vanity is seeing ourselves better in any way than someone else.

FALSE MODESTY: In ourselves, we call it pious humility. When someone says he is humble, you know you are looking at the most **prideful** person in six countries.

STUBBORNNESS: A person who refuses to admit he is wrong when he is shown otherwise, or refuses to seek forgiveness when he knows he is wrong. Basically, anyone trying to make a big issue out of trivial things.

SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS: He can always show you how he is right and the other person is wrong. Self-Righteousness comes in when, knowing we are right, we become nasty about it. We look down on the person who has not risen to our high standard of holiness. We regard ourselves as superior.

SELF-JUSTIFICATION: He can't stand to have his motives misunderstood. He always has a reason for every action. If you will just let me explain, I am sure you will see under all this that I am still the wonderful person you know I am.

SENSATIVITY-TOUCHINESS: This is the ease in which our feelings are wounded. Of course, we recognize this promptly in others, but when we see it in ourselves, we call it thoughtfulness or rudeness on the part of others. So many times, we fail to see that it is self-centeredness in ourselves. How can anyone be so thoughtless and cruel to a fine person such as I. Sensitivity is nothing more than selfishness.

DAYDREAMING: This is a mental retreat into a magic kingdom where you are always the king. It is an attempt to bolster our ego by false premise.

All these listed above are forms of **pride** and the problem is that it is difficult for us to see them in our own character. If we suffer from any of these forms of **pride**, everyone else will know it before we do. Why is **pride** God's number one SIN? Because, it is self-accenting self. It breaks the First Commandment (Thou shall have no other gods before Me). It is dishonest to say that I can go it alone – no man can. We all need God!

When we discovery any of these types of **pride** in ourselves, we then try to do something about it and inevitably what we try is some form of suppression. We try to cage the beast. We feel if we can hide the manifestation of **pride**, we can relieve the effect on others. The reason this does not work is when you suppress one form of **pride**, another form of **pride** more subtle takes its place, and is unrecognizable to us. We are part of the problem, and therefore, we cannot be part of the solution. This is why the answer to **pride** is another person who can subdue **pride** and replace it with Himself. This is the Good News about Jesus Christ. He was totally free from **pride**. His life was one of complete self-giving, the exact opposite of **pride**. No other one can deliver us from this SIN. All hope and deliverance begins and ends in Jesus Christ.

The Key then is to completely give ourselves to Jesus Christ, by asking Him to reveal to us any and all forms of **pride**.

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REMEMBER:

**INFORMATION WITHOUT
APPLICATION IS MERE
CONVERSATION!**

**ALWAYS DO A CHECK UP
FROM THE NECK UP!**

**H.A.L.T.
NEVER GET TOO
HUNGRY, ANGRY, LONELY, TIRED**

**DO
A DAILY INVENTORY
TO SEE HOW
YOUR THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS
LINED UP WITH GOD'S WORD!**