

PARADISE FOR THE HELLBOUND

Hebrews 2:15

“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” KJV

I wrote “Paradise for the Hellbound” to show how to regain spirituality and change for the better. In this book I describe ways to achieve the psychological, spiritual, emotional, and even the physical changes needed to live a reasonably happy life. The book details how to put the Bible’s vital instructions into practical applications to receive both enlightenment and fulfillment in our days. Enlightenment fades when fulfillment depletes. The balance of our whole person requires ongoing maintenance.

DEDICATION

TO MY SISTER, BRENDA WHO NEVER HAD A FAIR CHANCE AT SELF-
LOVE YET WAS MANY TIMES MY ONLY TRUE SPIRITUAL
ENCOURAGEMENT. HER GRACE-FILLED FORGIVENESS RINGS
FORTH BEYOND ETERNITY.

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What if under one condition could a man write books of wisdom and still be respected by his peers. And the condition was this, every author must obey all his own words at all times for, if he doesn't he shall be considered by one- and-all a hypocrite undeserving of the pen.

I then say to this, thank God for and behold thy faithful hypocrite. For truly good men do evil. And atrocious men do good if only for display. No man [mankind] is at his best through every passing juncture of the season's change. Please my fellows allow our writer his birthright of human perfection which is in fact, God's calculated plan for an imperfect being.

But for our many wise authors allowing their God-selves to surface, by clawing through the dark, narrow, natural mind. They do then spring forth into light. And we through time stock our libraries with Love-filled words of Wisdom and Grace. We devour the very words by our appetite of Hope.

And then our wise authors fade away from their best sparsely enabling the wisdom they know works. Thank God then for thy faithful hypocrite.

Laura Edgar

“FEAR NOT”

Tears are an expression of feelings that words cannot cradle. Tears are pure heart-spoken truth. Our heart's truth is oftentimes illogical from the intellects perspective. Our mind distorts and misconstrue that which our heart speaks to us because the mind and intellect view the hearts feelings and opinions as weak, fearful, and even ridiculous. The ego abides in our mind and tells us; “Your heart makes no sense it is wrong moreover you should be ashamed that you are fearful!”

Our intricate thought mistakes our heart's words as pitiful and a threat to its own survival so it changes our soul's deepest truths to fit that which (ironically) shame itself dictates. The mind has such a great capacity for reason and yet our sometimes-enlightened psyches fail to understand and accept our own hearts voice.

The whole person being void of the courage it takes to set out toward a quest to know and embrace itself, flounders. Our ego transforms our hearts truths into an egotistical rational of perceptions therefore, how, and when will our heart ever truly be expressed.

But even more importantly when if ever and how will we finally realize we do not have to shut down the vulnerable part of ourselves to be “safe”. It is when we finally embrace the part of us we are taught to fear that we become whole. Men and women walk around split in two by their judgement of their own heart. Many people have no earthly idea that they are deeply wounded and afraid.

It wounds our heart to be continually invalidated, stifled from expression, and torn in two by status quos and perceptions of isolation.

Two thirds of the world walk around wearing an emotional mask hiding who they really are for fear they will be disliked, judged, thought of as weak

or worse. People judge their own insides by other people's outsides and say..."I am different, I am afraid, I am ashamed, why am I so different than the rest of the people in this world?"

With fear of showing who we really are at the helm we humans study and follow ridiculous status quo behaviors. The way we talk, walk and roll must be in line with someone else who we see as "accepted" and "Kool" so we can be Kool. But in doing so we stifle our creative flow. Our accomplishments are quelled by our stifling alter-ego.

In a world where shame is king few people have THE fearlessness TO BE REAL AND DIFFERENT. Yet people scream from the roof tops "I DON'T CARE WHAT ANYBODY THINKS ABOUT ME! As if a non-caring attitude toward their reputation is somehow a success making them superior. And those screaming it the loudest are actually the most terrified. Though they may have no idea they are afraid. They have no idea that it's a good thing to "care" what other's think of us. And to value our reputation is socially healthy. It's the paralyzing fear of what other's may think of us that is unhealthy.

I drove by a little elementary school in a small town in Florida. On a sign out front in bold black letters, lit up with white light it said; "Anxiety workshop every Tuesday 3pm in the auditorium." I thought to myself Wow! Thank God, a school that is actually helping the children with the ever-growing problem of anxiety. I asked my 16-year-old daughter who sat in the car with me "Would you like to go to the workshop?" She snapped "No Mom!" I did not expect her to comply she rebukes pretty much all my suggestions.

Anxiety, nervousness, depression, panic, are all fear based. Our world is living in fear yet very few people want to address it much less admit it. That is understandable. Most of us were taught at an early age that it is a shame to be afraid. Fear represents feebleness, weakness, pansy, scaredy-cat, chicken-shit, and yellow-belly not to mention a few more choice words that I won't mention. With labels like these branded into our innocent adolescent psyche's and no emotional encouragement to counteract fear's

song why would we do anything other than repress our fears? So, we stuff it down into the depths of our bowels where unfortunately, it makes us sick both physically and emotionally. In this book are the solutions to fear.

In the Bible, we have been instructed to “Fear not” by God, Jesus, angels, prophets and so on. “Well, that’s easier said than done HP” (Higher Power). One of the main reasons I have published this book is to share the practical ways I have found to overcome fear. Although it seems as if fear is wrong and bad, it is not.

Emotions or feelings are never wrong but rather the wrong lies in hurtful acts committed in response to fear. If I label my emotions wrong, I label myself wrong. If I label my fears wrong, I am more likely to repress them and stay in denial of them rather than doing self-appraisal so, I can move forward to the solutions for the fear I feel. How can I ask God to remove a fear I am too ashamed to admit I have? Repressed fear causes all kinds of problems in life. Knee jerk reactions to fear damage relationships.

It has been said in churches and among some Christians that fear and faith cannot abide in a person at the same time. The statement well-meaning as it may be sets us all up for failure. Since fear is a human survival emotional reaction, the phrase labels all humans “faithless” because all of humanity is fearful at one time or another.

Most would agree that Hope is a beautiful thing, a godly, spiritual virtue. The Bible teaches us “Faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). Without the presence of fear, neither courage or hope could exist. Where hope lies, there is usually an underlying fear that the hope will not be fulfilled therefore fear is simply a part of the human condition and can be dealt with by courage, faith, and an abiding hope. Furthermore, if we label all fear Satanic I must have been the walking incarnate of Satan himself.

I do not want to leave out of the topic the kind of fear which keeps us safe. There is a kind of common sense fear which preserves life. Without the fear rooted in self-preservation, the human race would not exist. But that's a different animal than the dysfunctional fears that can paralyze and even emotionally cripple a little heart and life.

Hebrews 11:7

“By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith, he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that is in keeping with faith.”

Of course, it was not Noah that condemned the world but rather his faith helped him to believe the world would be condemned...and drowned.

Ironically, this scripture is taken from the part of the Bible that Christians and Bible scholars alike call “The Hall of Faith”. It is said often in the church that faith and fear cannot inhabit a vessel at the same time yet...this scripture about the building of the ark shows us otherwise. Noah acted initially out of “holy fear” when building the ark yet he also applied faith to his giant task of saving humanity. I suppose he just wanted to save himself and his family and probably did not think too much about saving the entire human race.

Genesis 6:13

“So God said to Noah, “I am going to put an end to all people, for the earth is filled with violence because of them. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth.”

Without healthy fears, the human race would not survive.

Unhealthy Fear

I recall I was young and born'again Christian thumbing through my bible opening to different pages randomly, hoping God would give my poor sinner's conscience some relief. Desperately I studied different translations, deeper Greek definitions, topical studies, character studies, references, depictions and on and on. I attended Bible studies and heard many different preachers of all denominations. There was no doubt in my mind that The Bible was the anointed word of God. Yet it continually triggered my guilt and shame as often as I read it. I could find only condemnation in this intricate book of law and Love.

What possible reason could I have to continue reading a book that regularly condemned me, me a born again still struggling sinner? Why continue walking in these churches of judgment? I had experienced a grand white light spiritual experience in a little church in the meadow where I first met Jesus. Therefore, I would not give up on His Holy Bible nor would I give up on myself! My walk with God had begun by my investigating a Gideon's Bible. I remember reading Paul's struggle with his besetting sin and I so related to his struggle and to his self-condemnation for it. However then to my own shame, I could not overcome sin nor could I reconcile with the harsh Biblical words that I read and yet I continued my studies.

In the beginning of my walk with God, some religious authority or another uttered the dreaded threats of Hell fire. Me, being an impressionable young and recently born again Christian I cringed as the preacher harped on the things that I was still doing that would land me in Hell.

What is the bible's definition of Hell anyway? Here are some definitions taken from my Strong's Bible Dictionary.

She-hole- From Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat) including its accessories and inmates-grave, hell, pit. (From Old Testament Hebrew)

Tartaroo, from Tartaros- the deepest abyss of Hades; to incarcerate in eternal torment-cast down to Hell.

Geh'-en-nah- used figuratively as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment.

Yikes! Hell is not a happy place to think about, it strikes fear into the minds and hearts of those who believe in its existence. I surmise from the definition of "Tartaroo" that there may be levels of Hell. Seemingly, the deeper one goes into Hell the worse it gets. It reminds me of a four-star hotel where the finest penthouse is at the top floor. I am not here to explain away anything in the Bible I just want to understand it and share my understanding with you.

I do believe Hell exists, because it is in my Bible. I believe my Bible because of experience not blind faith. My beliefs came much like Apostle Paul explains in this scripture:

First Thessalonians 1:5

"For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of The Lord having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost."

The people I know including myself that have peace of mind and usually live by the golden rule; have a grounded relationship with God. That

relationship sprouted out of an intense need in their life. A need that they could not resolve by themselves. We reached a point of powerlessness or in other words a state of intense neediness with no solution in sight. Therefore, we sought God for help. We then learned to rely on God and it worked.

The fears of death, life, and condemnation are real. Fear can permeate our everyday life in a negative way if not put into perspective. Using fear to control other adult's behavior is wrong. Living our lives in constant fear of one thing or another is an unhappy existence. Going to church out of guilt to find yet more guilt and shame adds insult to injury. Listening to preachers who continually address their perceived sins of people who they think will go to Hell is condemnation from the pulpit. These types of sermons usually reflect some unresolved issue or sin in the heart of he who harshly judges. It is certainly easier for us mortals to look at the sins of others than point that high-powered perception at ourselves, for then we may have to change. Change may seem too difficult or even impossible. The thing about sin is that, oftentimes the shortcomings we detest in others we have done or still do ourselves.

John 8:7

“So, when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.”

Saint John 8:1-10 tells a short story of the Pharisees condemning an adulterous woman. The Scribes and Pharisees wanted the woman, an adulterer violently punished stoned to death for her alleged sexual crime and betrayal! I wonder what could have been in their hearts. Jesus took a different attitude toward this sinner. He said compassionately; “Neither do I condemn you” He showed understanding not condemnation. Therefore, we should also and so should the speaker from the pulpit. Commonly, when a preacher or minister begins his judgment sermon of railing accusations toward those he feels are of lesser value than himself the most

judgmental in the crowd will be shouting amen the loudest. Those who harshly judge consistently apply examination to everybody but themselves.

What about this fear God thing? Here are some definitions of fear.

Fib-eh-o- To frighten, i.e. revere to be sore afraid, fear exceedingly, reverence. (Strong's Concordance)

First Peter 2:17

“Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.”

Taking into consideration the root word or Greek Bible definitions of fear, I prefer “revere” God rather than to be “sore afraid” of God. But then again, I am not the one looking at a burning bush or a fiery angel of God. Until that happens, I will visualize God as Loving rather than scary.

The reason that I refer to Greek dictionary translations is that the New Testament was first written in Greek with some Latin and Aramaic as well. Therefore, to understand a scriptural word thoroughly I refer to its root Greek definition. Here is a little more explanation of the New Testament according to Biblica a bible website.

“The New Testament was written in Greek. This seems strange, since you might think it would be either Hebrew or Aramaic. However, Greek was the language of scholarship during the years of the composition of the New Testament from 50 to 100 AD. The fact is that many Jews could not even read Hebrew anymore, and this disturbed the Jewish leaders a lot! Therefore, around 300 BC a translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew

into Greek was undertaken, and it was completed around 200 BC. Gradually, the Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint became widely accepted and was even used in many synagogues. It also became a wonderful missionary tool for the early Christians, for then the Greeks could read God's Word in their own tongue.” (Reference <http://www.biblica.com/en-us/bible/bible-faqs/in-what-language-was-the-bible-first-written/>)

In conclusion, our lives can become consumed by fear. There is the healthy fear and then there is the fear that can become anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder, phobias, stress, sleeplessness, paranoia, fear that causes violent and harmful reactions, fear of loss that provokes all kinds of grasping, stealing, lying and cheating behaviors. Fears that cause all manner of insecurities, vanities, and the list goes on. There are solutions to these fears and that is what this book is about...changing fear into Love.

THE FACES OF LOVE

First John 3:18

At any given point in time I can stop, breath and choose Love. I do not always feel Loving sometimes; I just must walk through my negative agitation praying that I don't hurt anyone with my words.

Some people believe in a condition of "Oneness" that everything we see and feel is an illusion and there is only Love. However, I am a finite being of flesh and blood; I understand some things are truly destructive for me. If all things are Love then my understanding of Love is wrong. The infinite does not negate the finite for the temporal is part of the eternal my flesh is temporal and I do not believe "everything is an illusion except Love."

First John 3:18

"My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but indeed and in truth."

In an attempt to fully understand the "fear of God" term, I will start by trying to grasp the depth of His Love for me as His child. Would my own mother throw me away or would I throw my own child away? God is mine as much as I am His. One example of God's Love is illustrated in the most famous scripture of all.

John 3:16:

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

My initial reaction to the story in Genesis of Abraham sacrificing Isaac in relation to my own child is hell no! Not even! In all reality, I am not sure

any circumstance could allow me that kind of faith. Although I do believe it is possible to believe and trust God that strongly. I believe with God all things are possible (Mark 14:36). I would have to know beyond any doubt that sacrificing my child would vastly benefit him and the masses. Even then, I do not know if I could follow through. To follow through would require a clear vision of wonderful results. Mother Mary must have had that vision when she let go of her son Jesus to be sacrificed. Abraham must have had that vision when he moved to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22:10). To know to some extent God's Love, it is necessary to invoke the ingredients of faith and hope. Faith and hope are planted by God and grow in our hearts by our own experiences with God and life. Faith and Hope are gifts but allowing them to grow by exerting and exercising them little by little is where the real strength comes from.

These Biblical stories of great faith and Love simply remind me I have much room to grow to reach the level of spiritual awareness that Mary, Jesus, Abraham, and God Himself had to be capable of exercising such intense acts of sacrifice. (Bear with me while I assume most believers know these common and basic church Bible stories) Again, to connect with God's Love we should keep in mind our own experience with His Love. Grace is a prime example of Love.

Grace is the unmerited Love and favor of God toward mankind (Webster's) But more importantly his favor toward us as individuals.

Grace happens when I do not reap the negative and typical consequences of my own foolish actions. This saving grace creates thankfulness in my heart and helps me to realize God's Love toward me. *Keep alive your times of grace they will surely strengthen your faith!* We can call this kind of grace "divine intervention" and it is. Remember Romans 3:23

"For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God."

Without realizing our mistakes and gaining life's lessons we do not see God's grace working in our lives. So then, what fresh reasons have we to feel grateful or thankful toward God?

Loving grace is evident when God forgives us. Pure forgiveness (no strings attached, no grudges, payback or keeping score) by God or me reeks of Love! How do I understand that God forgives me? If God teaches words to live by from the Bible, does He not also live by them?

First Peter 4:8 "Above all things have fervent Love for one another, for Love will cover a multitude of sins".

First John 1:9 "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Proverbs 10:12 "Hatred stirs up strife, but Love covers all sins".

First John 1:7 "But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His son cleanses us from all sin."

Cover – To procure pardon of them from God, Not to regard or impute them. (Thayer English Greek Lexicon to the New Testament.)

First John 4:8 "He who does not Love, does not know God for GOD IS LOVE."

I have had a revelation of the truth of God's word. These scriptures tell me I have His forgiveness and I believe it. If I confess my sins to God and repent with an honest heart conveying that I AM sorry (be real with God) I

will receive a relief from the guilt, pain, and shame of my sins. Of course if, the sin has hurt someone else I may have an amends to make before feeling truly cleansed of guilt. Sometimes I need to confess my sins to a non-judgmental third party before deciding the best action to take regarding amends. Someone who cares and relates to my mistakes, a person who is empathic will definitely provide the best relief when I confess my sins.

James 5:16 “Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous availeth much.”

Thank God confession really works! When I feel the relief from guilt in my heart, I know God has forgiven me. Here is a scripture even more direct on how to cover sin.

James 5:20 “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.”

Confession by the guilty, in spite of how foreboding most feel about it not only hides the confessor’s sins but also if the sinner is turned from the error of his ways, the spiritual dynamic also covers a multitude of sin for the nonjudgmental, empathic listener he confesses it to. The process though uncomfortable at first is absolutely miraculous and wonderful!

Luke 6:37 “Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

Testing these types of promises from God are one way our faith is built and our beliefs are forged.

Is this process of expelling guilt a recipe for the justification or rationalization of sin? Have we found a way to continue basking in our ongoing sin? Simply confess and then be on our debaucherous and merry way? *We could* interpret and apply the word of God that way; Lord knows The Bible has been twisted and shaken every way possible. However, Personally I do not want to continue to struggle with guilt and shame. I want to overcome sin. What I understand with my heart from these words is; by loving others, by showering forgiveness and grace I actually am loving myself. I am creating good consequences in my life rather than painful ones.

These scriptures tell me that I am human, and should accept it. When I do make mistakes, I need and want relief from guilt. If I do not get relief this way, the right way, by confession and amends guilt **will** come out in self-hate and hate for others, it will come out sideways! *Guilt will either direct me toward distractions or direct me toward solutions.*

Step Five-There is a huge difference between struggling for unattainable perfection failing to live up to it then beating ourselves to a pulp in our minds and heart thinking that somehow if we flog ourselves enough THEN we will be good and acceptable to our self our Lord and peers. Verses the pure and anointed process God has set down to relieve our guilt by confession. WE ABSOLUTELY DO NOT HAVE THE INALIENABLE RIGHT TO CONDEMN OR PUNISH OURSELVES. The decision to punish or not to punish lies in the realm of our Higher Power **who is qualified to judge fairly.**

The most common distraction from guilt is to focus on being intolerant of others. Intolerance, the big red flag that says self-examination is in order! When bathing in guilt's turmoil I do not like you or God so I jump on the condemnation bandwagon yee-ha! I could easily disregard the written word of God all together because of the punishment aspects of the Bible. In a guilty frame of mind all I get out of reading or hearing the word of God is an uncomfortable guilt triggering feeling with every sentence. Not to

mention, my father used guilt and shame to control me for years. I pretty much feel guilty all the time for one thing or another. It's been ingrained in me thanks to my twisted family members. I believe part of my on-going shame may be from the original sin of Eve. Supposedly when we are born of Spirit Jesus then takes on all our burdens such as shame. At least that's what I have heard in church. But I have found spiritual joy and freedom from burdens to be temporary. It's not reasonable to expect to be happy joyous and free always. But having peace of mind can be on-going if we do certain things.

Perhaps our heart tells us that we do not deserve forgiveness. Would a God of Love create us with weakness on purpose without showing us a practical way to overcome it? Would a God of Love not help us to become a joyous Christ like human about which the Bible speaks at least much of the time? There is a recipe for human success in The Holy Bible if we can just open our minds to new thought patterns and amended behaviors. Open-minded, willingness is the vital ingredient for spirituality.

I don't know about you but when I came out of the womb, I was not all-knowing. Neither did my parents teach me how to live a Christ-like abundant life. The doctor did not hand me an instruction manual for achieving fulfillment and joy. Nor did I get directions on emotional survival. I have struggled through life repressing emotions and fearing what people think of me. My parents taught me I was bad and wrong and I believed it. My self-hate drove me to self-destructive actions for years.

In first Corinthians 13:13 Apostle Paul states that Love is the greatest gift of all spiritual gifts. Maybe you're thinking, "Oh no not more of this new age love stuff!" Preconceived notions and contempt prior to investigation stunt the possibility for spiritual growth. God is Love; maybe there is something to this gift of Love. Can God's type of Love improve my daily life? If Love is a gift, I want it! If it will make me happy and content I want it!

What if I could deploy Love in defense of misery? What a concept!

I am aware that I do not show enough Love towards others? I am self-centered for sure.

Do I show Love toward those that Love me and resent the rest of mankind or visa-versa? All I need to do is ask God for His Love.

First John 5:14&15

“Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will He hears us. And if we know He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions we have asked of Him.”

According to God’s word, we know that it is His will that we feel and show Love. Therefore, we are asking for something that He wants us to have to further our walk with Him anyway. In times, past, I thought my own selfish desires were what I needed from God. Experience has shown me that once I started asking for things He says I need I got much better results for myself.

I found out that what I *want* is usually not what my heart and soul *needs to experience fulfillment*. It is time we started asking God for what he says is good. Changing our prayers to God requires faith because we are resisting our instinctual carnal nature. It begins by realizing all the stuff I thought I needed, has not brought me peace. ***Our coveted carnal needs are merely distractions from our true soul’s needs. God knows what I need more than I do; I think I will allow Him to give it to me!***

Mathew 18:3

“Verily, I say unto you, except ye be converted and become as little children ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

We must smash our concept of a condemning God along with our condemnation of ourselves. We have learned not to trust people. We have

found that if we trust, we are then vulnerable and get hurt. Even most of our parents at some point lied and hurt us. With our already fragile trust barometer how can we expect to trust and depend on a God that religion teaches, by law will send us to death and Hell? So far, these rules and regulations brought forth by the church have not helped us find anything except fear, guilt, and shame. I can remember thinking while in church; “are these people really as perfect and obedient as they appear? They seemed to have all the answers and portrayed perfect lives. However, Jesus said that we should “become as little children”. Uncorrupt Little children do not have all the answers! Little children are open-minded to learn. Little children are naturally honest. They have humility and enjoy listening rather than struggling to be heard. Children have the capacity to learn.

Proverbs 18:2

“A fool has no pleasure in understanding, but delights in airing his own opinions.”

NIV

If I hope to receive any good thing from God’s word, I must honestly look at myself and ask how spiritual principles apply to me. ***God’s word does me no good if I continually apply it to others!*** I must receive it concerning ***me*** to gain the wisdom and knowledge it offers. Awareness of other people’s sin does not benefit me unless I can see the little bit of them in me. I need also to realize God’s Love for me in a way that brings me some peace of mind, a way that assures me He will not cast me into Hell and torment. I do well to envision that Hell simply does not exist for me so why should I judge weather others are headed that way. How can I truly trust God? However, trust Him I must to be willing to do His will! In all paradoxical reality, when I finally surrender to God’s Love and direction I find a new freedom a true “walking in the Spirit”.

Galatians 5:22&23

“But the fruit of the Spirit is Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and temperance: against such there is no law.”

John 5:24

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes in Him who sent me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.”

It is easy to tell you “Believe what God says!” Hearing and believing are two different things. Believing with my intellect and knowing in my heart are also two very different things.

The father of a very sick and emotionally tortured child came to Jesus for help; the father said, “If thou canst do anything have compassion on us and help us”. Jesus said to him “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.”

Mark 9:24

“And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord I believe; help thou my unbelief.”

The father of a very sick child believed Jesus could heal his child yet he feared. He acknowledged his own doubt. He was aware of his unbelief and confessed it to Jesus promptly in desperation to have the child he loved cured of the torturous malady or “dumb spirit”. The ingredients of honesty, Love for his child, desperation and the fact that he knew he needed help (humility) saved his child. Not to mention he was open-minded to the possibilities of a miracle in spite of his “unbelief”. These simple ingredients, though not easily invoked are the same ingredients used to accomplish many great acts of God through man. When I have fear doubt

or lack of faith, I ask God for help and He does help in one way or another of this I can attest.

Let us investigate more about the gift of Love.

First John 4:20&21

“If someone says “I Love God” and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not Love his brother whom he has seen, how can he Love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must Love his brother also.”

Mathew 22:36-40

“Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (New International Version)

These scriptures are quite a lot to digest. If someone came to me and asked me to sum up the entire New Testament in two suggestions I would say to them: Love God and Love others.” Well, how in the heck do we accomplish that?

The word love is one of the most words in the English language; it has been confused and misused. The word has been invoked to manipulate and control and used to try to appease. I have found at least thirteen different definitions in my Webster’s’ dictionary alone defining love. Definitions range in extreme from God’s sacred Love for us to sex and passionate desire. Our Biblical translators are not a lot of help with the confusion. These brilliant writers have stamped the word “love” over several and varied original root Greek terms throughout the New Testament. Our King

James Version scholars felt apparently that some of the Greek love-type words are more akin to charity and translated accordingly. After much study and my own confusion, I have concluded that there are four types of godly Love.

Firstly, our own God inspired, caring, respectful and thoughtful **Love toward others** whom may or may not Love us. This includes Love towards others in spite of their own un-loving behavior. I say God inspired because either we do not feel the Love and yet we show it in giving (charitable) actions because we know it is the right thing to do or we are filled with that giving, precious **feeling** of godly Love and we show it, again we show it. (Action)

The second definition for **Love transpires from me to God**. A particular part of my heart is only for Him, the One who will never let me down, even if sometimes I do not remember that.

The third type of Love is portrayed in the Bible though it is neither explained nor addressed this is the **Love of self**. “Love my neighbor as myself” implies I know how to and do Love myself. To me this means knowing how to respect myself, nurture myself and do what is most beneficial for me spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally. I have lived most of my life having no idea how to Love myself truly. I know what it means to feel contempt toward myself for not doing that which my own heart urges. How could I have possibly carried out the command to Love others without my own self Love? Self-Love is learning to be godly toward one’s self.

Fourth and last is **God’s Love toward me**, this kind of Love deserves an all-together separate Love category. The powerful Love that God holds in his being toward me would blow my mortal body and mind to pieces if it entered my flesh in its fullness and power. Next, my spirit would be blasted to another dimension where it need not be enslaved by space or time, where

Love is at home....and we simply stamp this embodiment of spirituality with our standard definition and call it “love” oh well, I think it at least deserves a capitol L.

Let’s see what great attainable wisdom the Bible possesses about Love.

First Corinthians 13:4-8

“Love suffers long and is kind, Love does not envy; Love does not parade itself, it is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails” ...

I am no spiritual giant, full of Love, never getting angry or resentful. I am no authority on this Love thing. I do know that when I received Christ as my savior I also received a new Love for my fellow man. I felt the Love and I acted on it. We can grow toward living these scriptural examples of perfect Love. It is said “Gods not done with me yet. If I would like to make progress spiritually, I can compare myself with perfection and pray for improvement. If I compare myself to the hooker or the drunk to make myself feel superior or justified, I stunt my own emotional and spiritual growth. Ironically, that kind of belittling view of others is a character flaw in itself so; I am using bad character (false comparison) to make me feel like I have good character. False comparisons are nice, they make me feel good, and I like feeling good and at one time, that kind of ego boosting was good enough for me. Then I started doing honest self-appraisal, not to condemn myself but to begin to change.

People do not usually change where character is concerned. I have received a recipe to accomplish good change. If you are fearful, miserable or life just plain sucks for you be grateful. Self-sufficient, complacent people are not usually motivated for rigorously seeking God. Miserably unhappy people often are very willing to find relief from God for their emptiness. Self-

sufficient people are the ones we observe and say, “Darn Mrs. Smith down the road always has it so together! And look at all the neat stuff she has, she seems to want for nothing.” I hope that by the time Mrs. Smith reaches her deathbed she will take the opportunity to cry to God. I do want to point out though, if she waits until then to seek God; she will not have had the opportunity to know (as humanly possible) the wonders of God’s Love while on this wondrous earth. Nor would she have the blessing of sharing that Love toward others. Therefore, as it is said so often human misery can be a blessing in disguise. Though it certainly does not feel like a blessing at the time, I can attest to that.

I believe Love is an action”. Ask yourself in an honest self-appraisal what are the true motives behind the actions you choose to take. Are you acting out of fear or Love?

Suppose a man goes out of town on a business trip. He finds himself calling his wife ten times a day telling her he loves her. We could label his obsession Love or fear, depends on his level of self-awareness.

Hypothetically, we can now see his heart, it is full of fear, fear of losing her to another man because he is not there with her to guard over her. He fears he is not enough for her sexually or emotionally. He fears if she leaves him no other woman will want him. He is really checking up on her not overflowing with feelings of good intention and godly Love. He is insecure, ungrounded spiritually and let’s not judge him by his obsessive behavior he has not had an education on building self-esteem. He has not been exercising the faith that builds strong, self-assured character. What do you think would happen if he realized his own heart and told her his fear then prayed about his shortcomings? It would be a heck of a start in the direction of Love and healing. We know his actions are not from Love, because “Love thinks no evil”, “It rejoices in truth, and does not seek its own” all he is thinking about is “his own”! He is not communicating with her on an honest level. His repeated mantras of “I love you” are really saying, “I am scared”!

Visualize this: A couple meet and have a strong attraction toward one another. They spend a few months together, of course; they are on their best behavior. She is attracted to his sports car and he is attracted to her blonde bombshellism. He feels proud (false pride) when he gets her around his buddies and she is proud to drive that prize of a car. He tells her “I love you” often but does he really? I think he loves the temporary fix he is getting for his feelings by being around her. Let’s align his “love” for her with the Bible.

First Corinthians chapter 13

“Love is not puffed up and does not parade itself” Uh-oh! “Love sides with truth.” Has he told her, “Hey babe I only want you around for the hood ornament effect because, actually I am suffering from intense feelings of inadequacy and you’re my best shot at a good life.” Fat chance! I think he better pray for honesty and start his path of truth by admitting to himself his motives where the blonde babe is concerned. Next, he needs to get very honest with his God! Does this mean for him to live a spiritual life he can’t be in a relationship with a good looking women? Let’s hope not, but right now he needs to work on himself.

We can carry this kind of fake love into relationships with even our own children who we Love dearly. Bailing them out when they should be reaping consequences of their own actions is another counterfeit for Love. Often it is easier to yell and scream at them than to follow through on well-considered discipline. It is easier to try to fix them than realize they need to feel and express emotional pain to be emotionally healthy. Shutting down their tears with candy or money because it makes us uncomfortable to see them cry is selfishness not Love. Showing them, we understand just what they are feeling and care is so much more healing for them than shutting them down with quick fixes. It takes a relationship with God to exhibit empathy and tough Love.

I was talking to a woman about God, she asked, “How can there be a God of Love in this world? Look at the pain, suffering, and war, all the abuse,

perversion, murdering, backbiting, and the list of horror goes on, atrocities, diabolical profit taking schemes, etc.” I am definitely not sanctioned to defend God for how he made man. I will not attempt to protect God He can take care of Himself. I can however share my understanding of the circumstance of Love, yet suffering. I believe we are spiritual beings in earthbound, fleshly bodies. I believe we are here to learn what we need to take to the next life. These bodies are destined to grow old and deteriorate from the get go, our bodies are temporary.

First Corinthians 15:50-54

“Now this I say then brethren that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For the corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written; “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

Personally, I do not think human conception was my first beginning; I believe I was with the Father before my human origin and chose this human experience. This possibility does not nullify my need for or faith in Christ. We clearly do not have the complete spiritual story. One thing sure, I need to grow spiritually to be happy. Would my Father not afford me this loving opportunity? Would not your God afford you this opportunity? Life’s most valuable lessons have always come through difficulty. We are to be over comers, this implies obstacles. (Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 26 etc.) My flesh or self-will is the very thing I need overcome. Apostle Paul in Romans 8:37 said,

“We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

The real battle lies within our own mind. Overcoming is about conquering our own human nature to gain continual connection with the Spirit of God. By relinquishing my selfish, will to God and asking for His teaching and knowledge. I will open myself up to all manner of spiritual enlightenment and growth. The things I see with these eyes are a very small part of the bigger picture that I do not see.

The greatest and most precious things in life are gifts. We think we can acquire them, to our own dismay. Gifts are given if we can just receive them. When we give away the things, we feel we need the most we are fit to receive the greatest gifts in life. We need to open our spiritual eyes and see the view. Things get very stale in life if we only see with our carnal eyes. Expanding our view in daily life for us, is impossible, for God to expand our sight is His pleasure; He created us for just that. I must communicate my heart to Him even if I feel unworthy and guilty. I had a friend who feared over life's numerous and foreboding tragedies I told her that, to change by seeing life in a better light is a gift from God.

ONE LITTLE GIRLS TALE OF LOVE LOST

To tell a Love tale I sit I ponder.

What have I to offer?

Have I memory of God's great gift?

Put down on paper Love never quits... Everlasting to everlasting.

There was a girl who felt alone.

Feared the world hid at home.

Ran out doors asked the question:

"How do I Love through suffering and pain?"

*I cannot see to behold my joy!
 Memories of anguish heartless men.
 Long for comfort need to Love.”*

*No answer night and day!
 She posed the question over again.*

*An odd day a walk outside,
 No people where had they gone.
 The streets empty no cars passed by.
 No squirrels not a sound.*

*She sat quiet a wondering mind.
 No one to answer her question dear, she realized then a paralyzing fear.
 She had the answer all along; a look inside she.... did belong.
 The time had passed to Love the strange the not so pretty...*

*They are
 gone.*_____

“TRUTH THE MAGIC CARPET TO LOVE”

Psalm 91:1-4

“He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most-High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty I will say of the LORD, [He is] my refuge and my

fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely, he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, [and] from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth [shall be thy] shield and buckler.”

Truth is pure and flawless it protects and purifies he who speaks it.

Some do mistake hurtful and inconsiderate candor for an act of principled loyalty to God’s truth. Just because something is true does not mean I have the right to shout it from the rooftops in the name of my own good character. It is not deceptive to quench truthful yet unkind words. When we avoid hurting people, we also avoid poisoning our own heart by not planting that spoken root of bitterness. If my mother asks me how she looks I can say “fabulous” and she does look fabulous compared to many people, I have seen. I could just say “You look fine mom.” rather than saying, “Mother you look overweight, pale and full of fear”. If I try I can see some good in the way my mother looks. I could point out how the color of her outfit suits her so well. Compassion, respect, and truth are Godly principles and the precepts of God never oppose one another because a house divided against itself will surely come to desolation. Meaning I do not have to lie to be considerate and find an encouragement or compliment to bless someone with.

Mark 3:24

“And if a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.”

First John 4:7

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.”

Chances are, if you are anything like me after reading the scripture you are wondering; how do I love everyone all the time? Or, maybe you're thinking...I don't have this Love thing down pat, I must not be "born of God" or "of God". Do not feel alone, I doubt any of us have the wherewithal to Love our enemies or even to Love those who Love us, all of the time. Who wants to go to the pastor and painfully tell of our lack of Love toward our neighbor? We could just stay in complete denial of our loveless condition but that would be spiritually harmful. Honestly, I have at times been so far detached from my own true feelings I had a complete misconception of who I was. If we see ourselves with clear self-honesty; then and only, then is there a chance to change and allow more Love into our lives. The worst thing about not admitting negative feelings or thoughts is they tend to fester and grow into larger and darker emotions. The prerequisite to most spiritual growth is the ability to exercise self-honesty.

Pinocchio's nose grew and grew with each lie. Telling the truth is a kindergarten concept. However, all of us have developed far more comfortable strategies for dealing with life's difficult situations. We have perfected dishonest survival techniques that do not place truth as a priority in our dealings with others. We are older now and have boatloads of experience with truth. We believe we have gleaned wise conclusions from said experience. This kindergarten concept of truth that most have brushed aside as childish and ineffective is one of the keys to our happiness and peace of mind. Truth sets our hearts in position to receive joy and lowers our susceptibility to stress and fear. It is no accident Apostle Paul listed truth as one piece of the "amour of God". (Ephesians 6:14) Hearing and knowing this scripture myself for years did not help me until I put the truth principal into action.

It is not easy to admit hidden and shameful truths about ourselves. Suppose I do not want to admit some deep-rooted resentment toward someone or confess, I have hate in my heart.

John 8:22

“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”.

I want to be free! One of man's most important truths is to realize what lies in his own heart. Knowing our heart will provoke us to seek God. Suppose I admit the truth “Lord I hate my neighbor and I don't know how to Love him!” Let's face it folks we cannot reach down into the depths of our heart and pull out everything unholy by the root. At times I wish I could, however if I could spiritual cleanse myself of darkness I would have no need for a Great Physician! I prefer a Savior rather than a legalistic God who puts a big red X on my report card every time I fall short of perfection. This kind of spiritual traffic cop would surly land me in jail I mean Hell. When I am being crystalline honest with myself, I realize parts of my heart do not line up with the Love scriptures in 1st John and what's more, I cannot possibly change myself to match them. Here at our wits end we can either “forget this Bible stuff” or learn to rely on God every day of our lives. Then I pray: “Lord I admit I have hatred in my heart please help me to remain honest with myself. Please remove all the things that are not good for me and others.” Then hold on and remember all difficulties in life will reveal a lesson in one form or another if we are watching and self-aware.

In the movie “Forest Gump” a man named Lieutenant Dan was in Vietnam and lost his legs. He was furious at himself, the world and mostly God for the tragic injustices he suffered. He tried to suppress his emotional pain by drinking liquor and running wild. Then he fled to Forest's boat and got in touch with his hurt and anger. He expressed his feelings to God in a way some Christians would consider blasphemous. While sailing through a tumultuous storm he screamed and confronted his God. A movie yes nevertheless, it illustrates my point very well. Lieutenant Dan told God exactly what he thought of God's world. The result was peace of mind and joy. I have found the results of this kind of assertive and honest prayer to be healing and liberating.

Jesus is our advocate with God He has experienced the same temptations as us. He was flesh and blood, born of woman, the seed of man, human. He experienced the streets of Nazareth. He understands our pain, grief, anger, weakness, shame and guilt.

Hebrews 4:15

For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as [we are, yet] without sin.

He did also experience His own fear and doubt while on the cross.

Mathew 26:39

“He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed saying “Oh my Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Mathew 27:46

“And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lama sabaachthani?” That is “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”

How can we get real with our repentance without self-honesty? We would do well to realize God knows it all. He is God yes but He was also human, flesh and blood, having a lower nature as all humans do. Again, He was tempted as all humans are. Jesus asked His Father, “take this cup from me, nevertheless thy will be done.” Do all we believers suppose that the only time Jesus was tempted was that famous temptation from Satan in the wilderness and on top of the mountain in Mathew fourth chapter?

I understand the struggle with trying to give up my will for Gods. My flesh cries, "Gods will for me will be unpleasant; I know best what is good for me!" It seems like my will is better than God's then I do a reality check, where has my will really gotten me. What are my priorities when running on self-will? Money, possessions, getting my way, I want to feel good and let's not forget vanity, boy do I want to look good! Where will all my favorite things get me spiritually? Has my will gotten me peace of mind? Have my fun toys gotten me true joy unspeakable? Has my will profited me a guilt free life of abundance I can enjoy? Can I truly enjoy a day at the beach or a vacation absent of the Love of God?

By active, working truth, I can have a relationship with God. It has been tricky figuring out what I need to have true well-being and how to get it. Most folks assume truth and godly Love cannot be the answer to contentment, it sounds to cliché, and childish. ***Our fears fight against the truth.*** If I am running on fear who knows what or who will rule my life. I must not allow fearful thoughts to direct my actions.

Here are some examples of some fear-based actions.

A man thinks to himself, my wife might leave me for another man so he grasps and clings onto her until she is annoyed and wants to push him away. He thinks he is getting old and ugly so he searches and struggles to stay young. He has all kinds of surgeries, make-up, expensive clothing etc. until he has maimed his body by too many operations and depleted his monies. He is so fearful of losing his job and security that he obnoxiously sucks up to his boss, again annoying him until his boss wants to push him away. The man then over-works himself to near exhaustion all the while thinking he is protecting himself from insecurity and poverty. By reacting to fear, he has twisted and turned himself into a state of anxious turmoil all the while struggling to be in a safer more secure place. ***"If the journey down the road runs on fear, the destination won't be much better."*** ***I have concluded through my work toward complete self-awareness that the fear in me is ONE yet I can project it***

onto a million different circumstances and react to it in many different harmful ways.

There was a time in my life that I thought dishonesty was sometimes the best policy. I was honest with some people and deceptive with others. I would justify, "My husband can't handle the truth!" I did not like the results I got when I was truthful with him. In romantic relationships or partnerships if communication is not truthful, they will not grow far together in Love or trust. We too often look at our partners as the enemy. We often perceive them as an opponent because of previous hurtful relationships (baggage) from which we have not healed. In school, the teacher did not show us how to process hurtful emotions. The Bible does not offer help in that area until it is deciphered correctly. It took me years to understand the Holy word constructively. It required guidance and long-suffering to gain a usable understanding of the Word of God.

There have been instances when truth has gotten me into trouble. It is much easier, of course to be honest when we have nothing to hide. Guilt is the primary reason for dishonesty. Mischievous motives are generally followed by lies. ***The confidence to be honest in all areas of our lives is not only self-liberating, it exercises godly Love and triggers respect from others.*** Furthermore, it induces self-respect and much needed self-esteem. To achieve across the board honesty, we do well to begin with honesty toward God, and ourselves then work our way toward honesty with others with God's help.

Someone wrote these words about their deep, realized relationship with truth, it is beautiful:

TRUTH

What can be said of truth? It eluded me I could not grab hold!

I was sure, if I embrace her, she would hurt me

I thought, if I stand by her what I want would be gone

Oh sure I'll embrace her when she serves my needs

I will hold her as a last resort

I could not see her beauty; invisible to the eye

I mistook precious truth for an enemy

So small in spiritual depth is the human eye

Truth, a peculiar beauty seen only by the heart

We see by good conscience we see by our soul.

Finally, I held truth every way I could

In casual words, in relations, in view of self

By respecting truth, I fed her beauty to my soul and was healed

*Oh truth, you no longer elude
me*

Wait a minute! This is starting to sound like a namby-pamby (goody two shoes) self-help book that is going to get me into a lot of trouble! So far, I have suggested the following principals to consider with life goals and relationships in mind.

The first idea I submit is our concept of God may need some rethinking where “fear God” is concerned. I suggest that we meditate on examples in our own life of God’s Love for us. I also suggest we rethink truth on a completely different level, how it can work FOR us rather than against us. I submit that we ponder how self-honesty will help us improve the way we feel although initially it is sometimes uncomfortable.

If you are an avid church-goer or have been at some point in your life the word deliverance may come to mind at the suggestion of overcoming sin and shortcomings. So many times, I have heard prayers in church like “Oh Lord, deliver this man from the throngs of alcoholism.” Unfortunately, the alcoholic man at this stage of his illness is miserable whether drunk or sober. Does the minister or the alcoholic once consider the practical action of joining a program of recovery? Oh no, that would involve work! Besides who wants to hang around a bunch of pitiful alcoholics? Personally I would rather lie at the altar of the church of my choice fasting and praying in travail of my addiction passively begging God to lift out every part of me that is feeble and dependent! PLEASE GOD JUST TAKE IT OUT OF ME! Unfortunately, from what I have seen God usually doesn’t totally extract character flaws from us. Nor does he take away our free-will.

I have seen the drug addict delivered in church and I have experience the alcoholic delivered from his addiction through the fervent prayers and intercession of prayer warriors, deliverance believers. What sometimes happens after these deliverances is that the delivered addicts somewhere

down the road experience emotional difficulties in life. Perhaps they experience a hurtful divorce or death of a loved one, financial disaster etc. They have not learned plausible, practical coping skills and self-will or “free will” tells them the quickest way to erase emotional pain is in that bottle and they believe it. Fear takes priority and the delivered man relapses. Like a mother who forgets the pains of childbirth and delivers yet another child the addicted man, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, under severe emotional pain will forget how bad drinking really was to get whatever relief the bottle offers.

It takes time and teaching for a person with long-term addiction issues to learn to rely on God in times of intense emotional pain. Hence the programs of AA and NA, God breathed I believe provide the addict direction simple and true on how to live life drug and alcohol free.

Undisputedly, God has given us free will. Free will for a delivered addict is the freedom that very likely will be their undoing. Long term thought patterns die-hard. The Lord, I believe is without limit to what He can do for us. Free will or self-will has caused disasters from Eve and the serpent to Jonah and the whale, even Lucifer the mighty angel received grave consequences for his free will. God just does not remove all shortcomings from a man. Sometimes God does extract ingrained behaviors I can attest to that. Most times we must make a constructive effort with active reliance on God to change. Being aware of our faults is the first step in being an “over comer”. Change is uncomfortable at best. When working toward honesty with others, we will have fearful uncomfortable situations. Talking with a trusted fellow about our own spiritual growth experiences is priceless in the way that it helps good change come into fruition. Sharing the pains, the joys the fears and successes in life is fulfilling and needed. We are social creatures we benefit when we have friends and companionship both. Living a spiritual life is not only to please God but also to feel better and enjoy life when possible. There are times when enjoyment just is not appropriate or beneficial. At times of sickness, disease, dying, loss, injury it is right that life becomes burdensome. That does not mean we are not grateful....it could always be worse.

"JUST LIKE JONAH"

Jonah 1:2&3

“Arise go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me.

Jonah rose up to flee to Tarshish from the presence of the Lord. “And went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarshish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD.”

Jonah and the whale everybody has heard that story. Three days three nights in the belly of a whale and I read it is scientifically possible for a human to survive three days in a great white. That’s the gist of it there you have it. Seriously, though I am shocked at how much I have gotten out of the old story of Jonah.

Jonah received instruction from God to go preach to the Ninevites. Nineveh was a famous city. Nineveh was the capitol and at the center of the great and powerful Assyrian Empire. It was located two hundred and eighty ml north of Babylon on the eastern bank of the Tigris River in a very fertile plain. Today the ancient ruins of Nineveh are located in what is now called Iraq. It was called the robber city because it overran and robbed other cities to enrich itself.”

I am guessing that when Jonah was ordered by God to go preach to those terrifying men he thought to himself “heck no! I am not going to tell those vicious killers to repent of their ways; they may kill me or worse!” Whatever he thought, he ran like hell to escape the call of God set before him.

Jonah's actions show that (thank you Jonah) he did not trust God to see him safely through the task at hand. Keep in mind, during this study on Jonah; he was a chosen prophet of God. Most likely Jonah's little story was inspired by God not just for the Ninevites benefit but also for ours. By it, we are able to see that the men of the Bible were not very different from us. Therefore, Jonah the man of God who heard the voice of God possibly audibly was experiencing doubt concerning God's will for him.

I surmise Jonah assumes he can quickly outrun the Most High ruler of the universe. Therefore, he catches a boat headed for Tarshish. A fierce tempest begins in the salty waters. Jonah is asleep in the birth of the boat. The ship's sailors are scared to death of the storm. Fearing death or worse each man cries out to his own god. Maybe they prayed unknowingly to the Most High God unaware of His name.

Acts 17:23

“For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you.”

Apostle Paul went to The Areopagus a marble hill famous now (Mars Hill) in Athens (Acts 17:23-30) and ministered to some strangers. He had observed them worshipping a God they called the "unknown God". Paul pointed out to them that the God they worshiped is The Most High God. Luke the beloved physician wrote this account of the men who were ignorant of God's identity. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at." (Acts 17:30) I won't ask how The Apostle Paul knew that God winked but I interpret that as God thought nothing of it, "Truly then God overlooked their times of ignorance" (KJII). Should we not show patience and understanding as well for those still ignorant of whom their God is while they search for Him in their own way?

The mariners sought their god next; they remembered that Jonah was sleeping in the birth of the boat. Jonah was a loving and honest man, what he did next shows it. He was truthful with the mariners and told them the reason the tempest came upon them was because he had fled the presence of the Lord. He then said, "cast me into the sea then it will be calm." (1:12 Jonah). He was willing to die so these sailors could live. Jonah was not perfect, obviously, he had fear, and he did not trust God and disobeyed God's instruction. Nevertheless, Jonah portrayed Love, honesty and courage. The mariners' exhibited their own righteousness and Love. As scared as they were, facing death, they did not take lightly the idea of throwing Jonah into the ocean even to prevent their own death. They felt compassion for him or maybe they thought it would be wrong to kill Jonah. The men just kept rowing hard to get the ship to land (Jonah 1:13). When they finally decided to cast Jonah into the sea, they first prayed for God's mercy, forgiveness, and grace; not as a clan of vicious self-serving idolaters as it's said, but as conscientious, God-fearing men with principals. "And then the "raging ceased". No longer ignorant of who they worshipped they praised The Most-High God in their own way. (Jonah 1:16).

Jonah chapter 2:

A great fish swallows Jonah: In verse 1, Jonah now takes time to pray to God. (Jon.2:2)

"Out of the belly of Hell I cried" said Jonah. This reference to Hell in the book of Jonah is one example of a living hell. This kind of reference to hell is common throughout the Old Testament. It is obviously it means a living hell, a state of heart and mind while alive. It is unfortunate for the apprentice bible reader that translations allow for generalized blanket terms on words with various meanings. (Words like "Love & hell) These blanket terms promote confusion and disagreement in church and bible studies. Words with more than one meaning can be studied in the Greek and Hebrew lexicon and dictionaries to be thoroughly understood. Jonah's living "hell" is defined in Strong's Hebrew dictionary as "world of the dead". Obviously, Jonah has not stopped breathing; his heart still pumps blood as far as we know nevertheless, he feels dead and in hell so he is.

I can relate to feeling as if I am in Hell... At those times I feel hopeless even if I know I am not I still feel hopeless. A person may live in bondage to addiction, depression, mental illness, self-serving lifestyles of hate and violence, or are in destructive relationships all these can be described as a "Hell". Perhaps you are living a life that consists of just work; bills, more work, and no joy little fun and few laughs. Many situations could generate a living hell. Psalms depicts this state of being often

Psalms 18:5

"The sorrows of Hell compassed me about, the snares of death prevented me."

In Hebrews 2:15 there is one very informative and simple truth:

"And deliver them who through fear of death were their entire lifetime subject to bondage".

Fear and bondage go hand in hand. In this scripture, the type of bondage referred to is very real. This bondage does not imply being physically chained or imprisoned. Though no chains are visible, we can feel the oppressive and hindering shackles that sometimes rule our lives.

Romans 8:15:

"For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption whereby we cry Ab'ba Father."

Paralyzing, unhealthy fear permeates from the mother fear, the fear of death. Although death is not always our mental focus when spiritually paralyzed, I do believe it is the underlying fear. Fear is the culprit of all our

dysfunction. Fear is spiritual in nature and requires a spiritual solution. We can lie at the church alter and ask God to take fear away and He very well may. We can lay in bed depressed for weeks, months, and years, unfruitful in our existence. Wondering why we were dealt such an unjust hand in life blaming everyone around us for our plight. We can anesthetize our fear with drugs, alcohol, a little Prozac, a few Xanax, or perhaps another piece of pie. However most of us have found no real solutions in these futile attempts to change our own state of mind.

We can put acceptable labels on fear such as, anxiety, boredom, nervousness, annoyance, obsession, jealousy, possessiveness, controlling, the list goes on. If we have reached a place of hopelessness as Jonah has in his living hell we may then be in a position, if open minded and teachable to receive a fresh understanding of God's word. We may now learn to receive the "Life more abundantly" that Christ spoke of in John 10:10.

Jonah cries from his living Hell to God. Jonah was already a chosen man when the burdensome instruction from God was assigned. Remember the whole mess started when God gave Jonah a mission and Jonah's reaction is, he wants to get away from God's presence and now he has, to his own dismay. He is finding out his own self-will is much worse than his fear of Gods will. Now, he is realizing his mistakes and becoming teachable himself. I believe Jonah has arrived at a point of powerlessness. Meaning he feels no hope without God's help. He is to the point of total surrender to God. He cannot fight, run, or blame. Now all Jonah can see is his mistakes and the hope that God will deliver him out of the Hell he has run into. Living the will of God works better than struggling to run the show my way. Being at the end of my rope affords me the realization that God's plan is better than my own.

Jonah 2:2:

"And said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord and He heard me; out of the belly of Hell cried I, and thou heard my voice."

Because of his affliction, he cried! Experiencing a living hell is sometimes the only thing that prompts us complacent Christians to seek God. I mean really seek God cry out beg even! It would be nice if I could learn to live life in peace and harmony with others and remain in continuous contact with God every day. It can happen; it begins with a desperation like Jonah in our own Hell.

Jonah 2:8:

"They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy."

"Lying vanities" are the deceptive statements our minds make that distract and remove us from Gods peace and plan for our lives. In Jonah's case, his deceptive mind told him that running from God would be better than following His will.

Jonah 2:10

"God heard Jonah's prayers and the whale spit him out on shore."

The Lord came unto Jonah a second time and told Jonah what to say to the Ninevites.

Jonah 3:4:

"Yet forty days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Said The Lord

Next, the bible reads

Jonah 3:5

"The people of Nineveh believed God."

To be overthrown by God does not sound good. Apparently, it did not sound too good to the Nineveh homeboys because their reaction consisted of fasting, praying, and repentance. (Moreover, you know how strongmen Love their food.) I suppose the people of Nineveh felt their own Hell approaching and took positive action to change, they sought the solution. They believed Jonah was truly speaking for God. There are many unanswered questions where the Bible is concerned nevertheless it tells me enough for what I need to learn, which leads me to the next touching scripture.

Jonah 3:10:

"And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the *evil* that He had said that He would do to them; and He did it not."

Repent- to be sorry in a favorable sense (Strong's Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary of the Old Testament)

Evil- Bad or evil, adversity, affliction, calamity. Harm heavy hurt, misery, naught, sorrow, trouble etc. (Strong's dictionary)

These scriptures present two examples of God's nature toward us sinners. In view of God's decision to change not only His mind but also His decree toward the Ninevites exemplifies He really did make humans in His image.

My view of God has changed through the years of my born again faith and rightly so! Our relationship with God should grow and change in a positive way as we get to know Him better. The "written in stone" rules and regulations God-type that some churches portray is strictly contradicted in the book of Jonah and throughout the bible. Here God has mercy on those violent and hateful men that He told Jonah He would destroy. He changed

His mind or heart or His spirit decided differently. (I feel describing Gods choices with earthly words is somewhat lacking to say the least.) The bible declares, "He would have done evil against them, but repented". *The Lord and Most High God repented*. I will not speculate on what the Lord may have been thinking while planning their destruction. I will not speculate on God doing "evil". Of this topic, you may draw your own conclusions. I will only elaborate on the facts. *He showed them mercy, Love, and forgiveness in spite of themselves, this is the nature of God I need and Love.*

Apparently, Jonah did not see it that way; he is dreadfully upset about God changing His mind. He is perplexed because of God not doing what He said He would do to these so violent, heartless city robbers.

Jonah 4:1 `But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry."

Jonah 4:2 "And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee O Lord, was not this my saying when I was yet in my country?"

Jonah is very displeased with the way God is handling His affairs. Why did Jonah have to leave his comfortable home for this? Jonah said he thought God should show mercy on them from the get-go without Jonah's involvement.

Jonah 4:3 "Therefore now Oh Lord, take, I beseech thee my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live."

Jonah literally wants to die right now! Relating this to myself, I can see how in past times I have tried to manipulate God in my prayers to get done what I think ought to happen. Subconsciously thinking my way is better than God's way. Even when praying for others my heart struggled to control situations and manipulate people's behavior by my influence with God. I have learned that what I think I may need or others need oftentimes

is not God's will or the best thing. Sometimes my will is self-destructive and hurts people. The flesh strives against the Spirit in me. My flesh is the child who will eat chocolate until she is sick. God knows what I need and He gives it to me when I let him.

Psalms 37:4

"Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart."

This scripture has a two-fold meaning, not only will God give me my desires but He will place Godly desires in my heart that I may better do His will.

Mathew 6:33

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

According to Jonah, he is not getting what he needs nor is God acting right! It is making Jonah very unhappy! If God would just do what he wants, then Jonah would be happy or would he?

Jonah wants what he wants and he wants it now! Now, he wishes only to die. I wonder if he really thoroughly wanted to end his life or if his reaction was a spoiled emotional response to his hurt feelings. It sounds like Jonah has slipped into some self-pity.

Jonah 4:4- "Then said the Lord", Doest thou well to be angry?"

A question rather than an accusation is a good way to prompt us to look at our behavior. A little self-examination is in order here. Where is this righteous indignation getting us that we may hold unto death? The only one Jonah's hurting is Jonah. I say "righteous" indignation because yes,

the Ninevites were voracious killers they robbed cities, families, and the innocent. If they were to continue hurting others, they needed to be neutralized, overthrown and sent to the lethal injection table no doubt! Again, I say “righteous indignation” because God did say forty days and they would be overthrown. Jonah has his valid reasons for being angry.

Not to add insult to injury, Jonah walks into the outskirts of the city and it gets hot, The Lord then prepares a Gourd for Jonah, a plant that would provide shade from the hot sun and deliver him from his grief. Jonah came to be glad for the gourd. God then prepared a worm to smite the gourd that it withered. Poor Jonah woke up hot angry wishing to die once again.

Jonah 4:9 "doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? (God asks Jonah again) I do well to be angry, even unto death."

Jonah 4:10&11:

"Then said the Lord, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for which thou hast not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night and perished in a night; and should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?"

In this passage, The Lord explains to Jonah one reason why he spared the people of Nineveh. Simply

put, they are ignorant of right and wrong. I surmise they, being raised from infants in their violent society and social traditions knew no better. I am not justifying their murderous behavior; I am only pointing out that the conditions we grow up in mold much of who we are and how we think. They are God's people and he chose to bestow grace upon them rather than annihilate them. The Lords mercy and compassion are prominent in these scriptures. Even in these Old Testament times of law and punishment, The Lord God is Love. These verses also portray the Lords patience with Jonah as God walks him carefully through his lessons. God teaches Jonah as a

father would teach his well-loved son, in a way that he can grow emotionally and spiritually. I empathize with Jonah because I have felt the same emotions Jonah revealed in this story. God the Father has walked me through my life as he has Jonah. Teaching me what I need to learn either the easy way without defiance on my part or the painful way where I rebel and defy God until I learn from my mistakes. As for the Ninevites, God looks upon the heart; He is not ignorant of our capabilities or deficits of sound reason. He will save us to the end, utterly, oftentimes from our own selves.

So ends the story of Jonah

*(Ninevey-Archaeological Supplement, Thompson Chain reference bible, KJV, Fifth improved edition, study Bible.)

The sign of Jonah is that a man can drastically and miraculously be changed. People don't often change. The sign of Jonah repentance Look up scripture in Mathew. EDIT Bible scholars have tried for centuries to figure out what Jesus meant about the sign of Jonah.

"GODS PERPETUAL GRACE, FREEDOM FROM GUILT"

One definition of "grace" is unmerited favor; this is my favorite biblical definition. I feel it is most precise judging from my own experience. One of the benefits of this kind of Grace is "to not receive the negative consequences I deserve by my wrong actions. This kind of grace allowed me to be fairly functional and sane while living a self-destructive life. It is not of my own merit that I have survived to the age of 50 and am healthy. It is not by my own merit that I can write the words on this page and understand them with my heart. It is by Gods precious grace.

I was born again at the age of 27 and received a large dose of the Holy Spirit at age 30. After that, I felt I had everything I needed spiritually. I had lived most of my life refining and practicing the art of disobedience and defiance. I now assumed I had obtained the ability to live by every Godly law. In addition, why should I not believe same? My Holy Spiritual experience was the awakening of a lifetime. I was enlightened, strengthened, and healed both physically and emotionally. I had a psychic change as well, now I would merely know what is right and do it. Sounds simple huh?

I grew up practicing the concept that you learn something and then you know it. You learn division or addition then you get your grade, which is your reward. There should then be no further need for burdensome learning of addition or division. I assumed my spiritual lessons could be learned and retained in similar fashion. Spiritual laws are not the same as earthly carnal laws. I had to let go of my misunderstanding of spiritual concepts they reeked of self-sufficiency and left no room for further grace. I was looking for the prize, I thought I could do all the right things for God and the rewards would be thick!

What I really needed to learn was an active daily reliance on God. I needed a practical way to remain spiritually in tune with the "mystery of Gods will".

Paul in Ephesians chapter one calls God's will a mystery. This mystery requires consistent acts of dependence on God to behold daily. When I failed at self-sufficient obedience to God's law, I once again slipped into a rules and regulations perception of God by my own standards.

With my own guilt at the helm my God became a penalizing disciplinary rather than the omnipotent Father who loves me unconditionally and allows me to learn by my mistakes. *I was unaware that as a human I would be spiritually fallible to a point the rest of my life. Although divinely awakened I had never experienced an emotionally healthy relationship how would I then have an ongoing healthy relationship with God without further lessons?* Learning requires effort and work I did not want to work. I did want a supernatural good feeling continually without any more effort than some occasional prayer and church attendance. Consequently, I fumbled through years of sin all the while knowledgeable of God's wonderful truths.

Romans 7:18

"For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not..."

Struggling with sin while born again was torturous. I saw myself as a complete hypocrite. I knew what God, Jesus had done for me by my deliverance and on the cross. I could not muster up the good behavior to honor and repay him. Free will was winning out over my desire to do what is right again. The guilt and shame was now deeper and more debilitating than before my deliverance. Was I lost for good? I continued praying for His help. Finally, God showed me through my brothers and sisters a proactive recipe to walk in the Spirit of Love by grace. The exercises outlined in this book are all exemplified in the Word of God. They are actions toward freedom if followed as a daily way of life.

Guilt will either direct me toward solutions or destruction. The more I distract myself from truth, the further I get from a simple, peaceful life.

“FACING MARRIAGE OR THE DREADED SIN OF FORNICATION”

I was delivered by God from heroin and cocaine addiction by receiving prayer in a little Baptist Church from five or so parishioners including the preacher. At that time my life changed dramatically and so I was born of Spirit or born-again as the expression goes.

Not terribly long after my born again experience which by the way included; water baptism, baptism of the Holy Spirit and I'm sure the baptism of fire (Luke 3:16). (All the Christian credentials). I met another Christian I liked very much that was quite an attraction for me. I was single, young, impressionable, and very much desired to live by the rules. We dated for a short time. I believed in sexual abstinence before marriage because that's how I understood the rule in the Bible. I believed God wanted me celibate and had gone a year with no romantic relationships (a very strange concept to most people I think). However, I had such strong passionate desire for this man I felt I had better marry him before I commit the **dreaded sin of fornication**. After all God had saved me from drugs and alcohol. I didn't realize it at the time but I felt obligated as if now I owed God my obedience. I felt as if there were strings attached to my deliverance I did not have a pure understanding of God's grace and Love. I was viewing a spiritual even from a carnal and earthly standpoint

I was totally frustrated with abstaining from sex. Between my unreasonable fear of God and my raging hormones I was about to make a **huge** mistake. My solution for my overwhelming frustration and fear was to get married and so I did. Not long after our union my young and handsome husband began popping Xanax and drinking in excess. He stopped working and became very much an obnoxious drunk.

I have learned the doctrine of marriage from attending various Christian churches. Some teach that I should have actually submitted to my husband and stay married. I was attending Narcotics Anonymous and still newly sober. Some churches will callously dis-fellowship or excommunicate a woman by disciplinary council for divorcing her husband under any circumstances. Biblical teachings on this subject can be misunderstood resulting in oppressive beliefs and doctrines. Some church members said I should have persistently prayed for my will to happen in my husband's life meaning, for God to change him into what I want him to be and now! I could have wasted away praying for his transformation all the while living a life of servitude to a drunk. I would have been mourning and grieving daily about my husband. Me miraculously set free only to put myself back into bondage to an unfulfilled unreasonable expectation.

I recognize my readers may not agree with all I am writing. Christian divorce is a very sticky subject. As the preachers declare, "Sin to one may not be sin to another" I have found this to be true.

I married so I could Biblically and lawfully have sexual relations against the advice of my spiritual teachers. I married hastily not knowing the man well enough or long enough. Most people are on their best behavior when courting for the first 90 days.

Marriage is many good things but it is confined by intention when thought of as only a solution to sexuality. I quickly divorced Slim. I had not considered his well-being when I married him. I had ignored the glaring red flags I saw in my soon to be husband so I could get what **I** wanted. The union was based on selfishness. I broke the marriage vow and regretted the entire incident.

Should I have stayed in the marriage and sinned by self-induced oppression? Or should I have sinned by divorce and breaking a marriage vow? I deduced that I should not, by God live in my sinful mistake the rest of my life. The worse sin would have been rejecting my freedom to Love by staying with a man in a graceless institution by my immature ignorance of the higher law of Love.

Mathew 5:32

"But I say unto you whosoever put away his wife saving for the cause of fornication causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever marry her that is divorced commit adultery."

What does this scripture really mean? It is saying God's law is higher than man's law is it not. Even if the woman in the scripture was legally divorced, she still commits adultery states Jesus. The Judge signed the divorce decree, put his state seal on it and yet in Gods eye she is still obligated to her first husband. God's law prevails. His law deems the divorce occurred for the wrong reasons, only infidelity it declares will allow such a separation and freedom to unite with another person.

My question is this; are your beliefs in traditional marriage so lawfully bound that there is no allowance for grace? Does forgiveness stop when we consider the laws of marriage? I do not think that is what Jesus really meant. Mathew 15:1-9 talks about the scribes and Pharisees who asked Jesus

"Why do your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" Jesus answered: "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of tradition"

In my ignorance and fear of breaking traditional biblical law, I abandoned and breached the higher law of Love. I placed my fear of the law first and married with selfish motives in my heart. The act of sin to one may not be sin to another because of the motives of one's heart. Certainly, the act of marriage in of itself is not a sin but I believe it may be a sin depending on our heart.

Suppose I help someone because of the kindness of my heart and Love. Later I help someone again this time I'm doing it because they have something I want and I'm trying to manipulate them into giving it to me, I covet and lie to get what I want. Two of the same deed one sin, one Love. Indubitably, a big chocolate cake is not sinful but to the obese man it could be the tool of his self-destructive demise. In his heart, he lusts for it putting it before God, man and himself. The cake rules him it is his god. What about TV do I put it before my family and God? The same rule applies, what is in my heart?

Hebrews 4:12

“For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged swords, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of thoughts and intents of the heart.”

Mathew 15:8

“These people draw near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.”

Mathew 5:8

"Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

Romans 10:10

"For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

We have biblically established that what is in our hearts is the bottom line with God unto life and salvation. Given this knowledge,

I would like to be capable of placing with my hand what goes in and what comes out of my heart thank you! More self-sufficiency, Please!

Self-sufficiency does not jive with the realm of The Spirit. Let's examine the fornication issue a little further. Suppose on the flip side I meet that special man of God. A man of God, meaning he lives by the golden rule. This is the man I have been praying for, the man I want for my life partner.

We make a promise of fidelity to each other and keep it. We embark on a long loving relationship free of guilt and shame. We consider each other before ourselves often.

We do not legally marry or vow a vow because we are unsure of what tomorrow may bring and we have both been married before. Would I be living in sin? Would I be fornicating? I **think not**. Our motives are pure and within the boundaries of Gods higher law of Love.

Some men asked God this question,

Mathew 22:36-40

"Teacher which is the greatest commandment in the law? Jesus said to him
"You shall

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind.

This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it,

Love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

My point liberally spoken as it may be being if the motive in my heart is pure and my actions Loving, traditional do's and don'ts are not relevant. Moreover, this child of God is not bound by their meticulous and complicated tuition. Some may call these traditions religious bondage. Fornication as I understand it is committing a wrong act done out of twisted immoral motivation, selfish in nature and hurtful to people. Love cannot fornicate, only God can see my heart and yours. Setting moral boundaries for me and identifying what is and what is not sin for me is one crucial ingredient of my spiritual maturity. No one else can decide how I abide in good conscience toward God except me.

A proverb written by a friend of mine reads, ***"Of guilt I can't relieve you though you're sorry and I believe you."*** So often, when we go against our own beliefs and convictions (otherwise known as apostasy) we seek justification and approval from others. These confirmations give us temporary relief from inner guilt but do not cleanse our soul. Justification distracts us from our guilt and turns it to blame. Blame being a much easier emotion for our egos to handle. However, our hearts suffer the loss. Unchecked guilt usually results in self-hatred and snowballs into various sin. A little guilt can spin into more wrong action and create a downward spiral toward Hell.

Another spiritual succubus is un-forgiveness. Un-forgiveness also lives in our hearts and minds causing negative action due to negative feelings. I believe if we could see spiritual entities, these emotions such as guilt, hatred, blame etc. would appear as black clouds going down into the pit of our stomachs (like the graphic illustrations of disease in the movie "The Green Mile") and if unchecked, fill our bodies to the brim resulting in feelings that are unbearable. These feelings often spill over in a bad way. These individual sins should be checked daily and confessed to God and man.

The bottom line of my message to you is illustrated here so perfectly in First Corinthians.

First Corinthians 6:12-15

"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any. Meats for the belly and the belly for meats but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body."

AMEN

” REPENTANCE AN UGLY WORD OR A GRACIOUS GIFT?”

Acts 5:31 "Him (Jesus) God has exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins”.

Acts 11:18 "When they heard these things they became silent and they glorified God, saying, "Then God has also granted to the gentile’s repentance unto life."

Repentance should not be a one-time thing. It is necessary for salvation at the beginning of any Christian’s spiritual walk. Water baptism is referred to in Mark 1:4 as "A baptism of repentance.” This baptism is a formal act of Christianity. It is symbolic of dying to the flesh and rising in the spirit. Following such a monumental and decisive action of seeking God's will there will be evidence of God in our lives. There will be confirmative indications of God in us such as charitable Love toward others or "loving others as ourselves". In addition, we will be stepping into a process of spiritual growth that shows improvements gradually in our behavior. I heard a preacher tonight say repentance brings back the manifestations of God in our lives. We get re-aligned with the will of God and Things get easier when God is an active part of our life again.

I have yet to see perfection in any born again believer’s life. Often good change comes accompanied by difficulty and painful struggle. Repentance is a gift from God. Without it, none will grow spiritually or grow toward God in His likeness. Repentance usually results from guilt followed by honest self-examination. Solutions for remorse are found by conversations with God. The repentance process starts something like this. I realize I have hurt someone or myself by something I have done this causes an uneasy feeling inside of shame, remorse, guilt or utter horror. Our good conscience alone will let us know when we have done wrong. The Lord God has given us each good conscience for a reason, to use it to our own benefit.

Unless I am a sociopath and have no conscience or I have hardened, my heart against blessed emotions and am in deep denial I can recognize my guiding light my hearts nudge. Maybe I realize I have been living life wrong for a long time and have a whole river of tears to cry toward God. It is surely a gift when this point comes in our lives. Best we follow our own

hearts nudge rather than what appears to be working for others. I have found that my heart will not accept the deeds that another's heart seems to accept peacefully.

When my moment of clarity comes, I should seek God with honest and humble prayer saying I am wrong and asking for forgiveness. Thorough self-examination should be done nightly. A repentant heart admits when it is wrong without excuse or justification. This repentance is how I keep a free heart; it cleanses my soul and is a big part of my ongoing relationship with God. If I am not capable of admitting, I have been wrong to God or another person I can ask God to help me learn to repent.

As it is said if you cannot remember the last time, you were wrong, something might be wrong.

First John 1:9

“If we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

So often in a situation when we are not doing what we know is right for others or us we ask God for strength. "Yea, that's what I need, strength to do the right thing and overcome this besetting sin!" It makes sense in carnal theory, but for some reason my struggling, prayers for strength did not lead me toward that life more abundantly. Strength is great I love feeling strong! However, humility is the principal that keeps me close to God. It takes humility to repent.

Here I must sight the very first Bible scripture to which I could really relate. The scripture that set off a chain of re-birth events in my life. I began reading the Gideon's Bible I found in a hotel room drawer. I lived in a hotel for quite some time. I started reading Proverbs; the verses are timeless and contain little traditional law, therefore are easily understood and a very good place for a beginning bible reader to start. Proverbs laws are laws of the heart.

I moved to Texas when I was 22, I had no real friends or family there. I was definitely not doing what I knew I should or wanted to be doing. I

struggled with self-destructive sin. I began seeking God and turned to this scripture:

Romans 7:15 "I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do."

Romans 7:19 "For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do-this I keep on doing".

Romans 7:23 "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

Such a dilemma the Apostle Paul suffered! Such a dilemma we all suffer, call it the age-old war of the flesh and the Spirit. Label it the battle of fear verses Love. It is the war of sanity over insanity, diseased thinking over healthy thinking. This fight is ultimately one of death versus life. The two natures are in us all, the conflict is certain! Some are better at sticking to one side than others. Me, I was watching my soul's destruction by my own hand like a powerless spectator. I was unable to do what my own heart urged. The law of sin is very real and it will result in death if not checked. It is a spiritual law, one that can only be broken by spiritual means. This sin can be any flavor as long as it makes us a slave to it. This sin can be blatant or subtle. It can be gossip or murder. It can be drug addiction or just plain selfishness. Whatever the sin you can be sure it is hurting someone.

Romans 7:11

"For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew [me]."

The following intriguing poem exemplifies the law of sin:

"HER CALL"

*THE DARK SIDE CALLS, HER ARMS OPEN WIDE SHE WILL NOT
REJECT ME OR PUSH ME ASIDE*

*SHE TAKES ME IN, ——— I'M SEDUCED WITH RELIEF WITH
PLEASURE SO GOOD, BEYOND BELIEF*

*SHE STREAMS THROUGH MY SOUL ERASING MY GROWTH MY
UNDERSTANDING FADES, LIES SHE PROMOTES*

*SHE'S DARK IN MY DREAMS CALLING ME FAST
SCREW ALL THIS PAIN I'LL FREE YOU AT LAST!*

*SHE'S CUNNING SHE'S BAFFLING HER DECEPTION IS TRUE SHE
TELLS ME "I KNOW JUST WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU"*

*STREAM THROUGH MY SOUL FAMILIAR LOVER QUENCHING MY
THIRST LIKE NO OTHER*

*WARM FADED NOTIONS OF LIGHTED JOY FALL TO THE GROUND
LIKE A BROKEN TOY*

*REPLACED BY SENSATIONS OF DENIAL AND LUST IN THIS DARK
REALM SHE RESPECTS NO TRUST*

FUTURE GOOD FEELING? NEY, CONTINUOUS FALL

IS ALL SHE WILL GIVE ME SHE WILL MAKE ME CRAWL!

*I BECKON HER
CALL*

If we are deceived by our besetting sin, this means we cannot see how we are hurting others or ourselves by it. It means that somehow I believe the sin is what is best for me. We justify and rationalize away the reality that we are hurting people so we do not feel guilt; this is self-deceit from sin.

Once in church I watched as the preacher brought in a large crystal clear bottle of water and placed it where we could all see. He said, "this bottle of water is you, now I will show the effect of sin on your person." He took a tiny drop of red food coloring and said, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump." (Galatians 5:9) As the red droplet hit the clear water, I will never forget how it changed the color of that entire 5-gallon bottle. The preacher was so right; sin permeates my total inner man.

I want to stop here to say I make no practice of telling anyone what their sin is nor do I point out sin to try to change people. What I am doing is sharing, in this book, how I overcame the actions (sins) that caused me a lot of pain and trouble that maybe you can get the same peaceful results. At any time while reading, you may replace the word sin with one of many synonyms, such as weakness, flaws, infirmity, fault, curse, imperfection, transgression, offense, wrongdoing, mistake, misdeed, misconduct and my personal favorite: character defect. Some people take offense to religious words such as repent, sin etc. I have found that an apple by any other name is still an apple and that's just fine. By example, I would like to show the snowball effect of sin.

Let us say hypothetically that I have recently become born again. The Holy Spirit enlightens me; I have received Christ as my savior. I have stopped my immoral behavior with sex. I begin to speak more respectfully. I feel the Love of God in my daily life and my inner man, which is the evidence of the Spirit. I decide to quit smoking as well. It is self-destructive and my body is God's temple. I quit for a while and then I have a bad day. My children are caught skipping school and I am angry. The anger makes me very uncomfortable. I cope by having what I believe is a well-deserved cigarette; well-deserved because it will relieve the burdensome anger from a situation I cannot change. After the well-deserved, self-destructive unto death cigarette in comes the guilt. The regret of failing God and I is heavy on my heart. Maybe I will add a little self-condemnation to the mix. Followed by screaming and yelling at my kids because after all it's their fault that I smoked anyway. The blame eases my guilt. Snowball effect live and in progress. After screaming at my poor kids I need some serious relief, I go to the bar and have a few drinks, which turns into a few more. I run into my old lover (I am married) and it's on! The next thing I know I wake up at her house, my lungs hurt from smoking and I realize I had unprotected sex. Lord knows what could result from that! It can get worse from there or get better depending on me.

What happened? I say to myself, I was born again, and I am! Who knows what my new church friends would say about this behavior! They give me the impression that after being born again, washed clean, given the spirit of God I would be sinless. Gosh, I even spoke in tongues! Forgive myself?

No! I don't deserve it and either does anybody else. Snowballing sin? At this point if I don't repent, there's no telling what I'll do next. I can sit in astonishment of my unintended debauchery or I can blame everybody else and stay in denial.

Therefore, Apostle Paul and I ask, "Why do I do what I don't want to do?" The answer is because of the "law of sin", because of the law of being human. (Rom. 7:25) If this law of sin abides in me, how will I ever overcome my own thoughts and desires of the flesh? It is human nature to want to please God after a born again experience. We have changed and we are grateful. The logical mind says I can control these sinful desires through will power. "I'll set my mind against these behaviors and stop them for good." Paul says this law of sin "wars against the law of his mind" (Rom.7:23). I do not know about you but I have not been able to fix my mind with my mind. Neither was I schooled successfully in church on how to win this good war against myself it sounds crazy huh? I have struggled with sin before and after my born again experience. Temporarily, I can do the right thing while yearning to do wrong. Ultimately, my law of sin will win out against my own will power! How can I overcome sin? The recipe for spiritual success is right here in the word, if processed in a practical way.

Not to mention my neuron pathways have been in a cycle of guilt for so long it is natural for me to proceed in this fashion of sin, not only because of the law of sin but by the law of physiological habit.

Romans 7:24&25

"Oh wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."

A big Amen to that! This scripture says it all. When it comes right down to it, us humans don't have a snowballs chance in hell to escape damnation except for God's grace. Think about it. I don't mean to be all fire and brimstone but we are facing an impending death hear folks. Yet we are so blind to death actually happening to us although, it could happen today. If we compared eternity against our human life span, we would all live for

God and to help others every day of our lives? We would basically be kissing the Masters ass at all times to make out eternity more comfortable. Thank God for Grace. Not to mention we humans spend a lot of time trying to impress, and influence, our neighbors when really it's The Creator we should impress.

This born again experience is salvation for my soul. It required humility to get me to receive Christ and it requires humility to continue growing toward Christ. My favorite definition of humility is being aware of one's own character weaknesses and us born again believers do still have weaknesses contrary to some preacher teachings, ("the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." Mt.26:41) I have prayed for strength, struggled and waged war against the dark side in hopes of overcoming sin. Ultimately, surrender is what keeps me spiritually fit. Surrendering to God's will in my life on a daily basis, not just that one time initially when I accepted Christ but also following, as many times as it takes. For me that is daily, after all my flesh is with me daily.

First Corinthians 15:31

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

Do not get me wrong I am all for spiritual warfare. I myself war spiritually by prayer often. I have found when it comes to overcoming self-will and temptation a conscious daily decision or surrendering to God's will in my morning prayers and meditation is what keeps me from being overcome by the flesh or Satan or just plain selfishness. It is easy to say to myself "Go and sin no more." but sinning no more takes some positive action ahead of time. Dying daily as Paul phrases it is easier said than done. All that is in my flesh screams when I say the words "Thy will be done." To believe that God's will is better than my own means, admitting my will has not shown good results or my will has gotten me into major difficulties. Not only that asking for God's will makes me feel like I am going to lose out on my favorite things whether they be sin or not. I don't know what God wants for

my life, not explicitly but I do know what I want for myself. I feel shame that my will does not align with God's will. This my friend is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said "I die daily". It's not so much Satan that wars against our soul as our own self will.

Really, who would want to turn their will over to the Lord if their way is working for them? God's will is uncertain, and so strikes fear into my heart, and produces thoughts of losing something I want that He may not want me to have. Sometimes I pray for what I want then finish the prayer with "nevertheless thy will be done." Remember an honest prayer is most effective. Even Jesus prayed these words just before the soldiers apprehended Him. He feared, I believe, what He must soon suffer.

Mathew 26:39: "O my Father if it is possible let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

Lord knows if even Jesus at times had difficulty agreeing with God's will for His life, surely I will also. I like the 12 Step spin on this God's will thing. Step 3 is "Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him". That does not feel so much like a rule as a blessing because of the word "care" and blessings are good for me. I suppose there are others who have far surpassed this struggle of flesh against spirit and have no need to die daily. They have reached absolute reliance on God and don't commit selfish acts and have no further need for the blessing of repentance; Lord bless them I feel they'll soon be translated.

Avoiding the need for repentance takes practical action on my part. Spiritual learning comes in waves if I continue to seek God. Each wave is a level not outside myself to measure success, but a depth in my very being, my very heart. The new lessons are deeper, supplying a more resolute trust in God and a oneness with His will. When explained in words these lessons sound the same (not specifically but principally) as previous lessons learned.

We as students hear or say a spiritual phrase learn it, experience it, and want to be done with it. Graduate from that particular lesson. Then perhaps believing we got that lesson feel smug, prideful that we can now teach other Christians that which we so painfully learned.

In Mathew 6:33&34 Jesus talks about relying on God. He says not to worry about our earthly needs that God knows them and will surely supply. I read and understand this scripture intellectually. I have experienced times I did not have food, car, or money and miraculously God did get me through it, he supplied my needs all along during and after much worry. I got the scripture down I got that lesson down! I see now my worry had been futile. Following my lesson learned my neighbor Mr. Jones loses his job and tells me he's scared to death of what might happen I smugly inform him, "God shall provide" all the while thinking: "Oh ye of little faith." Next, a tornado destroys my lovely house. I then find out just how much I trust God. If I stay the path of faith and get through the disaster where God gives me a better house, I will have learned the teaching of Mathew 6:34 in a much deeper way. My faith and connection with God will be stronger because of it. However, something else has happened, another lesson. Why did I think I could fix Mr. Jones with words from a scripture? I cannot see his heart and its level of growth I should not judge him. I had to learn deeper faith from my own experience so must Mr. Jones.

What is peace of mind, one definition is that wonderful feeling everything is okay and will be okay. The opposite of waiting on the Lord to provide would be me running around like a chicken with its head cut off begging, borrowing and stealing quick replacements for all I've lost in that storm, impatiently trying to reacquire all that I lost not considering anyone or any consequence of my actions. This would be a faithless reaction to the disaster of losing my home. Though this reaction is human nature, at some point I must put my life in God's care to have peace.

Hebrews 10:24&25

"And let us consider one another in order to stir up Love and good works. Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day."

Fellowship with other believers is also imperative to growth and change. Choosing my Christian or believing friends wisely is very important. We tend to pick up behaviors from those we socialize or play with. Some people are more fearful (hard to get along with) than others. Some run on fear and some run on Love not totally but on the most part. By fear, I do not mean the kind of fear that is healthy and preserves life. Nor do I mean the kind that implies reverence to God. I mean the kind that disguises itself in some of these character flaws.

Vanity, false pride controlling, enabling, criticism, judgmental, gossip, chaos, drama, gluttony, sloth, immortality, addictions, hatred, violence, faultfinding, self-righteous, greediness, blame etc. all these are rooted in unhealthy fear. Nobody I know is free of character flaws. However, glaring character defects can be contagious. Choosing friends that I strive to emulate is beneficial. Having to unlearn behaviors is difficult enough for a born again believer without being negatively influenced by others. My spiritual teacher Sister Petty used to quote this scripture:

Song of Songs 2:15

"Quick! Catch all the little foxes before they ruin the vineyard of your Love, for the grapevines are all in blossom."

Sister Petty meant the little cumbersome annoyances that seem insignificant to my spiritual condition one way or another can collectively bring me to ruin.

First Corinthians 15:33

"Do not be deceived: evil company corrupts good habits."

When others wrong us, it is a perfect opportunity to exercise good change. Expressing our own feelings in a non-attacking respectful way to the

offender or even a neutral party promotes healthy emotions. The descriptions of good behavior in the Bible usually cannot be invoked through knowledge and self-will alone. The Lord does look upon our hearts and sees our desire to do His will. When we blaming others for our own shortcomings and do some honest self-appraisal we will be able to repent and ask God for help to overcome our sins.

Proverbs 16:18

"Pride goeth before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Roadblocks to progress and joy stand firm when we have become so good at blaming people and circumstances for what our lives have become that we don't identify our shortcomings and can't see what to repent of. Comparing ourselves to Jesus and lining up our actions with biblical principles shows sin in its true light. Comparing ourselves to the gossiping hooker down the road can make us feel better (haughty) but such a comparison yields us a false view of ourselves.

Hebrews 12:3-6

"For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your soul. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And, you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chasten, and scourges every son whom He receives." (NKJ)

This scripture commonly attributed as the writings of Apostle Paul is difficult to understand. I do know to be willing to take an honest look at my faults I had to have some serious motivation. It is tough to examine even one-character flaw. God's chastening brings about the emotional pain to be willing to change. Call it consequences or call it chastening either way it is a painful result of my own negative behavior. In turn, these unpleasant consequences send me into either denial or conviction. If these painful lessons have stopped and I cannot remember the last time I was wrong, I am either near perfect, one with God's will or spiritually stagnant. Maybe I am very good at defining my loved ones and associates faults but am clueless of my own. A life without chastening is a life without progress.

I want to discuss the merits and benefits of various religions. I have been in tent revivals where by God's Spirit miracles flow and the preaching is fiery and truthful. I have seen the Catholic confessional where men are set free from hidden secrets of guilt and shame and are not judged for being fallible. I have heard the praises ringing out from the Pentecostal Church where God dwells and the gifts of the Spirit flow. I have heard Baptist preachers speak of the grace of God by the blood of Jesus on the cross so powerfully it opened the eyes and hearts of men. I have sat in the rooms of 12 step programs where the people have shown the humility of children and a willing service to God sharing the miracles they have experienced by God's mighty Loving grace. I have been in my own nondenominational church where the Love flows like milk and honey from the preacher's heart and the choir was so gifted that each singer could have their own label. Amen

James 5:16

"Confess your trespasses to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much." (NKJ)

The effects of repentance and confession are unparalleled. Getting shameful secrets out of our head results in relief and freedom. If we pick a caring, honest person who can relate to us to hear our secrets, we find a fellowship surpassed by none. It helps so much when we realize other believers have the same struggles as we. Be prudent and patient in picking our confessional. We must be careful not to pick someone we will hurt with our words. Oftentimes concerns between wives and husbands, are better left unsaid. We must think this action of confession through and pray for guidance in this exercise of not only emotional health but also spirituality.

The exercises I am presenting are a work toward loving others and ourselves. A way we can learn to accept our brothers with their shortcomings by realizing our own. Suddenly we will realize change is coming over us through these simple principals. Our perception of God toward us will become much more loving and less rigid, less punishing. Our perceptions of self, others and God are one in nature. This knowledge

is a great key to spiritual joy. Our honesty toward others, God, and self are also one in nature. Are we critical of others? If so you can bet our feelings deep down are the same toward us. I know I need to grow if my heart is critical. This measurement of spiritual status can be taken daily. By investigating my feelings toward those that have wronged my loved ones or me, I can learn my heart. Can I forgive or do I stand on my righteous anger unto death? Commonly phrased, "I'll take it to my grave." My God will forgive whomever He pleases me or the most diabolical murdering child molester on the face of the earth. (Romans 9:15) Un-forgiveness prevents me from growing toward Love. A root of bitterness can grow into a tree of hate, which is no fun! Only the self-deluded are most comfortable reveling in self-righteous hate toward those so wrong, they feel they are deserving of their hate. Forgiving others frees me to Love myself and have life more abundantly.

How do I forgive? What I do is pray for whoever it is I hate or resent and then forgive them in word asking God to cause my heart to follow. This really works.

“WISDOM is opposite of FREEWILL GONE BAD”

My favorite definition of wisdom is “Knowledge put into action”

Another spiritual law that can make or break us is the karmic law of the tongue. The words we speak can be charitable and lovely or retched and deadly. I believe my own words have much more power over me than your words do. Not to say that I may not feel your words emotionally more than my own. I am suggesting that spiritually, by karmic law, my words affect me by karma more than other people’s words spoken to me. I will reap what I sew this law stands firm just as the law of gravity and the law of every action creates a reaction holds true. These laws are unchangeable except where the awesome power of grace is given.

Mathew 15:10&11

"When He called the multitude and said to them", hear and understand: Not what goes into the mouth defiles a man; but what comes out of the mouth, this defiles a man."

Proverbs 21:23

"Whoever guards his mouth and tongue, keeps his soul from troubles."

Ecclesiastes 5:2

"Be not rash with thine mouth and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God; for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth therefore let thy words be few."

Proverbs 12:18

"There is one who speaks like the piercings of a sword, but the tongue of the wise promotes health."

Proverbs 15:1&2

"A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness."

Proverbs 15:4

"A wholesome tongue is a tree of life, but a perverseness in it breaks the spirit."

James 3:5-8

"Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison."

These scriptures are self-explanatory. The words we speak not only have an outward effect, but also create an inward result. A friend once wrote "Tell all you know and there will be nothing left, share your experience faith and hope, and it will grow and fill your heart with peace." The karmic law (if you will) of speech can work for us or against us, it all comes back to Love. Are my words complaining, gripping, fear based and hateful or are they charitable and encouraging?

I have often thought about the scripture; "A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." (Proverbs 15:1) If I am interacting with an angry or hurt person, kind words promote healing both emotionally and spiritually. One friend I know is so good at not letting negative words pass over his tongue. When I asked him about it, he said, "First it's an exercise in self-restraint. Just because certain thoughts pass through my mind I

don't have to say them, if I keep practicing self-restraint after a while the negative thoughts and feelings subside, they come less often." because of this exercise he has peace and it shows.

I want this magic health to my soul, I want the spiritual goodness that will come when I stop myself from uttering every opinion, and pride filled thought springing from my heart. This exercise heals from within. If we encourage others with truthful charitable words, we will receive good results. These wise truths about the taming of the tongue are written in the word of God and I believe them! This karmic law is taught not only in Christian doctrine but also in many other religions.

Galatians 6:7

"Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to the flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life."

This karmic law in no way nullifies the gift of grace. Grace is about not reaping what we sow, with karmic law in place; grace is truly a miracle and blessing from God. Moreover, to reap what I sew is not only about my life here on earth, it is about actions now that enrich my eternity. Love is everlasting and it starts right here, today in our actions toward others. I want to reap good things so I am willing to try the actions suggested in this anointed word of God. Life or death abides in the words I speak.

Wisdom- The quality of being wise; power of judging rightly and following the soundest course of action, based on knowledge, experience, understanding, etc. Good judgment, sagacity. 2. Learning, knowledge, erudition (wisdom of the ages). 3. Wise discourse of teaching, 4. A wise course of action. (Webster's)

Proverbs 9:9

"Give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser: teach a just man and he will increase in learning. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. For by me (wisdom) thy days shall be multiplied and the years of thy life shall be increased."

About now, I am asking myself "What on earth have I to share about wisdom?" Really! I am not usually wise in my own eyes, but lacking. Proverbs 3:7 states; "Be not wise in thine own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil." Do I always depart from evil? Evil meaning taking the wrong course of action or actions contrary to what I know is best or contrary to my knowledge. Evil does not necessarily entail a glaring, dark, twisted hurtful action. The answer is no; I do not always take the best course of action. I wish I did, nevertheless! I believe I understand the meaning of knowledge based wise action and can share accordingly. A friend of mine wrote this poem about the wise. We believe that the heart and soul can be seen through the window of the eyes.

"THE EYES OF THE WISE"

The eyes of the wise how would they read?

With oceans of intellect and knowledge of seas?

Or maybe shine forth with prophetic revelation

Holding mountains of philosophy and valleys of expression

Appearing timeless as the heavens, outside our dark system

Having evidence of forever showing forth as they glisten.

The eyes of the wise how do they read?

Simply as a small child's ready to receive

The words Jesus spoke are simple yet need to be realized in a deep and humble level of our heart.

Mathew 18:3- "Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Plainly, theologians and historians do not know for sure if Solomon wrote the book of Ecclesiastes. I remember reading Ecclesiastes for the first time and pondering the life of the man written of in that interesting book. (Whether it be written by Solomon or not). Solomon was said to be the wisest man of his time. (1stKings 4:29-34). Yet he was so fallible. He, (the writer, philosopher of Ecclesiastes whose actions and beliefs correspond with those of Solomon) was quite the intellectual. He spoke of seeking out vast quantities of knowledge, seeking wisdom, and doing great works.

The wise King Solomon sought out every good project available to men in those times, the arts, and building, eating, loving, celebrating, gaining silver, gold, all enjoyment, and wisdom under the sun. With this in mind, he concluded for himself that much of his escapades were pointless or folly he said because both the fool and the wise man end up in the same place, buried naked in the ground. He struggled with the realization that given all his wisdom and riches he would still end up in the same place as the fool. He struggled with the thought that his riches, on the most part; would be left to a man after him. (Ecc.2:18) He wrote that all his research, studies, complicated endeavors and intense contemplation were vanity. Wow!

Ecclesiastes 2:15&16

"Then said I in my heart, as it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then wiser? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity. For there is no remembrance of the wise more than of the fool forever; seeing that which now is in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool."

I can relate to this man because of my own painful realization of human mortality mixed with my tendencies toward visions of grandeur. (False pride) Oh how my vanity wants me to be better than other men. Oh how it

pains my false pride to realize I am not God. Sure, logically I accept this but what my natural heart yearns for is recognition and glory. I want to be praised yet now I see I shall end up old and haggardly that is if I am blessed enough to live that long. Perhaps this man of reflection in his repeated words; "vanity of vanities, saith the preacher; all is vanity." was suffering from the realization that he could not control circumstances set down by God, such as life, death and aging. I hear this preacher man screaming out from his heart; "It's not fair things should be the way *I* want them to be!" While pointing out the futility of reality he is in denial of his own control issue. What he needs to do next is accept that God is in charge. May I be so bold to say the preacher needs to realize his own shortcomings to find peace?

My history book states:

"Solomon having much intellect spake 3,000 proverbs, and his songs numbered a thousand and five. His greatest enterprise was the erection of the temple at Jerusalem, in which he was occupied seven years, and it was most elaborately adorned. (First Kings Chapters 5 and 6) He is known as the wisest man, yet his wisdom did not teach him self-control. He taught well but failed to practice his own precepts. He describes the fool in the book of Proverbs and thus draws a vivid picture of his own failings." (Thompson Chain Ref. Bible)

How ironic! I can't help see the parallels between Jonah and King Solomon. It does seem "all is vanity" with us humans. I cannot help but see the similarities of me and this man.

Kings 11:3&4

"Solomon also had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father." I prefer the word complete rather than perfect according to our

Standard English definition. (Reference "perfect" Hebrew and Chaldee dictionary of the Old Testament, Strong's concordance)

OK! That is a lot of beautiful woman, I can vividly envision poor King Solomon's plight. I believe between the pleasures available to him and his intellect, Solomon had huge obstacles to overcome before owning the humility it takes to rely on God. In his case, riches and intellect was an obstacle to his personal growth. Some say you cannot be too simple to find God but you can be too smart; truth spoken, if I have high intelligence I will be more deeply rooted in self-sufficiency. If I have man's glory, I will be more apt to bend toward grandeur and false pride. (Vainglory) Solomon was detoured from God by the Love (or lust) for his woman. We can learn from his human weakness. Though few of us have the ways and means of Solomon, we still may have the means for continuous pleasurable distractions. We still may be the king or queen of our castle.

First Timothy 5:6: "But she that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth".

Isaiah 47:8&9: "Therefore hear now this, thou that are given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children: But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day, the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy sorceries, thine enchantments."

Never say never!

All right, let's stop here! This is beginning to sound a little legalistic, I enjoy my pleasure, and I scream, "don't take my pleasure away!" Truly, I see little reason to serve a God only because I fear Hell fire. Who could practice legalistic rules of mundane obedience with no fun in their life and remain faithful not flailing into some kind of besetting sin, even if it were under the

guise of religion and service? Hypothetically, those of us regulated by rules and law see those sinners having fun, enjoying sex, drinking and partying with no apparent negative consequences and darn it, we feel jealousy and envy. We can label the unpleasant emotion of envy righteous indignation and let these sinners know they are going to pay! God will punish them for their guiltless fun! Finger pointing is always a bad idea best I do not act out.

James 4:12

"There is but one law giver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?"

Inside our heart, if we listen to it, we may be asking, why can't I participate in guilt free enjoyment? The lures of pleasure are great! The lures of distraction from truth are great! In all reality, our God will provide us with guilt free, sinless pleasures while we are obedient to Him. I have found much fun while walking in God's will. Balance is one key to a pleasurable and spiritual walk with God. We need balance! Dogma all the time makes Jack a dull boy! Pleasure all the time consumes Jack in self-indulgence; as he leaves his God behind in the wake of self-serving sin. Ultimately, if we do live for pleasure, we will have a great spiritual and emotional fall. (I do speak from experience) True wisdom accepts complete reliance on God.

Proverbs 9:9

"The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. "

I fear where I will end up if I do not rely on God. Free will goes bad but without free will where would honor, perseverance, tolerance, patience, faith and every other spiritual attribute fit in? There would be no such virtue necessary in our lives. There would be no need to overcome and no fighting the good fight.

First Timothy 6:12

"Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

In Proverbs it is written numerous times "wisdom seeks counsel." Presidents seek counsel, kings seek counsel, strong godly men, and woman through the ages seek wise counsel. Personally I have several wise counselors some family, some professional, some friends. We can seek advice regarding an action to take or not to take. Self-deception on the other hand, under the guise of good counsel seeks advice until it hears what it wants to hear. There are always people out there who will co-sign my bullshit if I seek them out. On the other hand, seeking various ideas and opinions when confused about a trying situation is wise. Aligning our decisions with God's word is smart. Think well about your motives with all self-honesty. Possible consequence of a decision should be thoroughly considered.

We cannot please everyone, people pleasing actions are fear based and can leave us insecure and resentful. This kind of decision-making is rooted in the fear of losing someone we want in our life. Best we put God and ourselves first where matters of the heart are concerned. I am not saying be selfish and inconsiderate toward others, however if we deplete our own well-being what good are we to any man? Rescuing others from their own consequences breeds irresponsibility and is not Love. There is much to consider in important decisions, council brings out these many considerations and options. Often talking with someone about a matter by itself brings forth clarity of mind.

In choosing council we should look for someone who will not judge, someone who cares, the motive of the counselor is relevant. Are they strictly about money or are they being paid yet sincere, hoping for our improvement with no ill intent? Counselors make mistakes also so we too

should not judge them if we disagree with their advice. Sometimes in a dilemma, the wisest course of action is no action. We humans tend to want to fix people by our actions. Example: Martha's husband is an alcoholic. She struggles inside herself; will he get sober? Should I leave him? Have I had enough disrespect from him? What can I do to make him quit drinking? We humans worry excessively about how things look to our peers. Leaving a marriage because of peer pressure lack sound and mature reasoning... The wife's decision about her dilemma should be based on sound virtue and conscience. Channeling our concerns to God is necessary for smart solutions. He will guide us by our heart if our mind is, clear and we are spiritually connected. The Holy Bible has an abundance of rules. It's no wonder so many people have written this wonderful book off as heresy and foolishness. On a whole, all of these rules are impossible to obey.

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY CREATES SELF-ESTEEM AND FENDS OFF HATE AND BLAME

It is wise to take responsibility for our own actions and decisions I think it's better to take responsibility now rather than later. Because of our lessons in childhood, oftentimes we equate the word "responsibility" with the word "fault". The word "fault" implies that a wrong action was taken which resulted in a negative consequence or occurrence. Therefore, with this definition in mind I will show you an example of how taking responsibility for our own actions even when others wrong us are wise.

A drunk driver wrecks into a sober man and puts him in the critical care unit of the Hospital. The sober driver committed no crime to receive such a horrible consequence (the crash) therefore, it is not his fault. The negative consequences are the fault of the man that committed the irresponsible crime of driving while drunk. By the same token the innocent driver knew the statistics and possibilities of driving on a highway. He knew Each year, about 1,300,000 people are killed in road accidents while driving, he chose to drive anyway. The innocent driver weighed the highway accident

statistics against his need to get from point A to point B he then made his responsible choice to drive. He had a one in 1,300,000 of dying that day. He knew a wreck could happen but hopes that it will not. But unfortunately he texted while driving and increased his odds by 8 times. Now, after the wreck as he suffers broken bones in the hospital he knows he made the choice fully aware of the facts. By the innocent driver taking responsibility for his own choices, he is free from blame, hate and anger toward the drunk driver...his taking responsibility keeps him free of resentment toward others. This injured man has a lot of trauma to work through. It will be much easier for him to manage emotionally without a boat-load of hate and revenge dragging him down.

Taking responsibility for our choices regarding any relationship keeps us resentment free. Yes, if we are wronged or betrayed it hurts however, we are responsible to process our own pain and anger...we are the only ones who can do this for us. We are not at fault when we are wronged just responsible. When we use this wise method of taking responsibility for our own actions it sets us free from the pains of blame and hate. This law also sets the stage for self-esteem and self-worth by taking responsibility for my right actions I have created good consequences in my life hence I build my well-deserved self-worth.

LAW VS LOVE

CAN YOU SEE IN DARK WHAT YOU SEE IN LIGHT? IF OUR MIND IS CLOSED ITS ALWAYS NIGHT

I do not want to downplay the law or its pure and good purpose for mankind. There are many Biblical laws, The Ten Commandments, Mosaic

Law, the law of the land, the greatest commandments by Christ, all the rules and regulations Apostle Paul and the disciples set down as tradition. There are laws of sacrifice, atonement, holiness, purity, carnality, UNCLEAN! UNCLEAN! Let's not forget those pesky religious laws made-up by certain church's that dictate don't wear this, don't say that, shouldn't marry her, too much jewelry, didn't tithe enough, rules of eating, rules of drinking, cut that hair, don't cut that hair! Oh yes the list goes on and it is rigid! If we are wrapped up in all those laws, we will probably feel like the Israelites did when Moses came down from Mount Sinai with more rules than anyone could keep up with to obey. (Heb.12:20) "OMG it's all too much to handle! Psychic meltdown I can't do it I am doomed!" So cried the voices of the Israelites.

That is.... unless we are the one's doling out the rules to someone else, in the context of: "I know what is good for you spiritually better than your own conscience does." Yes, in a judgmental scenario rules and regulations grant me a superior and false sense of self-worth and esteem. And let's not be too hard on ourselves (or others). Sometimes these subconscious emotional survival skills rescue us from deep depression and give us a sense of purpose. Openly and legalistically judging others however, is a counterfeit for truly helping others and will never grant us the true and rejuvenating self-worth we need to be at peace.

True self-worth comes from righteous action not righteous judgement. I have come to realize 'religion' is usually just an emotional band aid. Spirituality however is a condition of the heart and is built through right actions toward ourselves or others and relationship with God.

Revelation 3:21

"To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne?"

We human beings understand rules well. We live by them; we teach them to our children to keep them safe. We teach them to our teenagers to keep them from shame and regret. We explain moral rules, rules of conduct,

rules of math and science. Many of the rules, if not followed have grave consequences, jail, death and worse.

The Old and New testaments are nearly impossible to learn and remember much less to to implicate in our lives and obey all the time. Most Christians pick and choose which Old Testament rules they want to site. Have you read Leviticus, Exodus, or Deuteronomy? Those books contain countless instructions on how to live! They contain threatening punishments and grave consequences for not following God's exhaustive, undoable rules. Just the word “disobedience” has a ring to it that makes me want to bolt away from any church!

A little friend of my daughters came to me and asked me to explain the bible. I told her, “Samantha let me sum up the entire bible for you. I have read it several times and this is my conclusion.” I gave her Jesus’ words of the two greatest commandments. I said, “Love God and Love everyone. However, this is impossible to do by human means alone, so we must learn to rely on God and build a relationship with him through prayer so we can Love. To ask God to help us do the very things He commanded and do His will always.” She said to me “You mean the golden rule treat others the way I want to be treated?” “Yes this is the whole law.” I felt this was the best way to answer her question rather than trying to explain the multitude of laws in the bible. Simply and so beautifully put this scripture brings peace to my soul and calmness to my mind.

Romans 3:10

“Love worketh no ill to his neighbor therefore Love is the fulfilling of the law.”

Hebrew 12:18-24:

"For you have not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest. And the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." AMEN!

Strangely, even though I am a child of the new covenant and believe on the scriptures in Hebrews that assure me I am Loved, forgiven and have an eternal home with my Wonderful Father I still sometimes feel like a condemned child of the law born into ongoing sin, guilt, shame, and punishment. Perhaps these feelings come from my inner core. I am an eternal part of God, which makes the covenant from Mt. Sinai a part of my inner spirit.

My core being is all things God. Maybe the feeling of self-imposed impending doom comes from some childhood issue of feeling bad and wrong. I do not know exactly but I do know I need to stay connected to God so that legalistic self-condemning part of me does not take hold and beat me down. Now and again, I feel I am carrying the curse of Mt. Sinai on my hip like a special needs child that I Love so much yet is dragging me down.

Our lives all spring from Adam and Eve and the original sin and curse which feels like a part of me...a part of us, we all, His children, are the children of shame and fear. Therefore, the old law and covenant perches in my soul like a dark feeling emerging from time to time. I must refresh my

soul with the new covenant often as possible by connecting with Jesus. I must tell you, when we are angry, hurt, embarrassed, lonely, grieving, lying, deceptive, greedy, controlling, possessive, and a whole lot more other emotions then there is usually something we are afraid of. We either fear losing something we have or not getting what we feel we need. (See list in “[Maybe Satan](#)” chapter.

Romans 7:24

“Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”

Colossians 2:22

“In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:”

Exodus 20:20

"And Moses said unto the people, Fear not: for God is come to prove you, and that his fear may be before your faces that ye sin not."

Did God believe that fear would keep the Israelites in line? Did God think they would be able to obey the laws set down by Moses? Did he believe that He could rule the people by fear? I believe my God is omnipotent. I believe my God is Pure Love. He knew his people whom He created and how they would react. I accept both covenants as God's plan and believe that someday I will thoroughly understand the reasoning of God's plan.

Law and punishment works to a point but when the laws become too much to handle we rebel and look for other options. Such as we may hide from

God and lie to ourselves because we fear retribution. These laws set us up for failure. If the Israelites had turned to God and said, "We can't handle this help us to obey!" rather than turning to other god's; things probably would have been different. Maybe God would have felt pity if they would have expressed their dilemma to Him. Many of the Israelites did not make it to the promise land including Moses frankly put it is written God destroyed them. (Exodus 33:25&37)

What exactly is the "Old Covenant? Rules and regulations set down by God through Moses, prophets of old and priestly mediation, to be abided by, all emphasizing purity of life, as a condition of divine favor; including, laws and actions resulting in sanctification and redemption of sin through sacrificing, feasts, blood sprinklings, special building, sacred props, (candles etc.) priestly duties, special clothing, vows ritual cleansing's, offerings, rules of morality, the list goes on and on.

Burnt offerings, signifying atonement and consecration (Leviticus 1:2-9)

Meat (meal) offerings signify thanksgiving (Leviticus 2:1&2)

Sin offerings, signifying reconciliation (Leviticus chapter 4)

Trespass offerings signifying cleansing from guilt, (Leviticus 6:2-7)

Peace offerings signifying fellowship (Leviticus 7:11-15)

(Thompson Chain Reference Bible "Outline Studies or Analyses Books of the Bible)

Summed up the Old covenant employs a way to work our way into righteousness or suffer the mortal consequences of disobedience. Work and sacrifice our way to a guilt free life, salvation through works. This concept implies I should have the wherewithal to do the right things and stay in God's favor. Hypothetically, the only need I would have for God is to understand His laws and do them. I wish I were that good I do not lie to myself and pretend I am capable of obedience without reliance on God. This kind of relationship with God does not sound like it is from the heart,

or a Love affair. Rather it exhibits a relationship based on fear, strict discipline, and endless restrictions.

Many of us are used to these legalistic patterns because of our childhood; it is very natural to apply formerly established concepts of behavior to our attempt at spirituality. These old lawful ways remind me of a master and slave relationship. The old covenant requires a life of bondage, repressing free will and natural instincts. With this strictly regulated life, I surely would have been toast.

Galatians 4:21-25

"Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.

He who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants the one from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and answereth to Jerusalem which now is and is in bondage with her children."

So, the Bible says the old covenant is of "flesh and bondage". Unfortunately, if I feel I can work my way to heaven, self-reliantly then I can also judge and condemn myself, self-reliantly. The pendulum swings both ways. I must keep myself as a child of God for peace, sake!

Another pitfall of living for law is my attitude of achievement. "Look what I've accomplished, look what I've done for my God!" We have learned that "pride comes before a fall" and **self-reliance breeds false pride**. As an experienced backslider with Biblical knowledge, I have searched the scriptures hoping to relieve my guilt, but for me while in a guilty backslidden state of mind; all I was able to find were scary and condemning scriptures that deepened my guilt. I can understand how a believer's guilt

could throw him or her into denial and unbelief about Christ and the word. However, for the grace of God, this did not happen to me.

I feared Hell and judgment. What I should have feared was the actual consequences of my backslidden sin. I created my own Hell well enough, with prescription pills and a whole array of other substances and sick relationships. Why fear Satan when I am my own worst enemy? I learned many things wallowing in my backslidden days. I learned that God's Grace is a miraculous thing, which endures and is more powerful than my own self-destructive and self-loathing abuse. I learned that He still loves me during my sin in spite of me not loving myself. The Lord did not suddenly stop His Love for me because I returned to my sinful ways that would have been a conditional Love, which is a human concept selfish and weak. Again, there I was stamping fleshly ideals onto my concept of God's Love. I learned that I ought not to judge others when they struggle with their own besetting sin. I learned humility. I learned tolerance of others shortcomings. I learned that even the child molester and the murderer (I use these examples because most of us are repulsed by those who commit such atrocities.) deserve forgiveness. I learned that under certain conditions all of us humans are capable of most any flavor of sin. Some might say to that theory; I would never commit this or that sin under any circumstance. I say never say never. Some believe that character assassination is as much a sin as assassination of a life. Well I think one is mortal sin the other not, surely its worse to snuff out a life than it is to gossip about one.

What about the mindset; "I'm not under law so I can sin and not worry about any spiritual repercussions." I suppose this may work for some, if they believe it wholeheartedly. I have found following my own conscience makes me most happy.

Galatians 5:13

"For you brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty; as an opportunity for the flesh, but through Love serve one another. For all the

law is fulfilled in one word, even in this”: You should Love your neighbor as yourself” But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!”

In the above scripture, Apostle Paul did not say anything about God or Satan, only that you will be consumed by one another if led by the flesh. I used to think sinning against my neighbor was wrong because it hurt them. Rightly so but now I realize how it hurts me. The liberty in Christ spoken of in Galatians 5:13 if used to feed my flesh will consume me first and foremost. I should consider my brother and myself when choosing how to act. This puts obedience to the law in a completely different light, an alternative perspective. Meaning my obedience to Christ protects me. I want to have a good and happy life therefore I am willing to deny myself certain sinful passionate desires that I know may hurt someone I Love. To loving myself, I deny myself that piece of cake because I will be happier and healthier if I am not overweight.

Make no mistake fellow believers, the flesh or self-will is at times very cunning and self-destructive. The addict gets the benefit of seeing his spiritual malady more quickly and clearly because of the degree of consequences that his idolatrous sin brings him. One good reason to believe that works will not save us before or after we accept Christ is if we could save ourselves, we would not need a savior. If we could be saved from death by works, it would mean Christ died in vain, God forbid.

Galatians 2:21

"I do not set aside the grace of God: For if righteousness is through law, then Christ died without cause." KJII

Apostle Paul with such eloquence implored The Church of Galatia.

Galatians 3:3

"Are you so foolish having begun in the spirit do you now perfect yourself in the flesh?"

During a slide back into the flesh it is more comfortable to apply scriptures like these to other people who we assume are in need of straightening themselves out. We seldom, during a descent into selfishness ask ourselves how scripture applies to us. The struggle with my flesh and breaking scriptural law feed guilt to my soul. Love thy neighbor can be made a grey area. Perhaps I can justify my sins by labeling them "done in Love" What a great loophole! LOOP HOLE, LOOP HOLE! If this is the context of my thinking, I can pretty much label my motives flesh. After all, I have devised many useless techniques for burying guilt!

Definitions of the "flesh" are as follows:

Bodily, temporal, or animal, unregenerate, carnal, fleshly (Strong's)

The term animal implies living on instincts focused only on what I want and what I need to survive.

Galatians 2:16:

"Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified."

Thank God, for the new covenant we are saved because we believe! (John 3:16)

James 2:20:

"But wilt thou know o vain man, that faith without works is dead?"

James 2:18

"Now someone may argue, "Some people have faith; others have good deeds." I say, "I can't see your faith if you don't have good deeds, but I will show you my faith through my good deeds." (New Living Translation)

In other words, if we have true faith, works will follow this is my experience.

Years ago, I given, called to a ministry for women. It was a ministry of Love and forgiveness to strippers, hookers and drug addicted woman. The most common feeling expressed among the ladies that obstructed their walk toward Christ was the belief that they must clean up their act before they could seek God. They believed they were not worthy of forgiveness in their sinful state. This self-condemning belief goes hand in hand with applying self-reliance to spiritually needy areas of our lives.

By the nature of self-reliance, we are responsible for stifling our own sinful essence, even the credence that we alone are capable of "being good" without Gods help is a mighty and carnal myth that has brought down kings and vagabonds alike. As the Greeks have Zeus, the Romans have Neptune the Egyptians have Isis I am no such god.

I do not know any but I speculate the people who are truly capable of setting moral boundaries always keeping them who experience no inner struggle of good and evil tragically, have no need for God. If someone of this autonomous nature lost a loved one or contracted a disease, they may be pushed to their limit and seek God.

Understanding the theorem of faith and grace is often difficult for us humans because it is a gift. I am not comfortable with receiving gifts because I feel wrong, weak, and penitent. My neuron process in my brain is not familiar with the patterns of receiving an unconditional Loving gift. I am used to strings! I shall apply my own scholarly, well thought out

preconceived ideas about gifts thank you! A reward for being unable to live righteously does not compute! All I have to do is accept the gift, remain teachable, and rely wholeheartedly on Christ? Ideals easier said than done! This goes against all my natural instincts of self-sufficiency! Why did God make us weak and fleshly, doomed to a physical death? Good question, The Apostle Paul shows us one reason.

Second Corinthians 12: 9&10

"And He said unto me, "My grace is sufficient for thee for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me. Therefore, I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

What a paradox! Apostle Paul, with certainty of conviction-filled faith stated his pure unwavering reliance on Christ! Such acceptance of God's will! I venture to guess his faith did not come overnight. We do know Paul had a revelation of Jesus on the road to Damascus. Paul was blinded for three days then healed by Ananias by the laying on of hands. (Acts Chapter 9) These events gave him a major jump-start where reliance on God is concerned. The crucifying of the flesh is a process of painful self-realizations and fearful yet courageous change. "Courage is not the absence of fear, it is the absence of self" Apostle Paul suffered and died for the gospels sake, he walked through the fear in the absence of self.

II Corinthians 11:24-27:

"Of the Jews five times I received forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeying's often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often in cold and nakedness."

Those examples are just a few things Paul suffered. He had to be an extraordinary man.

He suffered extreme opportunities to exercise trust in God and survived. We all have our own opportunities to grow in faith, hopefully not to this extreme. We each walk our own walk with our God independent of one another yet connected through Christ.

What perspective can we put all these rules and regulations into that we learn of in the Bible? They are a guide to be aware of law serves us. Ultimately, we should always follow our hearts to decide the right action. A friend of mine once said, "Motives of pure Love supersede boundaries of law." if the motives and actions are of pure Love, they cannot be wrong. This calls for discernment and truth to God and self.

Titus 1:15

"Unto the pure all things are pure; but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled."

I believe the Lord cleanses our minds unto clarity so we can distinguish between good and evil, between flesh and spirit, between sanity and insanity, between wholesome or defiled, ultimately between Love and fear.

First Corinthians 10:23 "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not."

First Corinthians 10:31: "Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God".

God does not have to abide by man's law. As we saw in the "Jonah" chapter, God has been known to change his mind even. "God is Love," it says in First John 4:16, therefore, Love is the greatest guide to our do's and don'ts. To become pure, I need God's Love to cleanse me from past baggage of guilt, shame, self-condemnations etc. Carrying spiritual baggage clouds my reasoning for decision-making. When I apply the spiritual exercises that we have learned so far, I become capable of judging right from wrong. These spiritual calisthenics invite God's strength and good sense so I have the ability to crucify the flesh as Paul said and die daily. (Galatians 5:24, 1st Corinthians 15:31) This "crucifying of the flesh" sounds very cryptic. In simpler terms that are more palatable let us define it as "good change"

"CREATIVE CHANGE"

TREES SWAY IN THE BREEZE

BEND DON'T BREAK

BY EFFORTLESS EASE

PROGRESS THEY MAKE

WATER FLOWS OVER LAND

IT SMOOTHES OUT PATHS

RESULTS ARE GRAND

THIS CHANGE COMES

BY CREATIVE FLOW

THEY MERELY ADJUST TO HOW THINGS GO

LORD HELP ME LEARN

TO FLOW WITH GOOD CHANGE...

BE AWARE OF MY THOUGHTS

MOTIVES REARRANGE

NOT STRUGGLE AND FEAR WHEN THINGS DON'T GO RIGHT

NOT FALTER, FAINT OR PUT UP A FIGHT

POSITIVE CHANGE A SONG TO THE BIRD

BLOOM TO A ROSE

TO A MUSTANG THE HERD

I PRAY I RECEIVE CREATIVE GIFT OF CHANGE

***WITH HONESTY AND ACCEPTANCE, ON FRUIT TREE IT
HANGS***

READY TO

PICK

Recognizing character flaws requires honest self-examination. Letting go of old behavior is usually scary and painful. Some sins of communication such as manipulation, control, playing the victim to get what we want seems harmless enough but when the spirit starts guiding and teaching He will in an orderly fashion reveal to us all our behaviors that are not complete surrender to God's will. We do not always recognize our subconscious manipulative, fearful actions. The spirit will guide us into all truth if we seek Him, praying daily for truth and God's will. Granted, we will not be free of all these double-edged flaws (hurting self and others) while on earth, but the goal is to be free of twisted hurtful relationships and be at peace in self-Love. I Love speedy deliverance! I have made that clear, who wants to work for good character? However, all things are in God's time and my experience is; having had the insight to choose Loving actions

over fearful actions, has allowed me to take part in this great process of change, from the carnal to the spiritual. Watching ourselves overcome the things that separate us from our God creates temperance, patience, gratitude, freedom, and joy within us.

Revelation 21:7

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God and he will be my son."

Galatians 4:3-6

"Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying Ab'ba Father."

“MAYBE SATAN”?

The Archangel Michael showed respect even to Satan whilst doing battle over the dead body of Moses. Here is the scripture

that exemplifies we have no right to disrespect anyone under any circumstance.

“Likewise also these [filthy] dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil disputed about the body of Moses, yet Michael did not bring against Satan a railing accusation, but instead said, “The Lord rebuke thee.”

Write something about speaking evil of dignities/Satan

	LOVE	FEAR
TRUST		Suspicious control manipulation
PEACE		Turmoil, Chaos, Confusion
FAITH		Grasping fearful actions
ACCEPTANCE		Attack
UNDERSTANDING		Accusations
FORGIVENESS		Resentment, Hate, Wrath
GIVING		Taking, Stealing, Covetousness
HOPE expectations		Hopelessness, Jealousy, Envy, unreasonable
OPEN MINDED Judgmental		Contempt prior to investigation, close-minded,
TEACHABLE		Intolerant, Unreachable, Denial
HUMILITY personality flaws		False Pride, Vainglory, Dishonesty, and denial of
GRACE		Judgmental, condemnation, punishing
LONG SUFFERING		Intolerant, impatient
VISION/PURPOSE		Idle time, feelings of uselessness
SHARING FELLOWSHIP		Loneliness, Separateness
FREEDOM		Emotional and Spiritual Bondage

WORSHIP	Idolatry, dependencies
TRUTH	Lies, Denial, Spiritual blindness
PROTECTOR	Murderer
POSITIVE THINKING	Worry/critical thinking
JOY	Misery, Pleasure seeking
SELF DISCIPLINE	Sloth, Gluttony, Lust
ENCOURAGEMENT	Gossip, Criticism
PURITY	Perfectionism

On the healthy side of this list there are feelings and actions that compile a wonderfully woven tapestry. If we begin practicing one act of Love, the next Lovely action is easier to accomplish. Love is a choice as is fear. The mother of all-evil is fear. Realizing we have a choice between the two through Christ is a great key to opening the door of solutions for the heart.

Fear breeds every dark feeling and behavior on this list. This in turn breeds bondage. If we could truly see evil as it is at all times, with its consequences; it would no longer be a burden to do what is right. We do not always see the whole truth. If we could see that doing what is right for others and God is most beneficial to us, realistically right behavior would be easier to accomplish by genuinely asking for help from God, as genuinely as we would ask for food while starving.

I remember hearing my mother teach me her understanding of Satan and spirituality. She spoke as if Satan were a boogiemer who could jump out of nowhere and possess my mind and body. She taught me a Satan to be feared. She told me about Satanic power as if it were more powerful than Jesus. Again, in Pentecostal and non-denominational church as a baby Christian, I remember the people's prayers of casting out Satan and binding him up so he cannot get me. In addition, I read "your adversary the devil,

as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:" (first Peter 5:8) and he is! Except! When Satan descended upon Jobs good life Job did not succumb to evil! It is written in the conversation between God and the Devil just what God would allow Satan to do where Job was concerned. In this instance, God forbad Satan to take Jobs life (Job 2:6) but he did allow Satan to take the lives of his sons and daughters. (Job 1:19) This not only shows some of the power Satan has but it also raises the question; what are Satan's limitations? Are they different for different people? I believe, as crazy as it sounds, Satan is ultimately in God's will of course I know that is a lot to palate. This topic poses many questions in my mind that have unavailable answers.

Romans 8:28

"But we know that all things work together for good to them that Love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose."

Satan was unable to overcome Job during his plight. Jobs wife even said "curse God and die!" (Job 2:9) because of the tragedy, she watched Job endure. Job still had a choice, seemingly near death and suffering with the sickness Satan had smote him with, he was still able to choose either good or evil. (Job 2:7) His faith in God and trust endured.

Here are some educated and biblical descriptions of the devil and his helpers.

The Devil- The accuser, Prince of demons, Author of evil.

Revelation 12:10

"For the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night."

Demons- Malignant enemy of God and Messiah that inflict diseases at Satan's bidding

(Definitions from Thayer, Greek, English lexicon of the New Testament).

Satan had to ask God's express permission to take action against Job. I hope I am not as significant to Satan as Job was. Therefore, I doubt God has given this express permission to Satan regarding my life. I believe Satan's best intent for me (given my addict history) would be that I self-destruct. Consider also that Jesus had not yet appeared on the scene during Job's plight with His extra applications of the Holy Spirit. (I will talk more about that in the "Gifts" Chapter) However, grace, mercy, and forgiveness have been shown in the Old Covenant as well as the New. Moreover, Jesus has overcome evil by good; so must we.

In First Timothy 3:7 its suggested that if we speak evil of those not so well off as us, it could cause a boomerang effect resulting in our own evil bondage, a snare per say. Karma.

This is congruent with taming the tongue and reaping what we sew. (Karma)

Snare- Allurements to sin by which the devil holds one bound. (Thayer Lexicon)

First Timothy 3:7

"Moreover he must have good report of them which are without lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

Let me stop our study right here and interject some opinion. We who have read the book of Acts and the gospels know there is a lot of casting out of demons going on. Again, I believe this Bible is the anointed, inspired word

of God, written by man. (I suppose most of us have seen the exorcist) I believe there are demons, fallen angels, satanic insanity, satanic diseases, satanic demon possession, and demonic influence. I do not fear Satan or his demons. My God tells me not to and that God or [Love] will help me not fear these dark powers.

Mathew 10:28

"Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell."

First John 4:18 "Perfect Love casts out all fear."

There is much unknown about the dark side. I believe there is, in modern day, such a thing as an exorcism or a casting out. The casting out can naturally happen when receiving Christ. It can happen in a Catholic priest exorcist kind of way. This topic is not black and white. To be closed-minded is blindness. Sometimes merely resisting the devil or temptation causes evil to flee. (James 4:7) In my understanding, if God is Love then Satan is spiritual fear and everything under that heading.

Once I took a sick friend to a state mental facility. While encountering several patients in this not so plush place, it interested me to find; most of the patients I encountered where religiously obsessed with God and Satan. A friend that works in one such facility told me that most were obsessed with sex or religion in one facet or another. What are the implications here? I will let you draw your own conclusions. Do they really see and hear demons? Why not?

God also teaches me to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.
(Mt.10:16)

So I am compelled to write about protection against this evil force to afford us a greater understanding of evils wiles. We Christians seem to swing from one extreme to the other on this matter. Meaning: either we have an over awareness and preoccupation with Satan or an aloof intolerance about the topic as useful all together. Before presenting the biblical scriptures of surviving satanic influence and attack, I will say this about my own experience. Once I became aware that my flesh is weak, and aware of dark influence, I concluded I must feed myself spiritual nourishment daily, or "daily bread" to survive. As Jesus spoke in that most famous prayer, just as my body needs nourishment daily to survive, my spirit needs fed daily. This "bread" comes by prayer, meditation, worship, study, confession, repentance, fellowship, and lots of honesty toward God, myself and others and a vision of the hope of salvation.

Feeding my soul by spiritual exercise will keep me healthy and strong to be alert and aware of the wiles of the devil. Of my two Natures' Love or fear the one I feed most will be strongest! If I revel in debauchery of all sorts most days, then go to church one hour a week I am definitely feeding the wrong nature and will grow toward [in] fear. If we wish to grow toward God rather than away from Him, we must feed our spirit good things. These things do not have to be mundane and should not be. We can watch the word on TV if we choose our shows wisely. There are wholesome, good entertaining movies that feed our good self. We can write and journal to grow and learn about ourselves. Uplifting fellowship is high on the list of feeding my spirit. Nature's beauty is a great feeding ground for our spirit by taking in God's wonderful creation of springs, rivers and valleys, oceans, flowers, trees, hills, sparkling sunlit days and awesome, star struck moonlit nights. These settings can bring awe and gratitude for our creator while also holding pleasure and peace for us. Music is one of my favorite gifts of pleasurable spiritual food. Again, we can choose for ourselves wisely, I have found some music can stir me toward praise and gratitude for God and I do not mean mundane hymns. The actions that save me from my own lower nature (the flesh) also save me from satanic powers.

In Ephesians 6:10-18 are the famous words of Apostle Paul that is our supernatural defense against Satan and his servants:

THE ARMOUR OF GOD

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints"

Let us address this "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10) concept. "Brethren" includes me, inasmuch as I fellowship with believers in Christ and they are my brothers. I am also the brethren of Christ. How does Satan accuse me? Does Satan stand before God and belittle humanity? Yes, but also at times my own brethren play the "accuser", to my face or behind my back. The question to ask myself is do I have the unchecked guilt that feeds poison to my soul and allows their accusations to trigger a negative reaction from me? Satan can only play on my mind through my weakness or allurements to sin. If my cycle of guilt goes unchecked, you can bet I will soon be playing the accuser myself. This satanic soul sickness does not work on me if I am guilt free.

When guilt-free I am as a duck to water, all accusations slide right off my back, and I am unaffected spiritually. I am not saying that accusations are not hurtful sometimes; I am addressing the spiritual effects. How can I avoid this soul sucking sickness from the accuser? By the first armor: TRUTH! I use it to my advantage, confessing and repenting of whatever sin is unchecked then I am safe. (Refer back to the chapter on truth for further understanding of this belt of armor.)

The Breastplate becomes accessible by accepting Christ as our Savior in prayer. I believe each soul must do this each in their own way straight from their heart. Our righteousness is of Christ through the blood he shed. *Without Christ, the armor of God is non-existent.* We begin to put this part of our armor into action by receiving Christ as our savior and choosing baptism. We are then washed clean spiritually. This is the essence of the gospel. I cannot eternally save you or myself and my own righteousness IS "as filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) Human abilities will never be good enough to get us to our supreme splendor. I am reliant on Christ, Him I choose to trust and depend on. The Christ in me that I have received is righteous, this is my breastplate, and it covers my heart that would otherwise be vulnerable to the dark side. It allows me to approach God through Christ under any circumstance.

It is written in The Bible that we are all sold under sin or destined to sin because we are human.

Romans 7:14 “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin.

The law of sin means that by nature we shall in one way or another all sin even if only in our heart and mind.

Mathew 5:28 “But I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart”.

Romans 7:23 “But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

Romans 7:25 “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I, myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Where there is sin there is guilt though some do not always recognize it. Will I always feel guilty? Maybe, how do I allow my heart to reach God when the essence of guilt looms between He and me?

There is a place in my spirit where I do feel my perpetual shame deriving from guilt nevertheless, I present my heart before my God. A strong place within in me cries out, "I will not tolerate separation from my creator by hiding and protecting parts of my soul and being that I am ashamed of in hopes that I can then win God's acceptance. Embracing the attitude of desperation toward God in spite of my apprehension awards me complete acceptance of "me" and of how God created me. Man seldom understands or sees this place in his spirit though it is there... Find it and you will find balance and a connection with God that cannot be intimidated by darkness of any kind even the darkness within ourselves.

My shame strives to separate me from humanity and God!

First John 1:8

"If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

In Hebrews 2:14 it is written that Jesus destroyed the devil.

Hebrews 2:14

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

What does that mean? I don't get it! Is Satan dead or not? Herein lies a mystery; can it be both that Satan is dead and alive? Yes! If he were dead to all people there would be no evil in the world, would there? With the solutions Christ has given us by the armour of God, Satan can be dead to us, quite literally dead! Should Satan's relationship with other people burden us? What matters is that **he is dead to me**. Does this idea sound selfish or does it sound liberating? I am not saying that we shouldn't have hope or

compassion for those burdened down by their Satan. I am saying we cannot walk our brethren's spiritual walk for them, nor can we set our loved one's boundaries for them. I am sorry, it is quite impossible. If we are trying to do just that, we are creating our own misery. I will now assert the proclivity to opine that if not for consenting humans, Satan would have no enduring power whatsoever.

THE BREASTPLATE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The breastplate of righteousness allows us the boldness to approach the throne of God despite our sinful status. Therefore, we may be empowered to do His work more effectively. The pieces of armor work together as one strong defense against Satan.

Hebrews 10:19-22

And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place. And since we have a great High Priest who rules over God's house, let us go right into the presence of God with sincere hearts fully trusting him. For, our guilty consciences have been sprinkled with Christ's blood to make us clean, and our bodies have been washed with pure water.

There is yet another powerful benefit of the breastplate of righteousness. The spiritual stronghold for good that the breastplate provides is for our own authority. It allows us the God given right to share our testimony as well as respond to our God given calling to the best of our ability. None of us are perfect and we should not expect ourselves to be. If we all must be perfect to walk in our calling, then there would be no one to carry the message of hope or Love. Do not make the mistake of neglecting your call because you feel you have not cleaned yourself up enough to do God's work. As long as we are truthful and Loving while carrying out God's work we are helping others and ourselves.

THE PREPARATION OF THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

Ephesians 6:13-15

Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

FIND EASIER TO UNDERSTAND DEFINITION

Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament defines the preparation of the gospel of peace as follows: "Readiness of mind with the promptitude and alacrity (eager, willing) which the gospel produces."

Revelations 12:11

"They overcame him by the blood of the lamb and the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death."

First, I will address the second part of Revelations 12:11. Earth is not my spirit /soul's home,

Songwriter Jackson Brown wrote the following:

"It's a hotel at best.

You're here as a guest.

Better, make yourself at home

while you're waiting for the rest".

First Corinthians 15:50

"Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." (Meaning it is our incorrupt Spirit that inherits the kingdom of God)

I do not believe Revelations 12:11 is saying that we should despise what we have been given on earth nor that we should be restless irritable and unhappy all the days of our lives as human beings. There is a lot to enjoy here as human. I am suggesting to you that there abides a recurring feeling of separation from God, in the essence of every Christ believing mortal. When we read, "they loved not their lives unto the death." it does not have to make us squirm with misunderstanding. The statement implies that we never will have the 100% feeling of completeness and comfort while on earth when our Father's abode is where we want to be. We are not there yet.

"The gospel of peace", that we are eager and prepared to share must be exclusive to us exemplifying our own experience with Christ. Our "testimony" (Rev. 12:11) should be from our hearts. Otherwise, it is not the pure and unadulterated spiritual weapon by which we overcome evil."

This defense is wielded by sharing in the context of "I". Meaning I am giving my testimony about what God has done for me rather than telling someone what he or she should do. It is not the gospel of peace if it is spoken in the context of "you" or we. I stand firm in this belief. Why is it not a gospel of peace if it is being wielded as instructions? Because the miracle has happened in me, I am the gospels fruition. We hope the skeptic

and unbelieving will be saved. Preaching feeds our spirit but it is not the magic armour of God which is the preparation of the gospel of peace. The magic is in our personal testimony, which is the protecting armour of the gospel of peace.

How can I give something away that is not mine? Instructions, rules, and regulations are not the gospel of peace. The gospel of peace is my testimony of how The Lord brought me out of a living Hell to a joyous fruitful and sometimes difficult life. It is about the changes for good He has brought me. It is about belief in the promise of salvation that He has put in my heart. ***By my spiritual experience, I am prepared to share the gospel.***

The icing on the cake is that this heartfelt sharing of Love is most effective for bringing others to Christ. At all costs, we should recoil from being the devil's advocate, which would be coming across accusatory to Gods children while sharing the gift of salvation! It is written that Satan is the accuser of the brethren.

Revelation 12:9 & 10

“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”

Furthermore, brethren the gospel of the good news of peace protects us by the peace of mind that believing in our own salvation produces. Furthermore, trusting God produces peace of mind, which in turn protects us.

Philippians 4:6&7

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

NKJ

When we are at peace within, we rarely feel the need to verbally defend ourselves or argue. When we are at peace, we do not feel the need to attack or hurt anyone. Therefore, peace of mind protects us from all kinds of spiritual snares. Peace of mind is one of the most powerful defenses we have ironically without taking a defensive action.

"THE SHIELD OF FAITH"

Ephesians 6:16

“Above all taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.”

What is faith? Following are the Webster's definition and a biblical description:

Faith- confidence, belief, to trust, an unquestioning belief that does not require proof or evidence.

Hebrews 11:1

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen".

Faith and trust are built when we walk through challenging situations with hope and prayers that God will make things right. This will allow us finally to experience God's pristine outcome. A God breathed outcome is not always the one we have envisioned. Again, I would prefer a quick deposit of faith by the magic Holy Ghost but that is not usually, how faith is increased. To have our faith fortified we must hold on to trust in God during bleak and emotionally taxing situations. *HOLD ON! Getting to the other side of hurtful, tragic, traumatic situations builds trust in God if we guide our heart and mind toward hope.*

Rom.12:3

“For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as ***God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith.***”

What we do with that faith is our choice. We can exercise and build it or repress and deny it. Faith, use it or lose it. How faith is a shield from this dark oppressive power named Satan? Active faith protects me from fearful reactions (hurting others or myself). It tells me I do not have to try to control every situation that makes me uncomfortable. It allows me to let go and let God. It enables me to accept the things, situations, and people that I cannot fix anyway.

During perplexing experiences if I do not exert a little trust in God and put things in His hands I end up with a miserable outcome or a fruition of fear.

Psalms 46:10

“Be still, and know that I [am] God: I **will** be **exalted among the heathen**, I **will** be **exalted in the earth.**”

Exerting trust and hope by maintaining Loving behavior during times of frustration strengthens my inner being and rockets me toward a dimension of higher knowledge called spirituality.

However, trusting God is not easy. It takes prayerful reliance on Jesus. The book of Hebrews' description of faith includes the "substance of things hoped for." Hope is a part of faith. Hope is a hard nut to crack because of fear of the unknown. My thoughts can be both hopeful and doubtful at the same time. Some needs I can easily believe will be met, while others are

hard to envision. I do believe however, that an unwavering faith can move mountains. Quite literally, pure faith is miraculous.

I surmise that when Abraham moved to sacrifice his only, long hoped for son Isaac, he believed with all his heart that his son would be brought back to life by God. (Heb.11:17) When we exercise faith, we are putting our future in God's hands where it belongs. When we experience good results, we marvel at the way our God accomplished things for us. This produces joy, gratitude, and true happiness in our lives. This is the "evidence of things not seen" Hebrews 11:1 talks about.

James 2:22

“You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did.”

We must relinquish the fearful illusion that we need to control others or we will lose.

We must abandon the thinking that; we need to map out others boundaries of behavior and enforce penalty if they veer from the path we have chosen for them. This belief is nothing short of playing God; it piles up all manner of burden on our shoulders until we break. If we want faith to complete itself in us, we must realize our own equality with our fellows no matter what their station in life or ours may be. If I envision myself as superior to others, I naturally will also perceive that some others are superior to me.

Keeping my self-actuality of being a child of God relieves the burdensome feelings that accompany playing God. Yes, many know more and many know less; many fall hard as others slowly regress, many hate, many Love but one thing certain holds true for us all: "God shall bring every work into

judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:14) We shall all stand-alone before God, and we are interconnected in Christ. Remember the golden rule of Love, would I want the action done to me that I want to do to others? If not, lift up the shield of faith, be still, and pray.

"THE HELMET OF SALVATION"

1st Thessalonians 5:8

“But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

Ephesians 6:17

“Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”

What might this be and how does it protect me? The helmet is set securely on my head, immovable. It is the unwavering belief that my name is written in the lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21:27) The essence of the

Helmet is the comforting knowledge that I will be transformed at the coming of Christ or on that fateful day of my death. Moreover, that I will receive a much broader space for my spirit to dwell after this body gives out. This armor is the helmet of immovable hope of new life and belief that Jesus died so that I may live. The helmet is the embodiment of Love for the heartfelt ideas of what the next life holds.

Do I hope and dream of a new earth where the wolf and the lamb lie together in peace as written of in Isaiah 11:6? Do I relish the thought that no pain, death, sorrow, or tears await me in eternity as exemplified in Revelation 21:4? Perhaps I would prefer to be whisked off to the third heaven as is written of in 2Corinthians 12:2 to dwell by the holiest places. Places where there is no need for sunlight because the illumination of God Himself shines so bright. The third heaven where angels and “spirits of just men made perfect” flourish (Hebrews 12:23 Rev.22:5). Maybe my dream of salvation is to be translated (spiritually transformed) as Enoch and Elijah were; not having to experience death, being simply taken up.

Hebrews 11:5

“By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.”

Hence, my lifeless body never to be discovered by friends and loved ones. (Hebrews 11:5 & II Kings 2:11) Maybe I just hope for a good long, well deserved spiritual rest until the resurrection of Christ. (First Thessalonians 4:14-16)

Whatever your hope for eternity, I believe much of the next life will be designed by this life, by our own faith and beliefs, our own Love and hopes.

I believe we hold much more impact on our next reality than we give ourselves allowance for. These matters are not black and white, as some prefer. I am certain the possibilities are as endless as God's Love for us.

The Lord spiritually transformed these men; Enoch and Elijah, before Christ was even crucified. God does not have to play by our boxed in rules. These biblical writings are but a touchstone of God's realities. Limiting the possibilities within God's realm of power reflects our own natural, perceptual limitations due to being born within the confines of space and time. *It is by natural perspective not spiritual awareness that some say, "The afterlife can only happen one way"*. Nevertheless, it is better to hope for Christ's eternity in a boxed in limited way than not at all! I believe salvation is here for the free Christian and the boxed in Christian alike. Redemption from death does not depend on doctrinal idiosyncrasies.

How does all this belief in salvation protect us against the wiles of Satan? When we have a deep belief in our salvation, it changes our entire perspective on life. With the helmet of salvation firmly placed on our head, we are no longer living only for this life.

We now have a different spirit about our actions that reflect eternity. In other words, our thinking disseminates from a much broader viewpoint, the God consciousness is without limitation, and therefore the salvation belief vastly expands our thinking process in the direction of goodness and spiritual safety.

This phenomenon may be compared to a person spending his entire life inside the house, and then suddenly one day he steps outside, seeing the ocean, the sky, and the land. His perceptions and actions will be greatly influenced by this experience. Stated plainly, his life will change dramatically from walking outside the house. Never again will he think with such a limited perspective. Without the hope of salvation, there would be little reason in my mind to live for anything more than worldly pleasure.

Hence, my actions change because of my psychic reference and my faith in an afterlife, which is the protecting helmet of salvation.

Proverbs 9:20 (research)

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

Ephesians 6:17

“And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;”

II Corinthians 10:4

“The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds.” New International Version

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for the pulling down of strongholds."

Up until this point, our pieces of armor have been protective clothing that is worn. Now we will consider the "sword of the spirit". A sword is a weapon different from the other armour. Have we here a weapon that actually wages war against Satan and his slippery demons? Have we a tool of war that will destroy our enemy? How do we use this sharp tool; this double-

edged weapon of words? Which words do we use and how will they effectively cut the devil to the quick?

Is the word of God simply read or heard, then digested as daily spiritual bread so we may overcome Satan and his spawn? When we consume it, does it protect us like a magic potion of Love that surrounds us with angelic fighters battling night and day for our survival? Perhaps after I digest these words I can spew them out at the invisible Satan and bind him. I could spout choice words out at those I perceive as wicked to cut them to the quick showing no empathy for their possible humiliation and pain.

Would this be defined as use of the sacred sword?

I understand all these scenarios and negate none of them. However, the last scenario leaves much room for error because it involves passing judgment on my fellow humans. When I say error I mean such a judgment action can very likely go against the wholesome and Loving Principles God has set down in His word. Personally, I do not pray the word "at" anybody face to face or spout it off as a retribution for someone's weak actions. I will pray with others providing I have their express permission or request. I have found a more principled way to use the sword of God.

Hebrews 4:12

"For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Hosea 4:6

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."

Proverbs 15:14

"The heart of him that hath understanding seeketh knowledge: but the mouth of fools feedeth on foolishness."

Proverbs 11:9

"With their mouths the godless destroy their neighbors, but through knowledge the righteous escape."

Proverbs 3:20

"By His knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew."

There is no denying the benefit of knowledge on any subject nor should we negate the possible damage of hurtful words. I have heard the word of God used to hurt others, which is contrary to the principals of God's Loving word.

Knowledge saves my life in many situations. In war, in driving, walking down the street, using household products, learning a trade, feeding myself, the list goes on and on. Are things any different where spiritual knowledge is concerned? The word of God is knowledge, the wise apply this knowledge to themselves and benefit from it. When the word goes deep down into our hearts it serves us.

By seeking my own spiritual well-being, and applying these principals or words from God to my life, I am now able to serve others. The beginning of wisdom is to work toward feeling better by learning to follow our own conscience. Then as we begin to feel peace and acceptance of our own human condition, we can accept others as less than perfect. By our self-Love, we are more capable of giving to others the grace that was and is bestowed upon us.

Why is the word a double-edged sword? The sword has two edges cutting forward and back, it has two “Authorities”. The two powers of the sword signify a two-fold battle. The first battle is against my own carnal nature and the second battle is for the salvation of others. Meaning, I use the principals of the sword to witness, pray, and be a godly example for others, which with Gods’ power will aid in their salvation.

Before entering in battle the warrior exercises and practices with his sword by learning to apply God’s word in his own life. His practice results in powerful thrust and precision on the field of battle. He does not learn to handle his sword and then stand comfortably on the field of destruction screaming his knowledge of the sword at his enemies. He picks it up and uses it. Action is how he wins in battle. He sweats using that which he has so painfully learned through experience. He has been injured on occasion during battle, yet through these injuries, he has become a stronger more confident master of efficient warfare. He fears, yet fights courageously for his own life. Yes, the warrior protects and fights for others but the need to survive the battle himself is what wrought him the victory and kept him alive. Self-preservation was the key motivator by which he committed selfless acts. His survival instinct was a prerequisite that enabled him to fight for others. To walk away from the battle feeling the victory with his own health and welfare intact was his goal. He had become a living example of Godly character.

The bottom line is to hopefully put the sword of the Spirit, the word into action in to our own lives. However, teaching the word to the unwilling and rebellious can only be imparted by example. Applying the word in your own life is the way the sword is used to its fullest benefit. I am saying that living by the principles of righteousness is your valiant sword. Being a doer of the word protects you with precision and power and testifies that you can teach spiritual swordsmanship to hungry willing subjects who may grasp it. The rebellious unbeliever must be taught in a way they can accept and respect, which is by example. Trying to impart guilt trips on sinners is no

more than applying iniquitous principles to spiritual matters. It does not work.

James 1:22

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves".

1st Corinthians 15:31

"I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily."

Romans 8:13

"For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."

I am talking about the war we must wage against ourselves. We must fight our flesh to put good, biblical principles into action in our lives. What is temptation if not a war against a part of ourselves? The pain of self-appraisal, self-examination, and the grief during change for the better is all a part of our duality. The injury to our "flesh" or ego while resisting temptation is part of overcoming evil. In our effort to maintain Godliness and put Love first in our lives we must not be defeated even though we may fail temporarily. We do not stay down by beating ourselves up for a failure. We realize we are fallible, doing our best and so we get back up and start afresh on our righteous path as many times as it takes. This is our first true battle. This is our primary need for the sword of the spirit, just as the warrior on the field of blood we must fight, and put our higher nature first to win. We must overcome the enemy within. The Lord has provided us with the armor to overcome.

My fight is not against those who may tempt me; what is temptation if not a war waged within myself? My battle is not against those that may not believe in God as I do, nor is it to argue about the wages of sin or religious doctrines of men. ***My conquest in life is to learn how NOT to fight others.*** My battle is to overcome my selfish will to be in control of all within and without. Spiritual knowledge is vital to my being but there is one thing much more important and that is to know the Love of Christ first hand.

Ephesians 3:19

"And to know the Love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that you might be filled with all the fullness of God."

First Corinthians 13:8-10

"Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; ***whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away.*** For we know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

One day when we pass-away our knowledge will no longer apply because our reality will change drastically. Just as the law of gravity holds fast at all times on our Earth the law of gravity does not apply in outer space. We will be Spirit and Spirit law is not human law. Nevertheless, the Love of God is changeless this is what first Corinthians 13:8-10 means to me. A relationship with Christ comes by seeking Christ just as earnestly as we would seek out a beautiful lover whom we desire with our heart.

Seek Christ in your own way and He shall reveal Himself to you. Look outside yourself and seek a connection, ask God for a confirmation that Christ hears your prayers and cares. I do not speak for Christ! However, I have seen it over and over again people that seek do find. Reach out in prayer, "ask largely of The Lord" my spiritual teacher used to say.

Isaiah 7:22

"Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above."

Summing up the entire topic of defense against Satan it comes down to choice. We choose whom we will serve God or Satan, evil or good. The only power Satan has against us is the power we give him. Seems to me it is God's will that we experience the pains common to humanity, otherwise it would not be a human experience.

Why give Satan the glory for every tragic event? Distresses naturally occur on God's green earth. Life, death and everything in between under the sun were created by God.

Isaiah 45:7

"I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the LORD do all these things."

We are being prepared for a different type of existence, that of "Spirit". Our focus should be on the good lessons we must learn to complete our human journey. Though I fully understand swimming in negativity and the distraction, it provides. The following scriptures are very comforting where fear of evil is concerned.

Romans 8:35-8:38

"Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution or famine, or nakedness, or peril or sword? As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. ***"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."***

I Love that scripture!

THE CIRCUMFERENCE OF PRAYER

This is an in depth chapter about different types of prayer. Not everyone will relate to or have need of every kind of prayer written of in this chapter. Keeping prayer simple is a good thing. On the other hand, some of us have what I call "the gift of prayer" a calling of God, a depth of spirit for serving intercessory, deliverance and warfare prayers. Some have the gift of higher language (tongues) to exercise in their prayers.

I must interject; I am weary of hearing inexperienced preachers, ministers, and teachers try to teach accurately a thing which they have never learned or even heard first-hand. These teachers balk at, disbelieve, and even condemn-as-evil the

precious and anointed gift of praying in tongues. Tongues are a higher and much more concise prayer language.

PRAYERS OF REQUEST OR SUPPLICATION

Supplication- Kneel down, pray to fold double up. To ask for humbly, earnestly, as by prayer.

As I have written in prior chapters, the best prayer is the honest, heartfelt prayer.

Being honest in prayer and praying for what we need rather than what we think God wants to hear is very effective.

Philippians 4:6&7

"Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

NKJ

What about this prayer request thing? Everybody who requests something through prayer knows prayers are not always answered the way we want them to be especially when specifics are involved. There is that pesky "free will" thing that applies when praying for others that the power of prayer will not nullify. Meaning when we are praying for people to change we must remember God will not snatch back anybody's free-will be including the free-will of the guy we want God so desperately to change. Then there are those irritating "life lessons" that we usually need to learn. Therefore,

in the midst of a fervent request to God it dawns on us that what we are going through may be part of our spiritual growth orchestrated by God Himself... as we desperately beg Him to fix the perplexing situation. Unfavorable circumstances in our lives are usually geared for our own emotional and spiritual growth and the sooner we learn and accept the lesson the sooner the problem goes away. Many times the lesson is merely learning to let go, live and let live (or die). My mother has a saying: "Each person has the right to reach their own level of incompetence." Oh Mom how true that is, we do well to stand by and let the whirling dervishes (drama queens and kings) spin.

Assuming that I know just what someone else should be doing is wrong. Checking my motives is the first and most important rule of prayer. Nine times out of ten if we are praying to change someone else, our request is rooted in selfishness. Prayers such as, "Lord please make John Doe behave the way I want him to!" If I stay on top of my own spiritual exercises and work on my own behavior, everything else will work itself out one way or another.

Mathew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

As one of my well-respected counselor's says "Allow and respect each individuals spiritual process toward personal growth and emotional maturity." Ok, so how about if we pray like this; "Lord, please heal so-and-so!" Well it so happens that "so-and-so" is 90 years old and it's his time to meet God. Or how about a prayer such as this, "Lord please chastise, and rebuke Satan's spawn that is living next door. He continuously has wild parties and commits moral sin!" Unbeknownst to us the person we have labeled "evil" has been through a lot of trauma and is doing his best to numb the intense emotional pain he feels on a daily basis so he won't commit suicide. Chances are if we had gone through what he has, we would be ten times more dysfunctional than he is. I should not label anyone evil

this is subtle harsh judgment. I am not justifying hurtful or sinful behaviors. It is prudent to pray thy will be done in someone's life, and Lord please give me understanding of him or her if I am angry with someone. It is always better to understand than to be understood. Understanding shows Love and tolerance, which are characteristic of Christ.

Mathew 7:5

"Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam from thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast the mote out of your brother's eye."

Beware of subtle judgments that war against the soul. If I stick to the true spiritual blessings for others in prayer such as Love, faith, hope, wisdom and all the blessings of heaven I am praying rightly. [Giving] type prayers rather than [taking-away] something from a person type prayers are an act of Love. After all, "it is better to give than receive." even where prayer is concerned. The word reads "Bless and curse not." (Romans 12:14)

Some feel it is all together wrong to pray requests for ourselves; I do not lean to such extremes though I do respect other people's beliefs in that arena. The scripture expresses that it IS okay to pray for ourselves, balancing it with giving prayers for others.

James 4:2&3

"You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures."

Our quest should be to learn to ask God for spiritually valuable things. I believe it is a good thing to request spiritual blessings for ourselves. On the other hand, I do appreciate those that have an unwavering faith and belief that God will supply all their monetary needs. So they never ask for anything for themselves because their faith is so strong in that area.

Neither of these ideals: asking or not asking are wrong or a contradiction, but rather it is a choice we make according to our needs. Our prayers should develop and change as we mature as believers and grow toward God. Personally, I have not grown out of asking my God for help and doubt I ever will. Though often times God's peace enables me to be still and trust Him. "Be still and know that I am God" Psalms 46:10.

LAMENTATIONS OF PRAYER

Lament: mourning, wailing, echoic based. To feel deep sorrow or express it as by weeping or wailing. Mourn, grieve.

This type of prayer is sacred though it does not feel like it at the time. Lamentation consists of expressing to God deep emotional and spiritual sorrow, fear, grief, pain, or regret. These deep feelings cannot be uttered in words. These deep-feeling induced prayers are articulated by guttural sounds of moaning, screams, or wailing whatever our spirit needs to express. These regurgitations expel repressed, secret feelings that can cause depression, misery, anger even rage if left unexpressed. We can lament for others in prayer as well by feelings of deep care and fear for them or even by catching or picking up the deep pain in others. Sometimes we do not know why we are in need of such painful expressions or what the feelings pertain to nevertheless, lamenting yields emotional and spiritual healing whether we are interceding for others or processing our own buried feelings.

Romans 8:26

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.” (New International Version)

Romans 8:22 & 23

"For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only that, but we also who have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body."

Yes, prayer of lamentation is painful and I am comfortable to do it in the presence of God alone. That is probably no wonder, within my own culture and in many cultures, a display of deep emotion is unacceptable and considered hysterical. I have been to funerals where women are hauled off and hidden if they cry too loud even for the death of their own child. We have a whole array of prescription drugs to stop the healthy emotional processes that some consider wrong even shameful. The grieving and traumatized are sedated and oppressed so those around them may feel more comfortable. How did our country get so deep into the tradition of emotional and spiritual constipation? I do not claim to know the reason why. “Keep a stiff upper lip!” “Men are not supposed to cry.” “Crying is a sign of weakness if you cry you’re a baby!” and the oppressive clichés rally on.

I have no idea how many have reached the depths of this blessed prayer of lamentation. I think if I were ever seen while lamenting in prayer some folks might haul me off to the psyche-ward concluding surly I am beside myself in psychosis. Nevertheless, whether it be because of recent trauma, unresolved emotional issues, or prayers for others I regard this prayer as a true blessing because when the need falls upon me I am moved to seek God

and afterward I am refreshed, renewed, and blessed with joy and a fresh connection to God. To feel my deep joy and gratitude I must feel my deep pain and physical separation from God. This body is not my eternal home not by any stretch.

2nd Corinthians 5:8

"We are confident I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord."

When a heavy burdensome feeling comes upon me, I sometimes do not realize it is a call for prayer; I may distract myself or blame people and situations for the way I feel. Sometimes I do not want to apply the solution to the way I feel which is prayer. Lamenting hurts! I question; why am I being led to pray, what does the burdensome feeling pertain to? Am I in need of intense prayer myself because of sin or impending disaster or is it for someone else? By the time, I have prayed things through (groans and all) these questions will usually have been answered. Furthermore, if not it will not bother me because of my new and improved connection to God.

These kinds of burdens are not easy. Sometimes God's gifts are painful and trying. I have had times when I have tried everything I can think of to shake the feeling of spiritual burden. I do not feel like praying and I can be stubborn. When my futile attempts at serenity do not work, finally I give up and say to God "OK, I'm not leaving my prayer closet until I feel better, until I get a breakthrough! I feel I have no choice except to pray, and of course, this works out well for me in the end. In the words of Jesus in Saint John Chapter 16, verses twenty and twenty-one.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come:

but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world."

Spiritual pain is real; I believe that if the Lord allows deep sorrow, He also provides directions of the best way to deal with it. I have had days on end in continual travail and lamentation followed by God's wonderful joy. Tears alone are not sufficient to express these deep spiritual emotions; they come from deep within our being deep within our bowels, if you will.

I have read in Psalms that King David lamented and groaned, and many other biblical characters have for one reason or another rent (ripped) their clothes, laid in ashes, lamented, groaned, fasted and grieved in prayer unto victory. I personally have only seen two brave souls who were able to pray this way in the presence of others. I thank God for them they helped me realize it is not wrong to feel that way and I am not alone. Bless you Jody for your fearless lamentation and travail that so shockingly taught me I am not alone.

Sometimes feeling and expressing the pain of childhood or adult trauma is all we really need to do to heal emotionally and overcome the anxiety of trauma. What is the best technique for healing childhood trauma according to the logical and educated adult mind? Will we heal by expressing our deep pain like a self-conscious adult, controlled, holding back tears and screams keeping the true expression and feelings quenched? Or would we benefit from expressing our feelings as a hurt child would express sudden tragic feelings of betrayal and abuse?

Our hearts need to be heard, this type of prayer and processing comes straight from the heart. Our hearts expression should not be altered or stifled because of modern day status-quo's. We should, by all means have a safe place away from those who may misunderstand our painful and lamenting prayer.

Yes, lamentation of prayer accommodates many needs. Such as emotional healing, physical healing, spiritual strengthening, deliverance from oppressions, and relief from the pain of separation from God, coping with loss any profound need can be lamented if the Spirit leads.

Ecclesiastes 7:3&4

"Sorrow is better than laughter: for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning; but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth." (Mirth means fun)

PRAYER OF BATTLE, WARFARE

Oftentimes the most passionate warfare prayer is carried out by using the gift of tongues. I am not stating this to demean the prayers of those who do not pray in tongues. I absolutely do not subscribe to the idea that we have to pray in an unknown language to wage spiritual warfare. ***There are many dark forces to pray against in English such as deception, spiritual blindness, disease, oppression, obsession, lust, hate, jealousy, greed and the list goes on. Prayer in any language against dark spiritual forces such as these is the essence of warfare prayer.*** Protection prayers for people are battling prayers as well. Tongues are a higher language but not always a more powerful prayer. Remember, "The effectual, fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16) "The gift of tongues" is called a Holy Gift because it is just that, a gift. Tongues are not defined the savior or my salvation. ***I do not want to minimize the powerful gift it is a mighty tool of Good in the hands of man.*** We will talk more about this gift in "The Spiritual Gifts" chapter.

I am quite certain we as believers have the power when led by the Spirit to call out battling and ministering angels either in English or in an unknown language. (Rev.12:7) In the very words of Jesus:

Saint John 14:12

"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it. If you Love Me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever the Spirit of truth."

With the help of The Holy Spirit and Gods angels, I also believe that we have the power by prayer to rebuke and bind the actions of satanic powers. (Ephesians 6:13&17) However, do we really understand what that means? These angelic battles of good versus evil are fought in a realm unseen to the natural eye. Strong spiritual circumstances may change due to our warring prayer yet remain unseen by us.

Jude 1:9

"Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

Mathew 18:10

"Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Mathew 18:10 speaks of the children having their own angels.

Rev. 12:7

"And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels",

Warfare prayer is very effective but we do not normally get visible instant results as with traditional exorcisms. I have not attended or participated in any formal hands on exorcisms. I believe they happen and have heard witness of them. I mention exorcism because that too is a spiritual battle waged right here in our realm.

We do not usually see with our eyes the result of battle prayer because we do not know just how our fervent command will manifest. God's will, is what we should aim for. He tends to make things happen a little different than we picture in our minds. Don't forget the law of free will when praying for others. ***The Lord will not turn the loved one we pray for into a robot for His or our will.*** Free will produces a huge variable when praying for men to change. Human beings always have a choice. God can clear our minds and free our Spirits, but we are the only ones that make the final decisions for ourselves. Battle prayers are released into the heavenlies to win spiritual wars. It makes sense that the method of prayer is Spirit led. Sometimes settling for the salvation of a loved one's soul is the solitary hope accomplished, meaning they may die in their mortal sin but God will save their soul. Prayer is a strong tool for salvation of our souls and works in spite of our small faith.

Second Corinthians 10:4, 5, &6

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ and having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."

This scripture covers the battle against my flesh and the battle against dark principalities. The word revenge is harsh and does not set easily with me. However, if I remember that these dark forces would like to aid in my utter annihilation and the painful destruction of my innocent loved ones the word revenge is not so tuff to swallow. One of the definitions in my Thayer's Lexicon is "avenge" which is much more palatable. The result of my long-suffering prayer that is most evident is my own higher thinking. With hope, I pray this battle prayer for others, of whom I feel compassion and Love. Spiritual mindedness does cast down imaginations and guide me to make right choices.

The battle scriptures of the bible do not mean arguing with other children of God and sarcastically departing with the phrase "I'll pray for you". I would not be practicing the loving, tolerant, long-suffering understanding that Jesus so humbly taught if I am resenting others. I had better start working on my own shortcomings if I fancy doing the work of The Father. When I play the Christian vigilantly and use this word of God to fight others face to face I have really missed the boat. If I am the Christian enforcer, I can always repent! Prayer warriors remember we pray to Love the unlovable. Pray against the evil spirit by the Spirit, remembering to show Love to the human.

If I accuse the sinner, by my words, again I have become the accuser of the brethren the very thing that I abhor. As St. Paul said, "Revenging all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled". In other words, to discern spiritual revenge as a human being, my own obedience should be fulfilled otherwise I may be confused about what to avenge. Obedience fulfilled does not mean I am perfectly righteous it means I have enough humility to be aware of my character flaws and quench them. When Paul states that the "weapons of our warfare are not carnal" this means they are not of self-will they are of Gods will in the Spirit of Love. Therefore, negating the possibility that quoting disciplinary scripture at people or rebuking people openly is spiritual warfare. If I am annoyed or angered by sinners the more courageous spiritual warfare would be invoking my own godly response of restraint of pen and tongue and walking away later realizing I just walked through and overcame my own fiery trial.

In the words of Jesus himself "Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me.": (John 21:21&22) "What is it to thee?" A nice way, to say: it's not your business, "Follow thou me." or work on your own spiritual condition. When we clean the inside of our own cup (Mt.23:26) we draw people unto Christ by His Spirit, they will seek godly council and be open to learn. Therefore, I reason out that our purest battling prayer is "thy will be done" in whomever' life, by this we cannot go wrong.

Jesus said in Mathew 5:44

"Bless them that curse you."

The above scripture clarifies how my relationship should be with sinners. I recall a person I met during a woman's retreat she seemed very religious and a bit sanctimonious. Every morning several of us would stand in a circle to pray together this woman would usually lead our morning prayer. She would start the prayers by targeting the woman who chose not to join in the circle. She would pray "Oh Lord open their eyes, help them to mend their ways, deliver them from gossip and back biting, convict their hearts of their sin." etc. etc. These woman, consequently were able to hear her critical prayers in the next room and she knew it. I could not help but think she was praying in that fashion because of her own controlling and judgmental personality rather than by the Spirit of Love. Moreover, she was putting herself out on display for us and the women she thought were in need of her brand of religion.

To word it plainly, her prayers were futile and vain I once asked her to pray for a man who offended her, she answered, "Oh no, that one is beyond God's grace!" I was shocked by her answer and realized her Love and tolerance were very limited. By discernment and self-examination, we can learn to pray obediently and with Love. Jesus himself addressed prayers of vainglory.

Mathew 6:5-8

And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites [are]: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen [do]: for they think that they shall be heard for

their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.

Must we always go to the closet to pray yes and no? If we have a weakness toward glory seeking and bigshotism and our motives for prayer shift to vanity when paying with others yes, I should stay in my prayer closet.

Best I stick to allowing God to keep my own cup clean rather than trying to clean up the world's sinners. It is literally impossible for me to clean the inside of anybody else's cup except mine. Can I cleanse a heart as God does? (Mathew 23:26) We are God's tools when convicted of my sin the guilt lies within me, my heart needs no one to point that out for me. We do well to keep spiritual warfare in the spirit realm by Spirit led prayer.

Have you ever sat in a charismatic church and heard someone powerfully speak forth words said to be straight from God? I have and they have been words of encouragement. Let me say I have observed more of these "thus sayeth the Lord Type Prophets on corners and city streets than in church, they are usually homeless. Are they for real that is not for me to judge? I do know this, thus sayeth The Lord prophecy went on often in the Old Testament. I am glad I do not have to deal with that kind of a calling it could be a poignant temptation for vainglory. Again, I will state I am no prophet.

First Timothy 5:20

“Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear.”

The above scripture offers justification for every rebuking and cutting accusation we choose to wield against our fellows, very dangerous. If a

person sins against me then will I state my case in a non-attacking fashion that I do not become the accuser. Paul the apostle of Jesus exhibited tolerance and patience for those who wronged him when accused by Jewish hierarchy (Acts). Bible believer be wary that you do not exercise displaced anger or humanities flaws using the written word as a catalyst. This scripture is high-octane fuel for any religious battle against our fellow man but we need not take the bait. Ultimately, we choose our own doctrine, so thanks anyway Saint Paul, you're writing over joys me however, I will leave the rebuking to whoever may be worthy to utter such judgments, if any be truly qualified. In defense of Apostle Paul, I assert he was probably trying to keep order in a disorderly church the best way he knew how at the time, in his Centurion kind of way. He may have struggled with intolerance himself I accept him as suffering the human condition.

Mathew 7:4

Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam [is] in thine own eye?

On a simple note when I pray for my enemies who I resent and ask Jesus to help me forgive them in my heart I get very good results. This type of battle prayer has a very high rate of success maybe because I mainly want relief from the bitterness in me rather than focusing on changing the behavior or circumstances surrounding my enemy. I can honestly say I have not seen this method fail yet.

Mathew 5:44

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

PRAYERS OF DELIVERANCE

I shall write about deliverance prayer according to my own first-hand knowledge. I was and am delivered from a life of emotional and spiritual self-destruction. I prayed for deliverance all through my life of bondage and never gave up on the hope that God would rescue me. My ex-husband used to say to me “Why do you bother to pray it’s not doing you any good?” It did seem as if he was right at the time. For years, he watched me pray to seemingly no avail. Until, finally, I became ready to accept the deliverance from God that I so needed. No one including myself could predict when I would finally be ready to accept the great gift of deliverance. No one knows when others will be ready to accept this great gift. How much misery will a person endure until finally, if ever becoming ready to give up selfish will, this is an age-old mystery? However, give up self-will we must to receive a true deliverance from God. Hence, the main ingredient of freedom is surrender. Deliverance abides in Gods will for us this is the key to open the door to deliverance. We all need deliverance even from death that threatens us at one time or another.

There was another man in need of healing in the times of Jesus the man. He had an infirmity thirty and eight years. Jesus asked; “Wilt thou be made whole?” (John 5:6) By asking the man this, there would be no presumptuous action on Jesus’ behalf. Yes, the man was in the sick bed for a very long time. Jesus knew, the important question was does this man want a healing not does he need a healing. This may sound a little crazy. How could a man crippled up not want a healing? This scriptural event reminds me of the phenomenon that occurs with prisoners incarcerated for many years they may fear or oftentimes do not want to be set free. Society calls this transition "institutionalized", it is the fear of change.

The battered wife, who cries for the beatings to stop, is also scared to leave her man and home for fear things will be different, fear of the unknown. She is desperately unhappy in her circumstances yet emotionally comfortable. She would not know how to deal with an emotionally healthy environment if she were in one. We can be comfortable yet very unhappy in our own spiritual bonds. Sometimes all we need for a miracle of deliverance is a sudden leap of faith. With the biblical miracles there was always an action of faith taken before each miracle happened. We can pray all year long for a miracle but if we do not do the footwork in one form or another likelihood of that miracle happening is slim.

In John 5:8 Jesus said, "Take up thy bed and walk". Moreover, immediately the man was made whole. In this case, Jesus spoke a command rather than a request.

Never give up hope is deliverance's cry to us, never give up hope, and never quit praying. Jesus prayed for people and they received instant deliverance and instant healing from disease. Some even had their lives restored from death as Jesus prayed. Oh that I could harness the level of belief Jesus had! "All things are possible to him that believeth." (Mark: 9:23)

Here is one definition of "spirit" which I enjoy. The description can be applied to either a negative or a positive spirit.

A spirit, i.e. a simple essence, devoid of all or at least all grosser matter, and possessed of the power of knowing, desiring, deciding, and acting.
(Thayer's)

Mark Chapter 9:17-29

There was a man who had a son with a self-destructive demon. Some of Jesus' disciples tried to cast the demon out of him but failed. Jesus remarked "Oh faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him (the son) unto me." I suppose Jesus would have said the same thing to me. Jesus ordered the "dumb spirit" out of the boy. He set the boy free of the "foul spirit" that was causing him to dive into fire, into water to drown, wallow, and foam at the mouth. The disciples asked Jesus in private, "Why could we not cast him out? And He answered them; this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting." Let's face it; Jesus had a heck of a lot more faith than the average bear! In this example of deliverance, the father exercised acts of faith and hope before receiving his miracle; he stepped out in faith by asking both the apostles and then Jesus to heal his son.

Interestingly I wish there was an exact recipe to follow for deliverance from a heart breaking disease of disability. I do know that certain people do have the gift to pray over someone and then they receive their miracle just as if Jesus himself had prayed.

There is one kind of deliverance prayer that I have seen work every time.

Mathew 5:44

"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you,

And pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;"

Why do you think Jesus told us to pray for our enemies? I have found that when I pray for those that I resent for whatever reason, in a matter of days, the burden of resentment magically leaves my heart and mind. Praying for

my enemies is Very effective for bringing me peace of mind. So the question again is will I allow God to relieve me of the burden of hating those who hurt me? Once again the chances of my enemies changing their behaviors over my prayers are minute because of free will. However, the chance of God changing my own heart toward my enemies is great. Wonderful is the peace of mind I receive from praying for my enemies. I know this suggestion is hard for many feel they are somehow offering to let these enemies off the hook of responsibility for their wrongs if we forgive them. This is a delusion; they will answer to God for their actions like everyone else. By praying for them, the only one let off the hook is I and thank God for that!

In Mathew chapter 13: When returning to His hometown, Jesus refrained from many mighty works because of the people's pre-conceived notions and unbelief. His old familiar neighbors knew Jesus the man, and could not accept Him as a savior and deliverer. Mathew: 13:57: "A prophet is not without honor, save (except) in his own country, and in his own house. Plainly put, I did not harness perfect belief when receiving my miracle, but I did have hope and desperation.

The Bible speaks of an intense seeking of God through fasting and praying, wailing and cries in sackcloth and ashes, as a servant to a Master. Sister Petty used to say this kind of intense cry for God is rare in these fast paced times and that the Church needs a renewal. Each man (and I mean humankind) must find for himself or herself the value of a true and close relationship with God. A passionate relationship with Christ and a heart touch from Him is available if sought. Luke 11:9 says, "Seek and you will find." If we seek God superficially, the result will be shallow as well. My full attention is in order when truly seeking God I should cast aside every distraction.

My experiences with fasting, have always been positive ones except when the time to end the fast is drawing nigh and I obsess over what I plan to eat. I have fasted from one to four days off all foods while drinking lots of water.

(Some are not medically able to go without food, it could be fatal, please contact your physician before attempting a fast.) Sometimes I omit meats and sugars only from my diet. I deny my flesh through fasting accompanied by fervent prayer, which allows my Spirit man to grow stronger and enables me to overcome human weakness. Consequently, I can then pray a more powerful deliverance prayer. What the heck if I want something bad enough fasting is worth a shot.

Psalms 35:13 “I humble my soul with fasting”.

Psalms 69:10 “I chastened my soul with fasting”.

Mark 9:28&29

“And when he was come into the house, his disciples asked him privately, why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, this kind can come forth by nothing, but by prayer and fasting.”

In other words, Jesus had the level of belief that enabled Him to cast the demon out of the child. As for these disciples, they needed to empower themselves further before attempting a deliverance of this measure. This “exorcism” if you will, after all casting out an evil spirit is an exorcism.

Fasting breaks patterns of the flesh, it pulls in the reins. We can fast to reconnect with God when feeling spiritually frazzled and drained. We can fast when feeling our life is running us instead of us running it. It is a good practice in self-restraint and overcoming my flesh by my Spirit. I emerge from three days of fasting and praying with an improved focus and direction for my life.

Diet and exercise in of themselves are very important to our Spiritual walk. I have noticed that too much meat bogs me down. Too much of a good thing is not good at all. A diet of plenty of water, fresh fruits, fresh meats, fresh vegetables, fresh seafood, grains, herbs, nuts, and dairy is highly beneficial. It takes shopping with regularity to eat a fresh food diet. If a food is, man made it cannot possibly match what God has intended for us to eat. A continual diet of canned and precooked processed food is a crime against our own bodies. Man cannot invent truly nutritious food, though they have tried and tried. I can rationalize a bad diet in a hundred different ways. In the end, I will be overweight and regret it or I will be sick and regret it. I am responsible for my own diet.

Isaiah 7:15 “Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.”

Is that the only reason Jesus knew to refuse evil? I doubt it but I believe it helped.

The reason fasting works is the same reason good diet works. In Daniel Chapter One, there is a story about how vegetables and water make men healthier than meat and wine. In Hebrews, 12:16 it is reiterated from the Old Testament how Esau sold his inheritance for a morsel of food. His brother Jacob did take advantage of Esau 's hunger and weariness. Esau rationalized “What good would his inheritance be to him if he starved to death?” I do not suppose either of the men were overweight in those days of old, Esau was a hunter. This example shows how the flesh can rule our good sense.

I used to quote scripture word for word during prayers for others deliverance. I am now reconsidering this action. Was I trying to educate the prayer recipient? ***Prayer is not the time to educate; it is a time to give.*** Maybe I was reminding the Great Spirit of His own words. Was I validating my own request by throwing these scriptures around? The word is powerful and sharp! Where should quoting scripture begin and end in our prayers? Edifying a present prayer recipient with the word is good.

They may need the confirmation that their own wish is God's will. If I am reminding God of His word, I think that comes under the defect heading of manipulation and is unnecessary. If I were trying to authorize my own prayer request by throwing in some scripture to back it up I would do well to identify my insecurity in the matter at hand. Writing down my own prayer requests and reading them back will help me identify my hearts intent surrounding prayer. Rule of thumb; always check my motives. Is the purpose of my prayer of a giving nature or selfish, controlling and carnal?

Quoting power scriptures for encouragement and edification during prayer is a positive action, when our motives are good. However, honest seeking of God and living by the principles of the word is where our true power lies. By being a doer of the word, I am living principles of Love and truth set down in the Bible. This in turn increases my faith leaps and bounds, purely by its nature. I will not get this kind of faith by quoting God's word. I seldom learn when I am talking but I learn a lot by listening and doing the right thing. Things always work out better if I stick to truth and brotherly Love.

A friend spoke to me today and said, "You know things always work out when I go by the rules." She is so right! I am not referring to legalistic tradition I am referring to the principals of Love that Jesus set down. I lived most of my life trying to bend the rules. Rules are made to be broken I thought. I thought rebellion was best for me and more fun. Little did I know, the perfect rule of truth, Love, and obedience to God can become far more fun and alluring than breaking Godly principles.... little did I know.

When a youthful child becomes an old gray headed, wrinkled man or woman. They did not see with their eyes the actual turning from new to old. They did not see as the blonde hair turned to gray and the gray hair turned to white. Becoming a powerful, Loving spiritual being happens the same way. As we begin to live by truth and Love we do not see the transformation, it is a gradual process. Making the right decisions by the rules will gradually transform us into the people we want so badly to be.

Receiving the life more abundantly comes one right action at a time. Just as the gradual dissension into Hell, comes one wrong self-serving action at a time.

The seed in the womb becomes a baby through nourishment and Love. To become joyful, we also need our spiritual nourishment daily. This takes time and attention if we are to reap the result of Joy and Peace of mind. One thing I need for sure is fulfillment that comes from fellowship and doing of Gods will. ***Spiritual enlightenment that is higher knowledge pales in the shadow of the hearts spiritual fulfillment.*** Praying rightly for others will come, but primarily, I should exercise my own helps. I can only make one person happy and that is not you. Prayers for others are more effective, of course, if done in faith. To pray with faith, I must have a spiritual mind believing for results.

James 5:14-16

“Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he hath committed sins, they shall be forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”

“Effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man” these are three of the ingredients of successful prayer when praying for others. I am the “righteous man” through Christ!

In John chapter eleven, Jesus brought Lazarus back to life after four days of physical death.

John 11:41-43

“Then they lifted the stone where the dead one was laid. In addition, Jesus lifted His eyes upward and said, Father, I thank You that You heard me. And I know that You always hear me; but because of the crowd standing around, I said it, that they might believeth that you sent me. And saying these things, He cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus! Here! Outside!”

Jesus became an example of faith in action and wanted to show the crowd that the Father had sent him.

John 5:19

“I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by Himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.

(New International Version)

John 5:30

“By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me.

(New International Version)

When we pray, it is the Father who makes the miracle happen. Why did Jesus have this unwavering faith for miracles? Here is one reason for sure:

John 1:1&2&14

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God.”

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

God and Jesus were one, in the beginning before Jesus became flesh. A friend explained to me this concept of being one yet separate. She explained; it is as the egg consists of yoke, white and shell yet it is one. So too are the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Of course, this is not a perfect example but it does show how three can also be one. I wonder if Jesus remembered everything about his life before becoming flesh. Without a doubt, He brought with Him the faith to move mountains.

The bonds of addiction run deep I have seen many delivered from these bonds. I have seen the captive set free. Deliverance is real and it happens all the time in many different ways. Do not give up the hope for your loved one. Hope will be answered one way or another by our Loving God.

Once upon a time when I was nearly five full years sober and clean I was having medical issues. My old whiplash injury was causing me excruciating pain. Finally, the pain wore me down and I started resorting to Percocet an opiate pain reliever, very addicting. For this addict it was as close to danger as standing on railroad tracks with a blindfold on allowing the train to get as near as possible before moving out of its way. Perhaps the train scenario would have been safer. After a few months of dabbling with narcotics my thinking went pure addict. The obsession and compulsion came back and I was well on my way back to a living hell. Desperate and afraid I went to AA meetings and still wanted more pills. I knew about a deliverance preacher out in cross-city, Florida the church was having a tent revival. I lay in my trailer praying and full of fear when I got a call from a friend who invited me to the revival. Oh what a fired up preacher he was. He screamed the word of God but preaching was not his most powerful gift. After the sermon, he singled me out and asked me to come to the front. I got right up and he prayed for me. I think he had his hand on my head as he prayed.

Suddenly I felt the "Rushing of mighty winds" spoken of in Acts during the time of Pentecost. Lord it felt like I was in a mighty wind tunnel and just as loud. I kept stepping backward to catch my feet up with my body that was floating backward. Wow what a feeling what a pure deliverance that was.

When I left there the desire to use pain pills was GONE. I am so grateful that my Fathers grace abounds. Did I deserve that deliverance after toying with my sobriety as I did? Apparently, God thought I did and I Love Him for that. As long as I do not shame myself away from the presence of God, wonderful are the deliverances He will give me.

PRAISE, WORSHIP AND THANKSGIVING

This type of prayer is communion with God. The awesome Lord is the only one we worship. He is worthy of our praise! This exercise for spiritual growth works positively for us whether feeling inspired and full of gratitude, or just paying homage in tuff times. Thanksgiving and praise are the same in nature; they are an acknowledgment of God's part in our lives.

We can praise God in song; praise him by raising our hands to the sky and stating His greatness, His majesty, His wonder, and omnipotence throughout all creation. We may do this in a church or in our home. We can do this silently while soaking up the miracles of nature or express praise loudly with excited exuberance.

Our praise should be as individual as we are, in other words done in our own way. Some church people love to get loud and lift their hands to heaven. Hands raised are a position of physical vulnerability and may be uncomfortable to some. Arms raised are a posture of submission that may cause an unsafe feeling. Just as crossed legs and arms are a protected stance. Open arms are a receiving pose. Raising of our arms in the presence of God's Spirit means we are showing trust. It represents openness toward God. It says bring it on! Doing this in the presence of others may cause feelings of shame. Such a display may arouse embarrassment that we would submit in this way to anybody or anything. Overcoming these fears and worshiping in Spirit rather than letting fear rule is liberating. This type of worship is not imperative for spiritual progress. If we choose, we may worship in this way in the privacy of our own home and reap the rewards.

First Peter 2:9

“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

I have always enjoyed this scripture. It offers a little, “dare to be different”, and courage to be ourselves. Being a little peculiar is okay with me. I like to think myself chosen of God, being special to God is important to me. All are chosen by God if they in turn choose Him. God’s people do seem peculiar to many, choosing to Love in situations that seem like they merit hate is peculiar to many. Most of the time my praise comes from a feeling of intense gratitude. My life is good and I know whom to thank for that. God has certainly brought me out of darkness into His glorious light! I have many reasons to praise Him in solitude and gatherings.

Acts 16:25&26

“Who, having received such a charge thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.” And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises unto God; and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake so that the foundations of the prison were opened, and everyone’s bands were loosed.”

The praise in this story was the key to freedom. These scriptures paint a picture in my mind of a dark and dingy inner part of the prison. I see lots of Rock and iron. Paul and Silas were not too concerned about what the other people in jail would think of their peculiar (different) behavior of praise and worship. Then that peculiar behavior set them free! They clearly had their priorities in check.

The book of Psalms is full of praise scriptures. If we are new at this praise thing, we can learn from David’s writings. I can use some of his psalms to praise my God. Again, this does not have to be mundane. Just telling God something good that He has done and thanking Him is a practice of honesty and humility. Be yourself!

Psalms 22:3

“But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel...”

“Israel” That means us, symbolically. (Romans 11:17) This says God inhabits the praises we offer Him. Parts of that statement are a mystery to me. Nevertheless, I believe the word of God and I want Him close so then I will try to remember to praise Him during all my different moods and situations.

Romans 13:15

“By Him (Jesus) therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise, to God, continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”

Sometimes it is a sacrifice to say thank you. It has a magic effect on my spirit to give thanks to God when I am going through tuff times. This kind of praise exudes acceptance. Saying, “You are God and all things are in your hands”. We show gratitude for instance, when served a cup of coffee or a dinner, should we not give thanks to the heavenly Father for all our blessings as well. Among the thorns in life lie the roses, red and fresh smelling. Praise and thanks when frustrated with life will help us to see the good things we have received. We will not feel deep gratitude toward God nor for our good fortune all the time, obviously. Making a conscious effort of right behavior toward God is a practice in building a healthy relationship with our creator and showing Him the respect, He is due.

First Thessalonians 5:18

“In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

Good things come by doing that which we do not feel like doing. Exercise your spiritual muscles and they shall grow strong. When you are strong, you will be of good use to further the kingdom of God.

OUR WEAKEST PRAYER

I would like to talk about times of utter despair. Suppose we have a time when we find our best effort to live happy fails utterly and we want to give up. Due to some miserable situation or event, we realize that our most intense desires and expectations of Love and fun seem to be gone forever. Conditions make us realize we cannot accomplish a thing to make life the way we desire it to be, we are entirely powerless and we know it. We are hurled into one of the deepest, darkest clouds of anger and sadness we have known. We are discontent and paralyzed by our feelings. We do not want to get out of bed and we hate being stuck in bed at the same time. We cannot leave the house. We have been doing all the right things! Why isn't God's will paying-off? We are tempted to take back sin, control, manipulation, drinking, drugging sex anything to feel better! Perhaps we are faced with financial loss or loss of a partner, this could be a major stretching of our faith, a trial to gain strength from if I get through it without losing hope. What is this hope? It is my heart telling my head that God is good and He will cause my situation and me to get better. Moreover, yes, I have fear surrounding this situation but I also have some faith.

It is common for new believers to expect that if we do the right thing's God will cause only the pleasant blessings to come our way. We are caught off guard by difficult situations and emotional lows. What is wrong with me? We might ask. Why is God letting this happen? When emotional pandemonium and fear enters our heart, we need to pray. We need to pray persistently and fervently. We can ask ourselves; am I truly trusting God and putting all my most valued people and possessions in His hands? Do I believe that He will supply all my needs? Guess what, it's okay if the answer to those two questions are no.

I recall a time in my life that my daughter came to live with me after being at her fathers for two years. This would be a huge change for me I thought. Would I be able to afford her? I would have to work more! I had thoughts

of the cooking and cleaning this would involve. In addition, what about all that homework I would have to help her with? When would I have time for my husband? I had a lot of fear though I love my daughter and wanted her home with me.

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I fretted that I would not be a good enough mother. (Please, do not think me selfish or horribly insecure. I am human and we are, together addressing the human condition and how to overcome it, I am talking about our core human concerns, better addressed than buried.) I made the choice, responsibly and lovingly to have my daughter back with me though my heart did shutter at the possible consequences of my decision.

My emotions spun into a frenzy of heaviness and despair. My heart said “the funs over” and my feelings followed with dismal paralysis. I became depressed, searching for answers, I turned to my husband and asked in confusion; what is wrong with me? I should be grateful and happy, I said. My heart would not obey my head! My husband assessed my depression as hormonal. That did not help me; I could not gather all my negative feelings, put them in a box, and stamp it “Hormonal”. Though my husband would have been relieved if I had, he; hoped this label would fix my mood. My husband is unable to fix me emotionally or spiritually. I have learned since then that fear of losing these most basic things: sex, security, and society can cause us the most emotional problems. This makes perfect sense.

I took a thorough look at myself and asked; "what was really going on with me?" I had to get quiet and away from all distractions to see myself clearly. After I prayed my “end of my rope” or “weakest” prayer to God and did some quiet reflection, I was able to fit together the pieces of my emotional puzzle. By understanding myself, I was capable of putting all those fears that had eluded my conscious thought into God’s hands where they belong. Prior to my understanding exactly what I was afraid of, I was unable to give it to God. By prayer and quiet reflection, we can achieve the self-awareness

that is necessary to become emotionally healthy and at peace through Christ.

I wondered during my time of pain if God really was hearing me, funny I thought my trust, and faith was much bigger than that. Hearing myself tell my husband, I felt God had forsaken me, sounded foreign even to my own ears. I wondered if I would ever recover. There was a veil of shadow covering my heart and mind. I was taking a step up Jacobs's ladder on a step with no light.

Romans 5:3-5

“And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the Love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.”

First Peter 1:7

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

I had a vision during meditation of a ladder leading to heaven. The ladder had both lighted steps and darkened steps. It was very easy to stay on the steps that where well lighted.

Genesis 28:12

“And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.”

I had my own dream of this “Jacobs ladder” The lighted steps represented times of gratitude and joy, periods in my life when I was well aware of my blessings from God.

My train of thought was positive and emotionally fit. The dark steps, just as important to my final destination, were difficult. Dark phases are sometimes deeply confusing and paralyzing if we allow them to be. On the dark step, I cannot always see where God is or where I am. Nevertheless, if I stay the course (meaning; do what I know is right) in spite of my lack of sight and understanding I will soon be illuminated again with God’s light and Love. To this statement beloved’s I humbly beseech, hold fast to your hope of God’s help! If we stay the course of **“Hope” the gift amidst the unknown for those who believe**, our trust will grow and we will be better prepared for the next darkened step of life’s spiritual ladder toward everlasting life.

These dark steps are scary. To admit we are afraid begins the process to become free of the power that fear has over us. To cry to God “I am fearful!” This is a “weakest prayer” and the beginning of true strength. Out of weakness, we are made strong. (Hebrews 11:34)

Romans 1:17

“For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.”

This process is one of faith building that moves mountains. From faith to faith, suggests the fear and weakness that lies between assurance and positive knowledge of God’s presence. These dark times are ok they are constructive even. We do not have to be paralyzed by fear any longer. We will grow spiritually if we choose to walk forward in faith while experiencing intense lack of enthusiasm.

Proverbs 14:10

“The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy.”

The translation I learned long ago and related to so much:

“The heart knows its own bitterness therefore no man can intermingle with (take-away) its joy.”

This faith building process works toward freeing us from the mother fear of death and the bondage that accompanies fear. Seeking God and pushing forward is using what faith we do have. ***This process provides for us independent joy.*** Meaning, the power other people have over our feelings is diminished. Knowing we do not need other people for our own emotional and spiritual well-being is a very powerful freedom and a precious reward of seeking God.

It can take a very long time to get to a lighted step on Jacobs ladder if we do not push forward and call out to God in our weakest prayer. If we resort to our own sinful solutions during these times, we could fall into the black abyss of fear and stay for a very long time. However, As Apostle Paul in all his wisdom and experience stated:

Hebrew 6:9

“But beloved we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”

AMEN!

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

First Corinthians 13:13

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity.”

Spiritual gifts are interesting and fun they are given for the betterment and encouragement of all God’s people. Love is the greatest gift, and by God’s Holy Spirit, we are able to Love therefore the baptism of The Holy Spirit is a grand and fabulous gift crucial to our journey as believers. I have been to many churches that did not speak about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I surmise they have not experienced this grand event as an intense life changing spiritual awakening as some have. Please, do not assume they are not saved because they lack this certain experience!

Luke 3:16

“John (the Baptist) answered saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire:”

First Corinthians 12:4-10

“Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:”

In First Corinthians 13th chapter, we are taught that Love is the greatest Spiritual gift we can receive. The Love of God Loves through me and by me it is proof of God's Spirit in me. This kind of Love treats all people kind and with respect; no matter who they are. For all life can give to you only true Love will see you through.

THE BAPTISM OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

My spiritual experience of the “wonderful” variety

Having said the above, I will now tell you a little story about my experience with the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit”.

There was a time in my life that I sought God with fervor and effort due to a deep emotional and Spiritual black hole in myself. Words do not give proper credence to any God given revelation of soul. Therefore, I shall use metaphors and allegories in an attempt to convey to you my experience. English has no words for the supernatural feelings the Holy Spirit has passed through me.

I was living in San Antonio, Texas at the age of 29. I frequently passed a little church on the way to and from my apartment. I had become a born again Christian two years prior and yes, my life improved quite a bit, I was no longer a slave to drugs and alcohol. Nevertheless, I was a struggling Christian. I suffered with anxiety attacks and intense stress in spite of being born again and water baptized. I was trying desperately to be obedient to the God I so badly needed to know. I read the Bible often and did abstain from all drugs both prescribed and illegal. I sought God through prayer regularly, I so needed relief from my anxiety. Suddenly the feelings of paralyzing fear would come over me and all I knew how to do was attempt to escape all feelings. I isolated myself from everyone. My husband at the time wanted to help but he could do nothing to relieve my fear. What is anxiety except intense unexpressed fear? No one was able to ease the repercussions of my emotional trauma.

I recall every time I road by this little neighborhood church I felt drawn to it. For nearly one year, I passed it by thinking: “Someday I will attend this church.” Finally, one morning I went to the little Baptist Church. I do not remember much about the sermon except the lovely old man with white hair who was the preacher. After the morning service, as I was leaving I

met a woman standing in the greeters doorway of the church. She touched my chest right where all my pain and fears felt stuck. She then said to me; "Come to the evening service, The Lord has something for you." What an understatement! I really believed her for some reason and was intrigued by what she said; I left that church with the hope I would receive something from God in the evening service.

My faith started with a belief in God, The Father. I was beginning to understand the idea of Jesus the son of God but it was difficult. I kept reading the Bible hoping something would click. The whole idea of a sacrificial lamb seemed extreme to me, I really did not get it, though I wanted to. The woman who I now know as Sister Petty struck my interest. I went to that seven-o'clock service as she suggested at the little Baptist church.

I entered the church and saw only five or six people including the sweet elderly, white haired pastor. He was elderly but very alert, spiritually proficient and empathic. Sister Petty the woman from the morning service was there, I later learned she was a minister, missionary, and founder of many churches. I saw a young man and his mother; I remember being surprised that they allowed a guy with long hair in the church. These people were giving their testimonies of what God had done for them.

After the testimonies were given they asked me if I wanted to receive prayer. The only religious organization I had experienced prior to this other than my brief baptism in water at The Church of Christ was The Kingdom Hall and they never publicly prayed for me. I did not know what to expect, but I opted for prayer and boy am I glad I did. They all surrounded me and put their hands on my shoulders and back, they began to pray. I heard unfamiliar, intricate dialects quietly spoken by several of them. My mind stayed open in spite of my not understanding their language, I needed God! I began to sweat I was a little scared. I felt something powerful dance through my soul. Suddenly it was as if oceans of living waters were surging through my body making my heart well.

Imagine oceans of Love flowing through such a small thing as a human body. This feeling was no shallow experience. I was steady thanking Jesus as they instructed me to do. As a previous drug addict I thought, "My god this cannot be right it feels too good" I had some fear. Then I felt my beloved grandmother, whom was one of the few encouraging figures throughout my childhood, flow through my soul she was there! Then the Love of God flowed through my heart like milk and honey. By that experience, I knew God was real and I had just met Jesus and the Holy Ghost in one large experience. Following this baptism of grace and peace, I felt Love for others and Love for myself.

I have not had an anxiety attack since. I found a fellowship where I actually fit in. I put down cigarettes. Tons of burdens were lifted off my shoulders, I was set free. I sang a new song on my way home that night in tongues. The experience in the church strengthened my faith 100 fold and more. The experience showed me a glimpse of eternity in my heart and soul. This blessed event happened two years after my water baptism, not because I am better or more spiritual than the next man is but because I desperately needed help. Because of my weakness and infirmity, I sought God with my whole heart.

In the book of Acts Chapter 10:44-47 the gentiles were given the gift of the Holy Spirit prior to their water baptisms. Again, God does not go by man's rules. I say this because I have heard some preachers preach that these baptisms come to man in a certain traditional order. I believe that God sent me Sister Petty and I her to help me understand what supernatural thing had come upon me. When the student is ready and willing, the teacher will appear.

I wish I could tell you the exact recipe to receive a grand spiritual awakening unsurpassed by any in your life, like directions for baking a splendid cake. I can only share my own experience with you and you do as you wish with it. This Holy Spirit blast was not sent because of my own merit. "Seek and you shall find."

John 14:15-17

“If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter that he may abide with you forever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.”

God’s gifts are innumerable. All good spiritual fulfillments are gifts. Even my own obedience can be viewed as a gift because it is from Jesus without help, I am rebellious and proud. Tribulations in life are a gift, whether I learn from them is my choice. Life itself is a gift. It is a strange thing to depend on God for every good thing. For me it is a reality of necessity.

James 1:17

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

First Corinthians 12:7

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.”

Apostle Paul is clear in First Corinthians chapter twelve that it is God’s decision who receives what gift. He also makes it very clear that they are given by one Spirit to benefit the group. He states that these gifts should be exercised to encourage and edify others. We are a social people, if we spend too much time alone in our comfort zone we tend to stagnate. Granted, my time alone with God is vital, what I am talking about is balance. When I received the Holy Ghost along with faith Love and discernment, I was charismatically inspired and had no idea what balance was about. I was motivated coupled with no experience or temperance, on fire I set out to

save the world! I made many mistakes and had expectations that led me to an emotional crash.

If I give a gift to someone or receive a gift, consciously or unconsciously there may be strings attached. For example, Aunt Jane gave me a Christmas gift this year therefore, I feel obligated to buy her one. Suppose I get my children gifts and they abuse them or toss them aside unused? I may feel regret because they were unappreciated. If a man friend gives me diamonds or flowers, I wonder what he wants from me hence: "Strings". Contrary to Spiritual principles, these natural ideals are as great stonewalls that resonating in our psyche. Consequently, due to our life experience, it is difficult to comprehend fully an unconditional gift from God without some help. What do I have to do for God in return for a great gift we ask cautiously and suspiciously? After many misconceptions and mistakes, I found my own answer to this question. I am required nothing from God in return for the wonderful gifts He has given me. I choose to learn to rely on God and enjoy the gifts He has given me not by obligation but because of desperation. My way of running life without God does not work. Human legalism and reciprocations are invalid where Spiritual gifts are concerned.

Let us now research the Spiritual gifts that I have experienced, they are all over the Bible.

Romans 11:29

"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance."

Once a gift is given by, God He does not take it back! I firmly stand by this belief today. The gifts, which were given me, where and are bestowed upon me by grace and they are mine to do with what I will. In James 1:17 it says: "these gifts come down from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." The Lord is not going to change His mind about the gifts He has given me.

“DISCERNING OF SPIRITS”

Discernment is an uncanny insight into a person’s spiritual, emotional, and even mental condition.

Sister Petty used the gift of discernment and prophecy when she approached me that day at the church that later led to my life changing spiritual experience. She used her discernment wisely. Just because she saw spiritual malady in people, she did not judge them harshly or aloud. She did not project guilt onto them or scream instructions of repentance although repentance was often the primary action needed for deliverance from their suffering. If she saw the evidence of spiritual and emotional bondage and sin in someone’s eyes or heart, she prayed for them. Once I asked her how it was that she could see into a person’s spiritual condition and she said it was a sense; she could just sense things. She had couth about her gifts. She would not degrade the struggling sinner or even the demonically influenced person. Her discernment is to aid her in helping and encouraging others. Sometimes I can look into someone’s eyes and see right down into their heart and soul. I see deeper into a person’s soul than they would like to see themselves. So many times we humans block out our own feelings, and understandably. Denial and repression of emotions is a survival tool but only works temporarily. Often discernment comes from a “vibe” or overall presence of spirit a person projects that we can see with unfettered eyes if we are paying attention.

Every man woman and child has supernatural spiritual gifts waiting to be tapped into.

First Corinthians 12:10

“To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues:

If we have discernment or the ability to understand a soul's need for God the gift quite possibly will be followed by an intense burden. Meaning we do not feel at peace until we pray for our fellow human. The gift of discernment gives a man the ability to use a second sight. Some people call this ability psychic. God gives His gifts to whom He pleases and they do not always attend traditional Sunday church. Discernment is unfruitful if the discerner does not follow it up with some kind of positive action such as prayer, counsel or encouragement. The rule of thumb for any Spiritual action is always "do unto others as you would have done unto you". Of course, discernment can be to protect me from becoming entangled with a dangerous person but I should still pray for them.

Temperance and maturity result from the experience of exercising our gifts. Keeping our own character weaknesses such as false pride and vanity in check will allow us to use this gift Lovingly and responsibly. I would not want to hurt one of God's children through gossip or revealing a private matter to others that I have received through discernment. It is human nature to want to run and brag about the insights we have been supernaturally given. We should exercise self-restraint when tempted. After all, we do reap what we sew. If I detect a dark spirit in someone, I can usually describe or name the Spirit. Identifying a dark spirit by discernment helps us to understand what to pray for and how to counsel the struggling child of God. Sometimes the awareness of a spirit is a warning for swift departure. I cannot help anyone who does not want help.

DISCERNMENT

Possessors of this gift beware! If we do not stay spiritually healthy, discernment could become a resource for our own shortcomings to flourish. Seeing weaknesses in others presents an opportunity to judge people harshly and see ourselves in a vain light. God's gifts are unconditional and he doesn't take them back, God is not an "Indian giver" as they say. However, the uses of his gifts range from good to evil. It seems absurd that a blessed gift can be used for evil but with eyes wide-open, we have humility enough to understand this possibility. God gives us a gift, now it's up to us how we use that gift.

THE MOST MISUNDERSTOOD GIFT IN THE BIBLE “THE GIFT OF TONGUES”

First Corinthians 14:2

For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth him, howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.

Romans 8:26-28 King James Version (KJV)

26 Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

27 And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

First Corinthians 2:14

But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.

Some Christians do not even know that speaking in tongues is in the New Testament. As a matter of fact, Jesus was the first person to teach about it,

Mark 16:15-17

“And [Jesus] said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues”

Let’s get real here! In spite of all the biblical references we could ask for to prove the gifts uses and authenticity it is still the most misunderstood and abused gift in the bible. Unbelief where tongues are concerned runs rampant in and out of the church. If you do believe or are open-minded read on, what I write is truthful experience as well as biblical knowledge.

Acts 2:1-4,

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.”

I recall years ago; I had a friend that was with the Jehovah’s Witnesses, we went together to meetings often. We studied the Bible and my friend informed me that the gifts of the Spirit died with the apostles. I am not

sure where she got her information but she believes it to this day. There is not a thing I can say to convince her otherwise and have learned through the years not to try. To her the gifts are dead. Sadly, because of the teaching she received at an impressionable age, it is easier for her to believe a miracle of Satan than a miracle of God through man. There will always be Christians who believe the commonsense principals of the Bible but not the charismatic gift written about in the word. And guess what! They can believe as they choose!

HOWEVER, I MAKE AN EFFORT TO NEVER LIMIT MY HIGHER POWER'S POWER IN ANY WAY!

When I received the gift of tongues, I was overwhelmed as the Spirit of God blanketed me. I did not ask for the gift. What I did ask for was God's help. I was desperate for God and He answered my call.

I was in my pick-up truck right after a church service sitting with two friends. One was my spiritual teacher Sister Petty who was there to explain what was happening to me as it was taking place. Sister Petty was experienced with all the gifts of the Spirit and she spoke in tongues, and prophesized herself. She knew things about me without me telling her. Sister Petty was also there when I received the Holy Spirit with the evidence of tongues. Even though I received the baptism of The Holy Spirit in a little Baptist church and after my intense spiritual experience I sang in tongues as I was, driving home however even though I sang in tongues that very first time that instance was not "the gift" of tongues.

I believe it was evidence that I had been baptized by The Holy Spirit. (Luke 3:16 & Acts 2:38)

We sat in my pickup and it was as if I was being downloaded with all kinds of new languages. I felt such a strong and loving supernatural energy! The foreign language songs flowed from me organized, and passionate. I did not know what was happening but Sister Petty said, "God is giving you a gift". Boy did He ever! That was 24 years ago and I have been singing and praying in tongues at will ever since.

I do not have to be prayed up or even spiritually fit to pray or sing in tongues. Foreign language flows through me as naturally as the English language does...and sometimes even more readily than my first language.

The gift of tongues is an organized dialect. I do not become entranced nor do I speak in one syllable repetitions as a child who has not yet learned to form words. However, I have heard such simple utterances in church that sound like that.

When I first received the gift, it was untempered. I exhibited it aloud in church and at tent revivals. I have since tempered my use of the gift and I pray in tongues in private.

Please! I choose to keep the gift of tongues quiet in the church because of what I have learned by exercising the gift. For me to refrain from public display does not mean it is a cut in stone rule for all persons at all times. It was very important for me to go through my own learning process and allow my gift to evolve into maturity. As Apostle Paul said, I do not forbid anyone from speaking God's language in public. That is their choice.

1Co 14:39

Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.

It baffles me how so many Christians not only forbid the speaking of tongue but also condemn those speaking in tongues and imply that it's Satanic.

First Thessalonians 5:19

“Quench not the Spirit.”

First Corinthians 13:11

“Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.”

First Corinthians 14:19

“Yet in church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue.”

The above scriptures in my opinion reiterate the fact that it does others no good to hear us speak to God in tongues. I see no benefit to others by exercising this gift openly. With the exceptions however of the public uses for tongues shown in the Bible (Acts) such as to present an encouraging word of knowledge to the church that is straight from the Holy Ghost Himself basically a prophetic message. Or to translate a message from God into a foreign language for certain persons so they understand the speaker in their own language. Personally, I do not give messages for public use of tongues YET but I certainly do not object to it. Seems the only ones who truly understand the dynamics of this gift are those who have received it.

My Spiritual teacher helped me understand that the type of tongues-gift I have received is a gift of prayer, a more perfect prayer. It is a gift of song, a more perfect song. I have read Christian commentaries that do object to the gift of tongues being defined as a tool for prayer. I propose that the writers of such commentaries do not have an extensive or even a basic gift of tongues. Otherwise they would not try to limit its uses by restricting the gift of tongues to fit into their own little yellow box labelled “I make the rules regarding the gift of tongues (which by the way I have never experienced myself).”

The gift is subject to the man not the man subject to the gift. By this, I mean God does not turn us into robots nor does he take our free will. Ultimately, we choose whether we will allow the gift of tongues to flow through us.

First Corinthians 14:32

“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.”

Just as the prophet controls his gift, we control our gift of tongues. We may direct it and pray for whom we wish using it. We can use this gift to pray about what we choose as well as what the Spirit leads. If I want to sing in tongues to the tune of a rock and roll song that is my choice. I may not understand each individual word that I pray, but I do know the overall mind of the Spirit that guides each prayer. Meaning, I know the essence of the prayers subject matter as long as I am attuned to the Spirit. The Spirit prays through me; this makes for a lot of prayer time! I have written about the topic of tongues in the “Prayer” chapter also because the gift of tongues is a gift of prayer.

First Corinthians 12:28

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.”

Not all who have spoken in tongues actually have the gift of tongues per say; tongues can surface during spiritual experiences and be gone as quickly as quickly as they came. These types of experiences are brought on by the presence of the Holy Spirit not because they have been given the gift. As all other gifts, its good purpose is for the betterment of God’s people. Of course, I pray for myself in tongues, it is a benefit of the gift. Prayer is a great help to me and the prayers that God has certainly heard benefit many

others. Bless God for this gift, He did not take it away in my back sliding days.

Again BEWARE the gift of tongues can be used to feed our character flaws also. By checking our motives at the core of our prayers we will not use this gift to show off in church or try to meet someone's status quo.

Having the gift of tongues does not signify that we are better than those who have not received it. It does not indicate that we are more spiritual than other people either. It does not denote that God favors us over others. However, it does often denote that the man who has received the gift has sought God desperately and fervently with his heart. Shallow prayers bring shallow results.

I feel compelled to add that speaking in tongues does not signify mental illness. However again, many people who lack faith in certain areas of belief do think that those who speak in tongues are wacky.

People who continue to seek God activate their gifts to participate in service to God and man. Our spiritual gifts, if used advocate that we are servants not masters of men.

Ultimately, we serve God

"Ye are bought with a price; be not ye the servants of men". (1Cr 7:23)

I am sure Apostle Paul was referring to a negative type of "service to man" indicative of oppression and control. In previous verses, Apostle Paul had been talking about certain rules and traditions that some men lord over other men. When in God's service we deploy hope to men not in the spirit of servitude and subjugation but in the spirit of gratitude.

There is not a lot of explaining in the bible where diverse tongues are concerned. I suppose the gift is best interpreted and explained by the friendly experienced. I have heard extreme variations of what appeared to be the gift of tongues. I dare not judge that a person is faking God's language. I would not want to be guilty of judging the Holy Spirit so I exert self-restraint rather than harsh judgments. I will say though I have heard both intricate dialect and simple one-syllable repetitions of tongues. Who is to say it is not all true except God and the person uttering the tongues.

I have never experienced speaking to a foreigner in his own language as they did the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) however; I believe it could happen if the need did arise.

First Corinthians 13:1

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.”

“Tongues” is the magical gift of speech and communication that dwells in the realm of higher purpose. Tongues can be used for the calling out of great and powerful angels to battle and protect mankind. This wonderful tool of opportunity set down for us mortals often time's lies on the church floor misunderstood and trampled. None is to blame, for we are but a people struggling to understand those things that are above our human reason. Yet, grace unlocks the door for the open minded and God seeking believer to partake in action toward the greater good. The complete gift of tongues requires praying when we are tired. Praying when we just want to watch TV and relax. It means giving when we feel like taking. Finally, it involves hope that the prayers we pray are making and will make a difference for men and woman alike that suffer from this fatal condition we

call carnality. I have to admit at times this gift feels like a lot of work and a heavy burden nevertheless I am honored to be part of the army for light and truth.

The gift of tongues is a tool used for the binding and casting out of demons, it is diversified and powerful, misunderstood and abused. It is a blessed mysterious gift in the hands of men and so we do our best to fulfill The Spirits great call for prayer.

The gift of tongues should not be put on display. My daughter has heard me pray often so has her father. When I pray, occasionally, others may hear me. I have explained the gift to my daughter as thoroughly as I know how. She is prudent about my anonymity where it is concerned. She does not talk about it to her friends. Recently she was in Michigan with her father (my ex-husband) they called on the telephone. In short, my ex asked for a display of tongues over the phone for his three young nephews. I am not sure how the topic came up but I was floored. What was my ex thinking? Surly he knew such a display would be exploiting the gift of God. Not to mention my sanity would be in question. I calmly told him the gift of prayer was private and I would appreciate it if he would not speak of it to others again. I am not ashamed of having this blessed supernatural talent but as I said before to display this gift is counterproductive to spiritual progress. I would be subjecting the Spirit and myself to ridicule also throwing unbelievers in front of the bus. I would be causing their sin by providing a stumbling block.

INTERPRETATION OF TONGUES

The gifts of tongues and interpretations are interrelated. Interpretation can be implemented in a public setting. One person speaks a message in the higher language and then he or an interpreter announces the words in

English. These messages are for edification and encouragement. Understanding the core idea behind the higher language words rather than a word for word translation is still an interpretation. Meaning, my brain can comprehend a whole idea without having to hear and understand individual words. If a person walks up to me silently with a mean face and punches me, without a word I interpret and know this person is very angry at me and wants to hurt me. I get my interpretation of the tongues I pray by an overall vibe or insight that is just as clear as the example of the man hitting me. I receive the understanding of my tongues prayer or message without translating one word of it into English.

It encourages me if I know what I am praying about when speaking in an unknown tongue. Paul in First Corinthians 13:1 mentions “speaking in tongues of angels”. Do you suppose he was speaking metaphorically to drive home his point that without Love, we profit nothing or was his reference to the language of angels made literally? I believe in the calling out of angels literally, as the Spirit wills in agreement with our own spirit. When using the spiritual tool of tongues, I am in agreement with the will of God in a harmonious, faithful, and supernatural way.

Deep intercessory prayer for others is carried out by invoking the gift of tongues and interpretation. Obviously if I have, a heavy, painful burden to pray for others who I am not close to it must be of God. (I am just not that giving by nature) With deep lamentation and tears, intercession for others is carried out. Sister Petty explained to me that victory over situations comes by praying until the burden is lifted or “praying it through”. Oftentimes when the burden is gone, I finish up in a beautiful flowing song. In some instances, I catch a burden when I encounter certain people. I guess the physical parallel would be catching a cold. It makes sense that spiritual mechanics are similar to natural mechanics. I encounter a person and catch their spiritual need. It is ok if the idea of tongues and interpretation is foreign (no pun intended) to you nevertheless you are reading this for a good reason, perhaps you will soon encounter this gift.

Though I pray in an unknown tongue, I know exactly whom and what I am praying for if I apply the gift of interpretation. Without the partner gift, I might be insecure presuming I am the one in need of a boatload of prayer (I am not insinuating my prayer needs have been light, oh contraire!). I would be perplexed and fearful without the understanding that interpretation gives me. Therefore, here is a Biblical example of these gifts that you may not have heard in church.

Apostle Paul spoke of his understanding being unfruitful when speaking in tongues. (First Corinthians 14:14) Does this mean it is written in stone that anytime we pray in an unknown tongue our understanding is unfruitful no ifs ands or buts? That concept leaves no room for the gift of interpretation. Saint Paul was not and is not God; he did not have **all** the gifts and the Bible does not hold all the answers or examples of spirituality. With interpretation, we have understanding clear and simple. It perplexes me when I read books written by biblical scholars and theologians who portray by their writing that they have all the answers and dynamics about tongues and interpretations. It is made obvious by their writing that they have never uttered a word of God's higher language themselves and their teachers have no actual experience in the matter. My experience (in all humility) lines up with the word of God and goes beyond the Bible's limited teachings of this scriptural topic.

Suppose I want to pray blessings for family or friends for personal reasons, can I apply tongues? Yes, that is one of the benefits of the gift no harm done. Spiritual blessings are never wrong. Using this gift for commercial or material gain of any kind is where I draw the line. I remember my mentor and teacher telling me evil has a secular equivalent for all the gifts. I have come to believe the evil equivalent of any of God's gifts is that same gift used for evil. I was shocked when my teacher told me Satanists could speak in tongues also. I like to think the Holy Spirit rather than Satan guides most of those speaking in tongues. "From the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." (Matthew 12:34) One of the motivating factors behind the spoken gift comes from our own heart and that is ok the gift is a part of us. (I am quite certain many would agree with the proposal that

"God would take back any gift before it is used for evil;" I disagree "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance". (Romans 11:29)

A friend of mine has a theory, which is; all men and women are born with spiritual gifts. He believes that some people merely develop their gifts and others never give them a chance. I believe that is very possible. The following scripture suggests the same:

Acts 2:17&18

"And it shall come to pass in the last days sayeth God, I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams." And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

I received the gift of tongues suddenly I know exactly when it happened. I also believe I have had other gifts since birth. Once again, the way The Lord does things often varies. The scripture reads, "In the last days God will pour His Spirit out upon ALL flesh". Oh, please The Lord must not pour out His Great Spirit on all flesh! That would include those unbelieving sinners and the self-righteous who do not even know they need the great physician!" It is very important not to second-guess any one's Spiritual experience. I have heard and seen positive spiritual experiences happen to people in many varied ways. Supernatural experiences are as individual as we are.

Once a friend and I went to church and received charismatic prayer. He hit the floor of the church and did not get up until the sermon was over except to periodically laugh joyfully and then return to unconscious bliss. Some call this slain in the Spirit though I have never found that term in my Bible. Nevertheless, he awoke refreshed and full of joy and gratitude. His experience was a life changing and spiritually enlightening event.

I have another friend who is a long time sober alcoholic. She goes into jails and re-habilitation centers to bring the sick and suffering addicts and alcoholics hope. She is not paid in cash for this and she relies on her God and the fellowship of AA to stay sober. She told me about a wonderful Spiritual experience she had. She described feeling God's Love, comfort and peace encompass her about. This happened to her by seeking God desperately in her own way. Now she does the good work of God. Some may say her experience was of Satan or counterfeit because she calls God by an untraditional name. Her experience did not happen in a religiously customary manor or in church. I know her by who she has shown me she is not by who she tells me she is. God says He will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, why not her? The labels on her experience are not the same labels I put on mine; does this indicate evil? "It must be evil it has the wrong labels!!!!!!!" No, I do not subscribe to that notion! I see her actions as being the very one's Christ taught his followers to perform. She will meet Jesus at the allotted time; of this, I have no doubt. In the meantime, I believe God's Spirit is upon her. God is Love therefore how could I, in good conscience pronounce this loving woman condemned to Hell.

Acts 17:23 (NIV)

"For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To an unknown God. Now what you worship as something unknown I am going to proclaim to you."

I believe Paul is saying they worshipped his God, The Most-High God but did not know His name. The loving Apostle Paul straightened them right out in a nice way. It is very risky ground to attribute to evil the great and mighty works of the Holy Ghost and call anyone's God or gift from "Satan" or "The devil" without a really good reason for such an accusation other than they are using the wrong label. After all Apostle Paul did not assign the name Satan to the unknown God of Acts 17:23 why should we.

What about this term “last days” found in Acts 2:17, I believe it has a dual meaning? Firstly, it means nearing the time of the end of earth, as we know it. Last days refers to the times shortly before the apocalypse, Armageddon, the time when Jesus steps foot on the earth, conquers evil and ushers in the thousand years of peace. (Revelation chapter 20)

Second Peter 3:8

“But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”

What could this scripture mean? I believe it means God’s reality exists beyond the confines of earth and space where there is no law of time. Only God knows the last days for us. (Mark 13:32) Most people can see that the biblical signs of the time of the end have been appearing for quite a long time. “Wars, rumors of wars, earthquakes, family members betraying family and nation rising against nation”, the list goes on. (Mathew 24) I hope that we will all be spiritually equipped to meet God come these last days.

Second, I believe “last days” refers to the times shortly before our own death. Surely these are last days for any human being walking in the shadow of death; based on life expectancy I may have thirty or forty more years on this earth, unless of course something tragic and unexpected happens to me. Time passes in the wink of an eye. If you are mortal, you will see your own last days. Consequently, there is no better time than now to seek God and His Gracious Holy Spirit touch. The gifts of the Spirit flow in the church that would be a good place to start your search for Spiritual helps. Jesus did promise, “Seek and you will find.” (Mathew 7:7) I have wondered why some people receive a great blast of The Spirit and others do not. I conclude the main ingredient in receiving Spiritual gifts is seeking God with an honest and humble heart toward Him.

First Peter 4:7

“But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.”

THE GIFTS OF HEALING AND DELIVERANCE

First Corinthians 12:8-10

“And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these [is] charity.

To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;

To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another [divers] kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues.”

First Corinthian 12:28

“And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.

I know a preacher with the gift of healing and deliverance. I spoke of my experience with him in the “Prayers of deliverance section. I know he has these gifts because when he prayed for me miraculous things happened. God healed a neck injury I suffered with since I was in my twenties through the preacher. I do not know what it feels like to pass that kind of power through my body as a healer. I wonder how he feels when he heals a person. I do know he speaks with authority and confidence and addresses the ailment as a live entity. When I told the preacher about my neck pain, I was mainly concerned about having to take pain medication I had no idea God would heal me. I noticed it a couple days after it happened, I received my healing over five years ago, and my neck is still pain free.

MY SUPERNATURAL HEALING FROM HEPATITIS B

I have a more miraculous story of healing. In the “Baptism of the Holy Spirit” chapter I wrote about my white light experience and baptism. When I was in my addiction I got very sick several times with Hepatitis B. Hepatitis B is caught by our own blood being exposed to bad blood through transfusions or contaminated needles. Hepatitis B was around long before Hepatitis C was discovered or evolved. Hepatitis B was temporary, you catch it and get very sick then if it doesn’t kill us we recover. The symptoms are the same as the other liver diseases being coke-a-cola colored urine, yellow skin, a dull pain in the abdomen, no energy, upset stomach, white stool. The symptoms are unmistakable.

I made the mistake when I was deep in my addiction of sharing a needle with a man practically a stranger. I was desperate for my heroin shot. I was going through withdrawal symptoms and needed relief now. A few days later I was hit with the sickness. All I could stomach was watermelon. I ate loads of watermelon at the local cafeteria. I went to the hospital, they took my blood and I was diagnosed with Hepatitis B. This same experience happened to me at least twice that I can remember and maybe even three times. I had hepatitis B at least twice with a hospital diagnosis as a confirmation.

Years passed and I was delivered from addiction in a little Baptist church in the meadow. I used to have pain in my liver area for years after the sickness. I noticed that after my spiritual experience I didn’t have that dull pain in my liver anymore. I ended up getting pregnant in 1996 with my daughter Gabrielle who is now 18 years old. At less than six weeks pregnant I went to the hospital with what I thought was a urinary tract infection. The doctor gave me a blood test and a pregnancy test. I checked marked on the medical questionnaire that I had contracted Hepatitis B at least twice that I knew of. Long story short the doctor came back and told me I was pregnant (around 4 weeks) it gave me the blessing of knowing the exact time I was impregnated. The doctor also said **“YOU COULD NOT HAVE HAD HEPATITIS B, YOU DO NOT HAVE THE ANTI-BODY.”**

Well I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt, hospital blood test and all TWICE no less showing I had it. Now what of this doctor's diagnosis? I didn't think much of it. I thought he, they made a mistake...until I had numerous other blood tests which showed I had never had it. To my own shame after my spiritual experience and about ten years of sobriety I relapsed. I had many years of controlled using with minimal consequences that is except my horrible guilt of turning my back on a God that I now knew existed. I ended up on the methadone clinic in Ocala Florida. We all had counselors there who kept a good eye on our progress and abstinence from street drugs. They took regular urine tests and an initial test for all the worst contagious diseases like A.I.D.S, Hepatitis. B, Hepatitis. C, Tuberculosis, and more. After my first initial blood test my counselor called me, she seemed alarmed.

I must see you Laura! She quickly made me an appointment to give me the information she was not allowed to share over the phone. Please keep in mind I was an intravenous drug user for years on end. The first few years of my addiction before my deliverance and relapse were the worst. I shared needles and ended up with Jaundice and Hepatitis at least twice. I drank alcoholically for years. I worked in clubs where I was allowed to drink at work for many years. I was a Cocaine addict also. I shot cocaine and overdosed many times. See "Vision of the spiritually dark variety" Cocaine was by far the worst drug for me. I suffered deeply from paranoia and even delusions. The trauma from Cocaine abuse caused me panic attacks and deep, deep fear based anxiety for years. Thank God after my spiritual experience in the little Baptist church I was delivered from anxiety and panic attacks.

I went to the appointment to see my methadone treatment counselor. She was so happy and excited to tell me that; not only did I NOT have any of the horrible diseases I was exposed to but also I had the best "numbers" on the liver test in the history of the clinic. She said my numbers were near perfect. And I clearly had never had hepatitis B or any other addiction type liver ailment. She questioned whether I had ever really been a heroin or cocaine addict. It was clear by then that what the prior doctor had said about the anti-bodies was true. It was also clear to me that God had blessed me in more ways than I had known previously.

I told this story to one of my friends who has suffered with Hepatitis C and has been baffled as to how or why I didn't get it. My friend concludes that I have a "super-duper immune system". Apparently some people can fight off the Hepatitis's but normally they still end up with the antibody. I know that day in the little Baptist Church God not only delivered me from drug addiction, He also healed me.

I believe God does maintenance on His people if they will get around those with the supernatural gifts to be conductors of God's power. Most every time I have received deliverance, I was in a deliverance setting not every time though. I thank God for that man following his calling. These circumstances of healing and deliverance are not rules they are odds/statistics. Statistically the majority of people that receive deliverance receive it by being prayed over in a church setting.

THE CALLING OF GOD AWAITS YOU, LIVE YOU'RE CALLING OH BRINGER OF LIGHT

SERVICE

Acts 20:35

"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Mark 1:17

"And Jesus said unto them, come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men."

Are we to believe that after our born again experience we shall embark upon being fishers of men with complete maturity, temperance and perfect,

infallible wording and care? I think not, however witnessing and sharing our experience with Christ is the perfect school to learn and grow toward emotional maturity and Love. Becoming a witness for Christ is an act of giving that will bless us.

There are so many ways to be of service to God. Let us jump out of the box of limited thinking into the realm of the open-minded. Previously I have been talking about exercises toward spiritual and emotional maturity, to gain peace of mind. In this chapter, we get a chance to apply the principals of God. This is where the rubber meets the road. Certainly, we should be able to get out of the house and live our calling. We must exert the energy to spread the gospel of peace so we ourselves may be fulfilled. I will not hide the light that is in me under a bushel.

Luke 11:33

“No man, when he hath lighted a candle, putteth [it] in a secret place, neither under a bushel, but on a candlestick, that they which come in may see the light.”

So far, we have been talking about how we can find happiness and peace for ourselves by the exercises, which God has provided to become emotionally and spiritually complete.

What do we do with that completeness? Take it home and hide it in a box where no one can steal it? Should we keep it a secret so we do not lose it? Should we run from church to church looking for more spiritual excitement, more cool prophesies to encourage ourselves?

If you have effectively practiced the principals of the bible by doing the exercises I have shared with you in previous chapters, you have established a connection with God.

You will have received a touch from the Holy Spirit and your spiritual gifts will have surfaced. Consequently, the best “high” (infilling of joy) that we can get now will come by walking in our calling. ***Our joy detonates by hitting the mark where the will of God abides.*** I have made the mistake in times past of exercising a self-seeking attempt at spirituality. I went from church to church looking for that “high” I got during my baptism of the Holy Spirit. I just did not realize it was time for me to give then I would get what I craved. I needed to be the catalyst through which “rivers of living water” flow. As they say in AA “You got to give it away to keep it.”

I wanted more of God and I did not understand that the good feelings would come from being of service to others. There are scriptures upon scriptures in the Gospels, in Acts and all over the Bible about serving man in a godly capacity. It is so important to find our own niche in service. It is so important that our heart be in it! I believe that one heart felt encouraging sentence

to the lost, inspired by God is greater than a book of knowledge given without heartfelt experience.

It helps boatloads to be aware of our own shortcomings so we do not invoke them when witnessing to others. When God hands us a ministry the more we have grown and healed the more growth and healing we can share. The more we understand about ourselves surely the more we can understand others. The Lord provides for us emotional maturity to do His will. The better aware I am of my own shortcomings the less likely I will be enraged or irritated emotionally by the angry and spiritually sick lost that God leads me to.

My own ministry has grown and changed drastically. However, one element is the same. I am a woman and I minister to women. This is my calling the Holy Spirit has orchestrated. I do share my story with men but rarely work one on one with them. There is an energy called sexuality tension that could get in the way. A man may misunderstand my motives. How can I counsel a man who is so different from me in many ways not experienced with the same needs or fears? Does Christian religion teach

that men are of more value than women are? Oftentimes women understand that they should be subordinate to men, I do not subscribe to that idea. I do not believe in walking six feet behind the man or keeping silent in the church. (Sorry St. Paul) However, I am in an equal partnership with my own man. We must find our own walk with God. I am sharing mine with you.

One day my husband and I went to the springs to relax on a weekday. There were very few people there, it was so beautiful, and I was feeling so much gratitude and awe for God. I was now in the most loving relationship with a man I had ever known in my life. I had never been in love with a true man of God but had hoped for such a relationship on different times in my life. We were unmarried at the time and I was living at both his house and mine. I met a man and his wife by the water and we started talking about the blessings of God. We spoke of the places we lived and when I told the man my living arrangements he quickly pointed out that I couldn't possibly be in God's will while cohabitating with my partner. He seemed very angry about my alleged sexual sin. My best guess is that I triggered in him an unresolved resentment and fear. He exacted onto me legalisms and judgments.

I did not run out and get married because of this man's opinion of me no, not this time! The man at the springs did minister to me but not in the way that he probably expected. He reminded me that scripture teaches, judge not any of God's children in that way. He was an example of what not to do in ministry.

Luke 6:37

“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”

It is not my place to tell another adult how he or she should live or give unsolicited advice. I did not ask the man at the springs for advice. It is important I understand that people should make their own decisions and take responsibility for the results. I can however counsel others before they make a decision by together considering their options and the possible outcomes. If I try to take control of other people's lives I am depriving them their own character building lessons and I will surely get all the blame when things don't work out well. Usurping authority over other adults is a recipe for disaster. If I have a controlling nature I must work all the harder on relinquishing the illusion of control and quit playing God! Pointing other people's sin out to them is nothing short of faultfinding and is a character defect. If I alienate others, how can I show them the Love of Christ through me? Many hurting people out there need the Love of God and godly fellowship but are not ready to accept any power in their lives other than themselves no matter how miserable they are.

God has given us all freewill; I can share my experience of a Christ driven life with those who God puts in front of me. It is their choice to receive it.

Proverbs 17:15

He that justifieth the wicked and he that condemneth the just, even they both [are] abomination to the LORD.

When ministering to either a believer or an unbeliever we should show understanding and try to relate to their trouble. We should show we care and can relate to their plight. Let them know we see their pain. Then offer feedback and solutions if they would like, without justifying or condoning their sin. Emotional enabling draws people away rather than toward God. We are not the ones that can fix them God is. If I rationalize a fellow's sin for them and they get a temporary relief from it why would they seek God and repent? Understanding does not mean condoning. Listening is the

most important tool when working with others. Listen first! Sometimes back in my early ministry I was so enthusiastic to share my thoughts that I would not listen to theirs. The result of not listening was a disconnection between my prospect and me. If someone feels I am talking at them instead of to them, really feeling them, they will shut down and withdraw.

If the person I am ministering to is stuck in the blame game and not taking responsibility for the consequences of their sinful actions, it is near impossible to reach them with godly solutions. As long as a person is using blame as a solution for their guilt, they will not be seeking a true God breathed solution. Nevertheless, I can relate to their predicament because I have been there too so I show compassion and I thank God I am not living in blame. If I cannot relate to the person, then it is best I stay quiet and not manufacture any people pleasing type responses again to try to fix them.

First Corinthians 5:5

“To deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.”

In the previous scripture, Apostle Paul is discussing a very delicate topic with the church of Corinth. He tells them to leave one of their brethren to his own destructive devices so he will suffer to the point of realizing he needs God. I suppose the Apostle was practicing tough Love. Paul would not have the church enabling the man probably for fear the entire church would be corrupted. Again, desperation can play a huge part in gaining salvation. Perhaps the term “destruction of the flesh” was merely symbolic meaning destruction of his fleshly attitudes. Perhaps if the man were excommunicated by the church, he would reach out to God and overcome his sinful nature, “die to the flesh” and become righteous.

When human beings realize other humans, friends, family, pastor, priest cannot save them, they sometimes reach out with their heart to find God.

Romans 6:23

“The wages of sin are death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

There is no doubt in my mind this passage is referring to literal and physical death. Some sin will kill faster than other sin.

First John 5:16

“If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that.”

The logical consequences of sin bring the deadly and hurtful result of these two scriptures.

I knew a Christian woman several years ago who was born again. She was delivered from a life of prostitution. Naturally, she was the one God sent to minister to the prostitutes on the street. She would drive right down town and show those street hookers Love.

Sometimes she would help them with their needs of food and clothing. God bless her soul! I knew another woman that had a calling to minister to topless dancers. Once she took me with her and we made up flyers with Easter baskets that said, "Jesus loves dancers too!" they really lit up seeing these gifts of candy and care.

Sister Petty had a friend who stuck with her through thick and thin. She was too old and unable to see well enough to drive. Her friend was as a servant boy to her as she answered God's call founding Churches and ministering to men and woman. His calling was true and appropriate for his humble personality. He was such a sweet man.

Sometimes when sharing Christ's Love, I wish there were more I could do for people, I want to fix their situation. I must remember they have God too. Becoming emotionally invested in a struggling soul is neither advisable nor prudent. Keeping emotions separate from our ministry is best but we are human and do not always stay emotionally detached. Love is both a feeling and action that flows through us from God. By being careful to keep our emotions in check and not respond to our prospect out of fear, ministering will be less likely to cause us emotional distress.

I had a teacher once, very learned in the writings of the Bible her name was Ruby. I asked her if she would teach and counsel me in the principles of the Word, she agreed. We met once a week and she taught me. The longer we were together the more liberties she took concerning telling me what I should be doing and how I should act. I spent hours listening to her teach, she very seldom asked me about myself. Ruby made it quite clear to me that she was sure my experience had not been authentic. ***I Suppose She Fancied Herself the Authenticator of All Spiritual Experiences.*** She was unable to understand the fact that I had fallen into prescription drug addiction even after finding salvation through Christ. I felt she assumed her path with God was the only possible way to get to know God. I wish she had been able to seek understanding rather than only desiring to be understood. Sometimes understanding and caring is enough to draw a prospect closer to Christ. She took other liberties with me. She would ask me to pray with her and tell me to repeat word for word what she said. The thing is I would not repeat her words because I did not agree with what she said. Should I not make the final decision of what my prayers consist of? Her controlling nature and superior attitude made me uncomfortable and I discontinued our meetings after eight weeks of learning. I see the things that she did as a big no-no in ministering to others. So then, she taught me much but perhaps not in the way she would have liked.

CARRY THE MESSAGE NOT THE MAN

I can direct the homeless and hungry to local shelters. It is prudent to have information on local shelters and soup kitchens to meet the needs of the impoverished. I have rarely brought anyone into my home that I did not know very well. My home is my safe-haven it is my place of worship and meditation my family abides there, and it is sacred. I am not under obligation by God or conscience to give all that I have to the needy it will never be enough for them. It is imperative and godly that we learn how to say no when given a ministry.

First Corinthians 13:1-3

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become [as] sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have [the gift of] prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed [the poor], and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing”

I believe The Apostle Paul just touched on the difference between acting out of fear or “codependency” and acting out of Love. There will always be the poor to give to without end. Giving until I am sick, naked, poor myself or emotionally drained is fear based giving. Either I fear for the poor or I fear

that I must give or I will lose a blessing. Fear giving prophets me nothing and leaves me bankrupt. I give money if my family and I can afford it. Yes, the poor widow written of in Luke 21:4 gave all the money she had to live on and it was the right thing for her to do at that time. Nevertheless, being a minister with a family that by the way Jesus said, I should provide for (First Timothy 5:8) I must have faith God will provide for the poor without taking food out of my family's mouth.

Again sometimes, we should say no to those we so badly want to help. Ask for God's wisdom and words before leaving the house He will guide you, to this I attest! These are God's children to which we have been sent. Most you encounter will already believe in Him but feel they have done wrong and do not deserve His Love and Grace. We should show them there is a thing called forgiveness and grace for all mankind if accepted. God has bestowed Grace a wonderful magnanimous gift on us we should show same to his children!

Second Corinthians 5:18

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to Himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.”

One definition of reconcile is; “to bring into harmony, conciliate- to gain regard, good will, be friends with. "The ministry of reconciliation"; we are the chosen to bring peace and understanding words to the lost and subjugated Christian. We are called to bring hope to those burdened down by the cares of this world. Those, the self-condemning and fearful folk perplexed beyond faiths realm. We who have been delivered ourselves from such a state are best equipped to love, understand, relate, care, and reach these suffering lost. Anyone can judge and condemn, but blessed are those who know how to

pass on the very grace that is bestowed on them by God. Blessed are those that can rise above their egos into a place where the precious soul of a neighbor abides, a neighbor who may not be pretty, or polite. Yes, my friend to minister from Love's posture is the work of the Spirit. To some it is a foreign idea and absurd to offer Love to the lost.

Healing others in the name of Jesus does not happen only by the laying on of hands. Our words when anointed, (by anointed I mean combined with the Holy Spirits' power and purpose) have the power to heal the hearts of others. Not in one miraculous blast but as a deposit made by the Holy Spirit into another's soul to set in motion a process of supernatural restoration of feelings and conditions of the heart.

Acts 10:38

“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.”

God anoints and distributes supernatural gifts of healing to those of His own choosing.

First Corinthians 12:7-9

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit;”

When speaking to groups of women about the Lord and His works in my own life I have literally felt the healing power of God pass from me to them, I have watched as the Spirit of God affects them in a supernatural way. My

limited idea of God's healing power and close-minded view of how He works has broadened with my experience of service to others.

Luke 10:2

“Therefore said he unto them, the harvest truly [is] great, but the laborer's [are] few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborer's into his harvest.”

The harvest is still great, and the laborers are still few, at least I have not seen many folks carrying the message of reconciliation to God. This scripture still holds true today. I have heard the message which feeds separation from God which is “My God is going to punish you beyond your wildest dreams!” Ouch!

If a prospect does ask for help and advice in a matter always consider one's self. By an honest self-appraisal, we can ask, am I taking my own advice? This kind of practice will keep our own spiritual walk in check and preserves humility. Good advice turns into the best advice when applied to ourselves.

Galatians 6:1

“Brethren if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”

“In meekness” I like that suggestion, when ministering I ask myself, “Am I speaking with meekness to my prospect?” The grandest advice full of life giving knowledge will be lost if spoken in a way that offends the child of God who needs it.

I have a very good friend and counselor she has advised me many times. Sometimes I take her advice other times I choose another conclusion. The other day I asked her about her opinion on a matter. She was not in a Loving-giving mood. She responded abrasively and aggressively. I nearly ran out of the room. I felt she was trying to dominate and control me. I have guarded myself against doing the same thing to a prospect. Sometimes I have a bad day and it spills over into my ministry. At best when I speak harshly and wrong to someone I should take responsibility and apologize.

II Tim.2:10

Paul said "Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory."

I hope that we will not have to endure that which Apostle Paul endured for the gospels sake, the elect's sake. Surely, I will endure some perplexing situations so I may effectively do Gods work.

II Tim.3:12 - "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecutions."

Sometimes when persecutions occur, we do not recognize them as such, they do occur. For me once I recognize a situation as a persecution I pray for the person persecuting. People fear what they do not understand. There are those that prefer a life of darkness and are disgusted by the light that we carry in our heart and actions. God has protected me from violence and harm thus far.

I remember once early on in my born again life I was at a restaurant. I saw a man walk in, clearly as I see myself in a mirror I saw his death very near. The vision came in the form of a death spirit or essence that lay upon him. I supposed God would not have shown me that unless there was a productive reason. I had a strong burden to pray for this man. I also knew

in my heart I should tell him to seek God now while it is still day or while he is still alive. I was very scared to confront the man fearing his reaction. My self-esteem was not that great at this point in my life to have the confidence needed to give a message from God of all things. I was petrified and turning red just thinking about it. However, stronger was my resolve to do the will of God and I knew in a huge way by the message that lay upon my heart it was God's will. I confronted the man in a soft humble voice saying, "Seek God now, the time to seek is at hand". He answered, "Yes I know, I have been diagnosed terminally ill he thanked me and we parted. I must have been a sign for him or a confirmation of sorts. It was a supernatural experience. The gifts of the Spirit are for this very reason, to minister. I do not know what effect I may have had on his life. I questioned whether I was doing the right thing or if it was my imagination. Fortunately, I received the confirmation that the man gave me.

Passing a direct "Word of God" message to a soul is dangerous territory given the margin for human error. Ministering to the dying man went against all my normal boundaries of ministry. The man did not ask for my advice or help therefore it was not my business to judge and counsel him about his spiritual condition, under normal circumstances. This instance was an exception to the rule because the Holy Spirit laid it strong upon my heart. God has not used me in that way since and I am glad, oh sure I have surmised countless spiritual conditions and ministered and prayed often but my calling has not involved walking up to a complete stranger and telling him what God wants him to do. I was uncomfortable being put in the situation nevertheless the outcome was good therefore it was a fulfilling and enlightening experience and I was blessed to be used of God in such a powerful way.

I used to question my own ability to discern imagination from information sent from God. The messages from God are much more intense upon my heart than my own imagination I have come to learn. It is as though I know that I know that I know. Sister Petty used to say, "If it lines up with the Word of God it is good." It is a common behavior of the mentally ill to use "thus sayeth the Lord" statements. It is very ego inflating to give a message

straight from The Father. We humans sometimes are easily confused as to where spirituality ends and the ego begins believe you me! I have already discussed how judging others faults gives us a release from guilt and shame and can give us a feeling of elation, better than, justified etc. If we are born-again, our hearts have been cleansed but do not think for a moment that fear, ego and old behavior cannot rear their ugly heads in us through our new God given ministry if we innocently yet carelessly forget our flesh is still corruptible!

Ezekiel 36:25&26

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh.”

I do believe there are modern day prophets that carry the burden of the words “Thus sayeth the Lord”. They are responsible for knowing what to speak and when. They are responsible for distinguishing God’s message from their own will. A prophet is a powerful instrument of God. Modern day prophets carry the burden of being judged publicly as being anything from insane to possessed to flat out liars. I suppose they, powerful instruments of God have their own ministering boundaries, which is a whole other ball of wax of which I am not qualified to teach.

Moreover, with the kind of assignments God required the prophets of old to carry out, they most likely all seemed a little crazy to most men. I bet if I did meet a true prophet he would be very peculiar and I best not judge such as him so I will try not to judge any one.

I knew a man once his name was John. John and I where both backslidden Christians addicted to narcotics at the time we met. Nevertheless, in our conversations we discussed our faith and talked about the powerful works The Lord had done in our lives. Years later, when I got into recovery I saw

him again. My friend was clean and sober for a second time as was I by deliverance and the Grace of God. He started a new church and was certainly one of the best preachers I had ever heard to this day. He stayed in church while I chose to frequent AA meetings. I opted for a lot of counsel and the 12 steps of AA to stay clean and sober.

I went to Johns Pentecostal church often to praise and worship The Lord. One day during his sermon, he called me to the podium give my testimony I noticed he smelled very strong of alcohol. I knew he had been a drug addict and alcoholic so this was very disturbing to me. We had lunch the next day and I asked him about it, I told him that The Holy Spirit would not tell him to drink alcohol. He looked at me puzzle as if to say oh yes He would. The disease of addiction deceived John; call it Satan if you wish call it a generational curse. Self will run riot, he lost his church, wife, home fellowship and I surmise he lost his connection with God ultimately he lost his life. Was God punishing him for his sin? I think not John was his own worst enemy once he started drinking liquor the consequences where thick. False pride took John down like the thrash of a sickle straight from Hell. I cried when I heard of his untimely death by accidental electrocution.

I believe if John would have had counsel, if he had remembered he was an alcoholic who should never drink liquor he would not have lost everything. His parishioners at the church praised him often. He had no accountability to anyone he had no method of maintaining humility which is vital for a recovering addict. We must remember it is by God's grace that we are alive and doing well at all. John was in a powerful position usurping authority over many people his ego took over. We must remember to beware of false pride and realize we are no better than the wino in the gutter just in a better place thanks to The Lord.

TERMINOLOGY

Have you ever listened to an argument between two people because of miscommunication? I try to look for the possibility of agreement in spite of imprecise or unscrupulous vocabularies used by others. After all, I am not going to win any souls by arguing; Love is the key to winning souls. If I disagree with someone, I can always use the failsafe phrase, "You may be right". It is futile to debate doctrines. We are the chosen of God for a reason; we should make the choice to use all the good things we have learned in life to reach the lost. I have found it best for all concerned to stay open minded and flexible in interpreting the meanings behind the wording of people's experience. Often time's different people use different words to describe the same things. An agreeable mind is an understanding mind. God does not always come to others in the way He came to us, we should not be quick to write off someone else's spiritual experience as emotion or error. We never know what effect we may have in someone else's eternity. Love is the most powerful force in the universe surpassing the boundaries of time and space, if we share Love with the lost we can play a part in their connecting with the eternal Love of God.

James 5:20

"Let him know that he that converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins."

It is fruitless debating doctrines, along with different doctrines come different terminologies. Some say "Holy Spirit" some say "Holy Ghost". Once I was reading a Catholic book called the Catechism I remember thinking; I have learned these same doctrines in my non-denomination and charismatic churches except they used different terms for the same beliefs. Then when visiting various denominational Christian churches, I realized their traditions are very much alike although they had different ways of presenting and describing the same actions. I began to see how I agreed with most of the precepts of all the churches I visited. *Looking for*

Similarities Instead of Differences as A Prerequisite to All Communication Makes Service and Life Much Easier.

This brings us to the phrase “born again” I asked my husband a question; he by the way claims no religion but has accepted Christ as his Lord and savior. He does not attend church but does fellowship with other believers, in my opinion he is a godly man. I asked him what he thinks of when someone uses the term "born again". He answered “how can a man be born again it’s not really possible?” His answer was nearly verbatim the question Nicodemus posed to Jesus all those years ago.

John 3:4 Nicodemus saith unto him, how can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus explained to Nicodemus that, “That which is born of flesh is flesh and that which is born of Spirit is spirit”. (John 3:5) Nevertheless, I think phrases such as “born again and saved” are off putting to many people. Rather than giving a prospect a teaching session in Christian terminology, it is best to explain spiritual matters in terms they can understand. My husband said he understands the word saved like “saving money”. He understands the word born as “a baby being born”. My conclusion in this matter is this; my husband does not need saving, he has a relationship with God unlike most I have known in my walk with God. He shows more of the good character that Jesus spoke of and displayed rooted in Love than most. What if I had met him on the street while ministering and he said to me that he knows nothing about being “born again”? Would I tell him what I think he needs because in my mind he could not possibly be saved and is surely on a path straight to Hell? Even with good intentions, we can make mistakes in ministry. There are plenty of people out there who want help. We do not need to chase after those who already have a relationship with God but do not use our Christian terminology. I am quite certain people are not being saved due to particular terminologies or the right religion. The born of the Spirit experience is a matter of the heart that can be described in many different ways.

As I said earlier my parents were Jehovah's Witnesses when I was growing up. The Witnesses have their own brand of service that you may be familiar with. They simply go out on the street and knock on doors. Ok I am trying hard not to judge them by their unsolicited approach. This style of "spreading the good news" is definitely not for me. I surmise that some good has come from it. In fact, I have met a few people that are grateful for The Witnesses knocking at their door the fellowship works for them.

Romans 14:13

Let us not therefore judge one another anymore: but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block or an occasion to fall in [his] brother's way.

I myself am tempted to judge the Jehovah Witnesses for their style of service. Are they putting a stumbling block in people's paths, perhaps? I am sure some people do judge the Witnesses harshly for more reasons than having their doors knocked on. Not only do some judge the religionists but they speak harshly of them as well. The Witnesses annoy people and stir up strife, then when people rebel and buck against their ideas they write the people off as blind and unsaved. The witnesses write me off as unsaved and ignorant to the truth that only their religion knows. All the while some witness's fancy themselves walking as Christ did. They absorb the scorn and rejection of the people and then consider them Satanic. I question their motives where service is concerned. I believe a lot of it is ego, vanity and false pride thinking that they are the only chosen in the world and relishing the idea that we the non-Jehovah's Witnesses will all suffer and be punished in the end. Then they will be glorified as righteous and perfect. Then we will all bow to them and admit just how wrong we were, oh what a glorious moment for the Jehovah's Witnesses! (I am being sarcastic) Yes, I question their motives!

As for my own motives, they are selfish and giving. I witness because I am compelled by conscience and heart to share that which was so graciously given to me. Telling people what God has done for me keeps me sane and serene most of the time. Jesus cast demons called "Legion" out of a man who had been cutting himself and living naked among the tombs. After being restored to sanity the man begged Jesus to accompany him on his journey but Jesus answered, no return to your home and tell what I have done for you, perhaps Jesus urged him to share his testimony more for the man's own welfare rather than to cause more people to follow Him.

Mark 5:19 "Jesus did not let him, but said", Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

Romans 14:19

Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another."

Therefore, I suggest that when witnessing we do not start off by throwing a huge stink bomb at those we intend to enlighten. Let us meet them on equal ground and ground in which they are comfortable. We should be careful not to emotionally trigger our prospects into slamming their hearts and their doors shut. Ask yourself, in what manner would I like to be met by strangers when lost and miserable not knowing which way to turn. How would I like others to speak to me? Would I want to be talked down to? Self-honesty comes to the rescue again and helps us help others. Jesus said, "I will make you fishers of men" (Mark 1:17) Fisherman will throw out chum to attract the fish. They throw out what the fish want and need to draw the fish close. Soup kitchens have a good idea they give out the sustenance of mortal life while ministering the Love of Jesus. A place most would shutter to end up can be a spiritual haven where Jesus' Love abides. Lord bless the wise people of the soup kitchen.

GOATS & SHEEP

Sheep are very passive animals they do not buck or fight for their lives when led to the slaughter. They willingly give up their coats of fleece so humanity can have warm wool. A friend of mine told me a story about a goat that his friends had. My friend Jerry was only 10 or 12 years old at the time when he went to his little friend's house to play baseball with the guys.

Every time one of the boys would bend down to pick up the ball or turn their back to the goat and walk away, it would push the boys down by butting them in the behind. The goat had a mean temperament. Jerry said after the goat knocked the boys down it would watch them just as if it were laughing and making fun of them. I suppose in the days of Jesus men were very familiar with the varying personalities of these two animals. Bearing in mind the temperament of the animals, I can see why Jesus chose them for his parable.

Romans 9:21

“Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?”

As I wrote about in the “Jonah” chapter, Jonah was hurt and angry when The Lord destroyed the gourd that he had come to love. It is confusing and scary to think that God has created, like the gourd, some ultimately for the purpose of destruction.

Romans 9:22

"What if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long suffering the *vessels of wrath* fitted for destruction."

Here, Apostle Paul is not stating the idea as fact but he phrases his statement "what if?" Then there is the disturbing scripture in Mathew chapter three verse twelve where John the Baptist, the preacher of repentance, spoke of our loving Jesus burning up the chaff a worthless grain and gathering to himself the wheat. This [men created to destroy] concept is reiterated in Mathew twenty-five verses thirty-three through thirty-five where Jesus spoke the parable of goats and sheep.

"And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth [his] sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand Come blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

The way that Apostle Paul and Jesus explain it, sounds very much like these "goats" are evil and predestined to be burned. I have asked myself what shall I do and not do with this biblical information concerning ministering and witnessing. As Apostle Paul suggests God is in charge here He is in charge of us "the clay".

Romans 9:21

"Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?"

In the Spirit of peace and faith, I do well to accept that God's plan is certainly better than any mortal man's plan although, I am certain many would argue that point.

Shall I run to and fro in the name of ministry pointing out the goats with a long finger calling them Satan? I think not, for how would this further the kingdom? The thing is, us sheep (yes I do fancy myself a sheep) often act just like goats. Moreover, Lord knows the goats can do a heck of a job acting like sheep. Wouldn't it be nice if there were a label on the foreheads of both sheep and goats naming them such so we would know exactly what type of person we are dealing with? Why waste precious time ministering to and helping goats who are already fitted for soul level destruction? Well firstly, God uses both sheep and goats to further our spirituality. Showing no bias or prejudice toward people is a Loving act and exercises humility. Showing Love is one of the greatest commandments set down by Jesus Himself. Second, Love is an action and showing kindness to all men is an act of godly Love. Being in the presence of an evil and disrespectful man tests our self-restraint and tempers us spiritually. It is easy to Love those who show us Love. We are stretched unto a higher purpose when we are tolerant, neither condemning nor condoning the actions of spiritually blind human beings.

I have a friend who has a sister. My friend is a good girl who like me has muddled through this Christian walk making many goat-like mistakes. From a very young age my friend has had problems with her sister. She behaves very enviously and hatefully at times toward Mary. Once she pushed Mary down a dangerous rocky hill. When the girls where young their father used to do a fun trick with them. The girls would sit on dad's shoulders while he firmly held their ankles they would fall forward and swing through his legs back and forth, it was a lot of exciting fun for the girls. Mary's sister convinced younger sister to get on her shoulders. The sister promised to catch her but never even attempted to. She let Mary fall head first off her shoulders crashing her onto the cement floor this could have killed Mary.

Any good-hearted sheep would rather love their sister than disown her. Any good-natured sheep would have hope for their sister. In addition, the influence of this unkind sister on my friend could have been fatal; her reckless input about boys and sex was a snare for Mary at best. Mary's sinister big sister continually and cunningly abused her physically and emotionally. When Mary was able to detach from her for the sake of self-preservation she would reel Mary back in with love and kindness just to knock her down afresh. Mary's biggest complaint because of all her sisters' lies and deceptions was "why won't she just be real with me; why can't she be honest with me?" It was so hard for Mary to understand her sister because she could not relate. Quite simply their two hearts were as different as night and day. They were as different as a sheep from a goat. At times her sister could be so much fun; Mary wanted so badly to have her as a friend. Mary wanted so badly for her sister to have peace of mind

Finally, one day when they were older and had their own homes Mary called her sister on the phone. She listened while her sister tried to use her old tricks on Mary of inducing guilt and blame, the sister tried to manipulate and control Mary like she had when they were children. She listened as the sister blamed others for her victimized life. Mary tried to counsel her sister. She attempted to encourage her with hope of good change to no avail. Mary struggled a long time trying to change her goatish sister while withstanding too much emotional and mental abuse. Sadly, yet soberly, Mary realized she could not change her sister the goat, into a sheep. "For her own well-being she finally decided she must put the unhealthy relationship behind her.

Mary's Love for Her Sister Will Endure While She Relinquishes Her Own Self-Destructive Patterns Driven by Her Personal Desires to Transform Her Sister into A Friend.

Do we know for sure if the sister is a goat? Even Mary a lifelong sister to this woman does not claim to know whether she is one of the dreaded goats. Mary used the goat-sheep analogy to help her let go of her sister by realizing if she is a goat she will not change. ***She Holds On to The Godly Hope That Her Sister Will One-Day Change and Learn to***

Love, But She Has Relinquished Persistent Personal Interest and Self-Centered Motives.

Herein lies one of the hardest lessons of the ministry. We should be very clear on the difference between personal interest and desire opposed to hope and faith of God in our hearts. Mary wanted a friend, she wanted to share the joys of God she had experienced, and these personal desires got her all rapped dup in many dangerous circumstances with her sister.

This story holds the essence of one of the most important precepts of ministry; we should be very clear on the difference between personal interest and desire opposed to hope and faith from God in our hearts. Mary wanted a friend, she wanted to share

the joys she had experienced, and these personal desires got her all wrapped up in many spiritually draining circumstances with her sister. Mary did not know it at the time but her own motives were self-centered. This revelation came to her through much pain and hurt. We do well to minister from the platform that all people are sheep and be aware that all people can act like punishing goats so watch. Be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove in your ministry.

Sister Petty used to warn me, "Make sure you're prayed up before you go to minister in places that are spiritually negative." She would say, "There are many evil spirits in those places that can draw out your positive energy". My ministry has taken me into the jails, not as an inmate but as a minister, which made it very nice to be able to leave when I wanted. Ministry has taken me into the clubs, out on the streets, and many other possibly unsavory and dangerous places. Her advice is so important. All the things that keep me strong in Christ need to be done regularly especially when going into spiritually drawing places to bring hope and the good news of Love to the lost. Where there are plenty of lost souls there are plenty of dark spirits. We do not have to label the spiritual drawing that takes place dark spirits we can call it negative energy or bad vibes. Whatever the label

you choose is not as important as being aware that it can influence us and draw on our strength.

When ministering one on one or speaking before large crowd we should know when to withdraw from the ministering or counseling others. We say no when our spiritual health is at stake and we need a refilling of God's Holy Spirit. Sometimes the good **IS** the enemy of the best! Meaning the good is to go forth and minister but the best at that time is to take in personal communion with God. If I slide back into my life of bondage, I will be no good to anyone. When I backslide it will not happen all at once or while I am spiritually healthy. To backslide there will be a continual depleting of my positive energy from Christ. Gradually and seductively, my inner strength and joy will be drained. Slowly and alluringly, the enemy of humanity draws us to him. If I assume this is impossible I am in more danger than if I fear, it could happen. A wise man is aware of his behavior patterns of weakness. Remember there is safety in much counsel. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed [is] **willing**, but the flesh [is] **weak**." (Mathew 26:41) Are you flesh and blood? If you answered yes, then you are weak. By denying that weakness, we edge Chris right out of our lives.

Let us look at St. Peter the servant of God. In Saint John 13:37 Peter was so sure he would lay down his life for Jesus. He was so full of confidence he believes that nothing could stop him from following Jesus to the death! He soon found out his flesh was weak. His imprudent attitude soon developed into a full-blown denial of Christ this story is a very good example from which to learn.

Here's a theory I have about the Goat's and the sheep overall. I just found it in my files and decided to use it in this book. I believe it to be true but I don't know for sure if it's true. You be the judge.

The Lambs book of life and the Goats book of death

Each man has a soul and choice for their own eternity. No one should tell another his or her way is the best way, the right way, or the only way for another. The right way for one man is the wrong way for another. There is a book of Life and a book of Death. The Lamb's book of life means those written on the pages have everlasting life. These Lambs are immortal even if they are in a human body. The Goat's book of Death means that those written in it have little light in them. Only the light of life itself, which keeps the goat separate from the dead, abides in their heart. They have snuffed out their hearts cry for hope and faith. They only believe in what they see with their eyes and nothing else. Those written in the Book of Death are not the damned. They can change their destiny at any time if they please and have their own eternity waiting for them. A goat can act very much like a sheep at times and a sheep can act just like a goat. No human can tell for sure if another man is a goat or sheep. Therefore, the challenge for humankind is to treat all men equal with kindness. If there is a Hell under the Earth, the Goats will be at home there. If there is a Heaven far outside of Earth's realm where the blessed reside Lambs will be at home there. Goat's and Lambs are both needed for balance in this great Universe of ours. Each is created with their own purpose. The goats help the double-minded sheep decide their own destiny and vise-versa. The goat shows the sheep its options in life. The purpose of the eternal beings time on Earth is to learn. The question is not what wonderful blessings will I receive from my eternity the question is what will I bring into my eternity. What great things do I have to offer eternity? "Yes there are two paths you can go by but in the long run there's still time to change the road you're on." Stairway to Heaven essence

MARY & MARTHA

The Sisters that Jesus Loved and knew well but especially he Loved this Mary of Bethany not to be confused with the Mary Magdalene whom may

or may not have been a prostitute. Mary of Bethany had an over-bearing sister who liked to tell her what to do. (Yes I can totally relate to that). Mary had the Spirit of a student as she sat at the feet of Jesus to learn all that she could from Him. I believe this is the Mary that Jesus truly did fall in Love with. (Just a guess)

These two women by the way were the sisters of Lazarus the man that Jesus called back from the realm of the dead.

Luke 10:40, 41, &42

“But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? Bid her therefore that she helps me.” In addition, Jesus answered and said unto her, “Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

So, Martha had her hands full. I am picturing her worried, burdened down. Will all this food turn out good? She wanted help and there was Mary, her sister, sitting at the feet of Jesus himself, learning his beliefs and ways and receiving instruction no doubt. It would have been a good thing for Mary to help Martha in the kitchen. If others had seen the incident take place, they probably would have thought it was her duty to help her sister and the right thing to do. However, no Mary was doing the best thing, not the good thing, the best thing and Jesus made that clear. She and Jesus put her own spiritual well-being before service. This same Mary of Bethany kneeled at the feet of Jesus with perfumed ointment using her own hair to wipe his feet. (John 12:3)

When her brother died, she cried at the feet of Jesus and He resurrected Lazarus. Seems to me The Lord cared a lot for this Mary of Bethany.

My service to God has brought me joy and peace during and after ministering. A certain peace flows through me and around me. I have searched all my life for a feeling like this that for me comes only by the Holy Spirit. I have found God's will be the best action for me to take in any situation.

My dear teacher Sister Dorothy Petty used to say, "I'm so glad you obey the direction of the Lord." She would pray for me to telephone her and I would pick up the phone and call her. However, I do not always obey the direction of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit leading is the best tool in ministry. I must keep close to God to know His will. I must use God's leading with common sense and remember what I have learned about human nature. I have a time or two ministered and counseled people who were not willing to seek God and manipulated me to get what they wanted, food, shelter, a ride, money, etc. under those conditions I do not stick around them for long.

In Luke Chapter 16 verses, 19-31 there is a little story about a rich man and Lazarus. It is about a wealthy man and a beggar. While Lazarus was alive, he lay outside the rich man's gate begging for food. The story tells that the rich man had fine clothes and luxuries. The rich man lived sumptuously (expensively, magnificently). Both men died and went different places. I assume the rich man was evil and deserved his destination of punishment. The beggar I assume had a relationship with God therefore passed go directly to, not Heaven but the "Bosom of Abraham" as it is written. I know it is not prudent to assume but there is inadequate information in this little story. The story goes that when the beggar died angels carried him to a place of comfort. The rich man in Hell suffered intense dehydration pleading with Father Abraham for a drop of water. Abraham said to the rich man "remember that thou in thy lifetime received thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented." Does that mean that the rich man was sentenced to hell just because he was rich and lived sumptuously? I do not think so, I believe it is because he never knew he needed God, always having such lush distractions as food, power, all that money can buy. That is sad; it does make me grateful for my difficulties because they have prompted me to

seek God. For some reason the rich man is now concerned for his relatives back home in the other realm.

Luke16:27 & 28

"He answered “, Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.”

This is interesting, he is being tortured with a flame, a non-consuming fire of sorts, yet he is concerned for his family. On the other hand, perhaps he was just trying to manipulate an escape. Let us move on to Abrahams answer to the rich man.

Luke 16:29-31

"They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them.” Nay father, Abraham but if someone went unto them from the dead, they will repent. Abraham answered If they hear not Moses and the prophets neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead.”

Here this rich man sits in Hell apparently wanting to do some service work or “minister”. I dare say a little late. Abraham does not think there's any hope of change for the rich man's family. Bottom line is his family is not seeking God. The rich man's family is not looking for salvation. His family Abraham says, would not even repent at the sight of a ministering dead man! It is impossible to persuade men and woman who do not feel they need help.

So what good can Hell fire ministry do for the rebellious sinner? Condemning the sinner to Hell fire is like trying to spank the wicked into repentance. Other souls in this world are willing to sincerely seek God and require help. Ministry is all about that help, a loving word, and an act of

kindness. Try to relate to your prospect if possible and use examples in your own life to give them hope. Hope is what we all need. *Lonely and Afraid Is the Man Who Has Lost Hope for A Good Future.*

Blessed is the servant that can share his hopeful experience. Leave aggressive teaching for the schoolrooms and church Bible studies. Heartfelt experience with hope and love shared surpasses all circumstances and time to reach the dyeing heart and hopeless mind unto salvation of their soul.

This my friend, is what ministering to the lost is all about.

Romans 10:14 & 15

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, how beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

GIVE TESTIMONY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE WHEREVER POSSIBLE AND LET GOD DO THE FIXING.

DREAMS ARE THE OTHER WINDOW TO THE SOUL

*There's a secret place in the color of day
where ancient sacred entities play
reveal your face oh blessed king
of light and color and dancing stream
my dreams and visions you catch in the night
how is it this day I see the sight
of the great illusive "dream catcher"*

Acts 2:17

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:”

Our inner artist uses our creative imagination to form characters like in a play or movie so our deep subconscious fears and feelings can be expressed while we are asleep. We could be any of the characters in the dream, the villain, or the prince. Our dreams can be translated and understood to help us know ourselves. To work toward oneness or total acceptance of ourselves, we should take the steps to know whom the self is that we need to accept to be at peace. Our dreams aid us in realizing whom our inner most being is.

There are at least three types of dreams, prophetic, processing (ideas and fears), and venting (unexpressed or suppressed emotion). Processing ideas and fears and venting suppressed emotions are vital to our over-all well-being. Joseph from the book of Genesis and Daniel from the book of Daniel both interpreted prophetic dreams. God gave the New Testament Joseph an invaluable dream by which he had the revelation of Mary's Immaculate Conception and he received more dreams during Jesus' young life showing him how to protect Mary and Jesus from perilous danger.

Mathew 2:19

“But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt”,

Mathew 2:22

“But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee.”

What has happened to this gift today? I have never seen this gift of dream interpretation exercised in any church. Some preachers and teachers in the church today put a stigma on dream interpretation saying, “It is of Satan” and only associated with evil magicians, fortunetellers, and witches. The closed-minded are missing out on some of the most fulfilling and enlightening gifts from God because of their contempt prior to investigation. Therefore, where the church drops the ball the open-minded believer picks it up.

Daniel 1:17

“Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.”

There is a story in the second chapter of Daniel about King Nebuchadnezzar a powerful King who had a very troubling dream. He could not sleep because of the dream so he sent for his dream interpreters the wise men of Babylon, sorcerers, magicians etc. Not only did he demand they interpret his dream but he demanded they tell him the details of the dream as well. The King would not reveal the dream to them he was testing them to see if they could learn the details of the dream by supernatural methods. This was an impossible feat for the spiritual men so the King commanded that all the “wise men of Babylon” be put to death including Daniel. The King had commanded that if they do not tell him his dream he would cut them to pieces and their houses would be made dunghills. Daniel managed to

intercede, before the decree of death was carried out. He told the King that God had given him the interpretation so he could explain it to him.

After Daniel gave the interpretation, the King had a better understanding of who the Most High God was. Nebuchadnezzar was encouraged and relieved. The King would be able to sleep again; he was so grateful that he blessed Daniel and his companions with gifts and positions of power and authority.

Daniel 2:48

Then the king made Daniel a great man, gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon and chief of the governors over all the wise [men] of Babylon.

Bottom line the prophetic dream interpretation was a good thing all around.

In Genesis is another story of a dream interpreter named Joseph. Joseph the son of Jacob (re-named Israel) was a godly man sold into slavery by his own brothers because of their fear and envy. Joseph had told his brethren and parents about a prophetic dream he had that showed him ruling over his family. Apparently his brethren took the dream very seriously, knew it was prophetic and conspired to prevent the prophesy from coming to pass. (Genesis 37) Joseph had the gift of dream interpretation that turned out to be the catalyst by which his life changed dramatically, first for the worse and then the better. When he interpreted, dreams he made it clear to those receiving their dream analysis that it was from God. (Genesis 41:16) Dreams are rarely face value; they are usually symbolic and sometimes prophetic straight from The Lord. Prophetic dreams can be a warning or for enlightenment and encouragement revealing future events.

The Pharaoh of Egypt in Genesis 41 had a troubling dream so he called for his magicians to interpret the dream and they were unable. In this, instance these non-Jewish wise men were unable to interpret Pharaoh's dream so Joseph the Hebrew slave was called in to interpret. Again, as with Daniel, the interpretation not only brought major blessings upon Joseph but by it, Egypt was saved from a great famine. The Father God had no problem with Joseph supernaturally interpreting Pharaohs' dream for him, why would He object to someone interpreting yours today.

Genesis 41:8

“And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but [there was] none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.”

Symbolic processing dreams can be evaluated, and understood so we may grow into acute self-awareness. Analyzing our dreams is akin to self-examination which should be used as a self-revealing ongoing exercise. I have noticed that many of my processing dreams are fear based. My mind has a way of playing out my fears in a non-literal fashion something like a parable. For instance, being in recovery has caused my life to change drastically from how it was before I let God deliver me from prescription narcotics.

“Dream Identity”

had a dream that I was in bed and felt as if I was unable to rise. There was a man beside me; he was also confined to the bed. There was an audience of 10 or 12 people sitting on bleachers in the shadows next to the bed. The audience watched our every move and would boo or applaud. There was an air conditioner thermostat on the wall by the front door set at 78 degrees. I knew I was not permitted to change the temperature; I did not own the apartment I just lived there. Suddenly I was in the hallway of the apartment building. I was doing my laundry and looked up to see another woman's lovely lingerie and dresses hanging on a rack. I felt very displeased with my own clothing comparing hers to mine I was tempted to steal them but knew better. I am back in the apartment and a brassy red haired woman yells at me viciously telling me I am crazy and should be locked up. Suddenly I am back in the bed I look at the man lying next to me, he looks sexy, and I covet him.

After I woke up, I wrote down the entire dream, and read it back. I was given the following interpretation of my dream. The man in the bed represents the men I have had romantic relationships with throughout my life. Deep down in my psyche I wanted to possess them and keep them nice and tidy in a box at home where I could control them and have a guarantee they would be mine always. I want to keep them where all their attention would be for me. Coveting these men was rooted in neediness and the fear of losing them, the fear of being alone.

Being stuck in the bed represents my tendencies toward sloth and procrastination. It symbolizes me being paralyzed by the fear of success and fear of failure. The people watching in the bleachers represent my peers. It shows me how I put too much energy into worrying about what others think of me or about what they may see when they look at me. This part of the dream is based in vanity and false pride. False pride says I better be the best so I can get the applause and glory! I fear the fact that I could be booed. The root of vanity says if I look good, people will like me. The fear of not being liked or Loved looms in my subconscious. The common fear of not being liked causes me to narrow my outlook on life and

I am bound by my own perceptions of people's opinions and compliments toward me.

The red headed woman is my inner destroyer. The self-destructive part of me that tells me I am wrong and bad. A part of me says I will amount to nothing; this negative voice wants me to self-destruct. The thermostat on the wall represents my insecurity and fear of homelessness. It depicts my issue of entitlement that says people owe me. I felt I deserved that which I did not work to get. The laundry incident with the beautiful clothing shows my inferiority complex that others are better and more beautiful than I am. The clothing depicted (in my own artistic way) my desperation to hold on to beauty and youth, and again the fear of people not liking me. It also shows my belief at the time, that if I compare myself to others less beautiful than me I build self-esteem however, that idea is false. False comparisons stroke my ego until someone more beautiful enters the room then I am vulnerable to jealousy, envy and my false-esteem is crushed then I think even less of myself. I know now that to get true self-worth I must do esteem-able acts.

This dream reveals my carnal self to the core. The part of me this dream reveals is the part I have to work away from, the part I have to rely on God to relieve. God created my carnal side and it is valid and should be acknowledged then overcome. How did this interpretation help me? Awareness came to me after the interpretation. My carnal man would have me stay in that bed and not achieve anything; I can choose victory over my life. Get busy living or get busy dying this is my choice. I can stop myself when mentally beating myself down with negative thoughts because of the feelings my dream revealed. None is without character negatives. Knowing what those are of course gives me the option to work on them. You can interpret your prevalent dreams also be courageous to see what is really inside you. If a dream impresses you the next day enough to remember details, it is an opportunity to know yourself.

When I was young and addicted, I wound up in a county jail with a paraphernalia charge. I had some dreams in there that I am sure were

prophetic! I had a simple dream I was in that same jail in a different time. The jail was empty except for one other girl. I took her hand and we tried to get out we were locked in. We came to a brick wall and suddenly an open door appeared and we both walked out into a sunlit courtyard where we walked out of our bondage together.

The interpretation was that me and other women like me would be set free by our unity and faith. The prophecy did come to pass. Long after I was released from that jail, I returned in a different capacity. I brought in the message of hope and recovery by God's power to the women in that jail. But for the grace of God there go I.

Revelation 2:17

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give him a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to him who receives it.”

Revelation 3:5

“He who overcomes will, like them, be dressed in white. I will never blot out his name from the book of life, but will acknowledge his name before my Father and his angels.”

“The Bowels of the Earth”

I have a friend, she had a born again experience and became filled with the Holy Spirit. Her life changed drastically for the better. She had a dream that stuck out in her mind for years after she had it. She pondered what it meant; was it prophetic, was it her subconscious? It was not a venting dream because they are very emotionally charged.

The stage is set in the bowels of the earth. There are two huge extremely thick iron looking black doors entrenched in rock cave walls. It is black as pitch no light can exist down there still somehow, she can see. She stands by the door and observes there are people moving around. They and she can see in this black because their eyes are different from a human's they resembled reptilian eyes. She is not a prisoner there and she knows it. She is there for a different reason than the others. She is there to find her grandfather that had died years before. He was dis-fellowshipped from the Jehovah's witnesses' and she knows he feels he is not worthy of God's love. She is on a mission to tell him he can be forgiven by Jesus and can move on to a better place. If he does not realize he is worthy, he could move further down into the earth. The dream place has levels that go deeper and deeper. The farther down you go, the eviler it becomes. The worst souls transform into scary looking creatures that inhabit the depths of Hell. We can call the first level purgatory because there is a possibility while there to be redeemed.

She begins searching for her Grandfather. She is not afraid of the people because down there the spoken word of God immediately comes to pass if she quotes a scripture. If she prays for a four course meal, it appears in an instant. She knows she has the power of Jesus in her absolutely and infallibly. She walks and enters a type of dwelling that she knows belongs to her lost Granddad. The place reminds her of an old factory turned into an apartment. A short dwarfish man speaks to her "Why have you come to see your grandfather he is one of the worst living beings down here? The short man goes on to say, "Your Grand dad is a drug dealing king pen." She knows her Grandfather was an alcoholic during his life on earth. She realizes that inner earth is somewhat like the surface of earth in a way that they somehow consume drugs, trade, buy sell, socialize etc. She gets the feeling that her granddad is hiding from her because of his shame. She perceives that he does not want her to see him because his shame is too great. She leaves the dwelling and moves back toward the heavy locked doors.

She walks back to the thick iron doors and sees a few inmates of the abode. She tells them they are loved by God and do not have to condemn themselves to Hell. She explains to the lost that they are free they are just believing the lie of Satan and condemning themselves.

Next, she sees a man that she knew during his life topside. He had been arrested for child abuse and committed suicide. Now in The Abode he carries The Holy Bible with him everywhere he walks. He knows the word of God chapter and verse. Knowledge of God's word afforded him no power down there. She knew that the scripture was in his intellect but not in his heart. She knew there would be no hope for him unless he had a change of heart. It was now time to leave the place of the dead. As my friend exited through the thick and closed, iron doors three women she ministered to down there left with her, they were on their way to a better place they were released from purgatory.

My friend dreamed all this, her, and I believe the dream really happened. Since she shared the dream with me, she and I both have come to believe in a place called purgatory. We believe there is a chance of redemption in the first level of the darkness-lovers abode after the human death.

Mathew 12:32

“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the [world] to come.”

She does believe to this day that her grandfather escaped that place. That he is in a better place and that she brought three women out by the spoken word of God. To this day, she ministers salvation and hope to woman. In that way, this dream was prophetic. In addition, it was a spiritual experience and a supernatural happening that she travelled to the place our bible explains. Many of her beliefs can be backed by scripture, why should I debate or question her beliefs in this dream? "With God all things are possible". (Mk10:27)

She believes she visited the "Abode of the dead"

Shehole- Hades or the world of the dead (as if a subterranean retreat) including its accessories and inmates-grave Hell, pit. (Strong's exhaustive concordance, Hebrew, and Chaldee dictionary of the Old Testament, ref#7585)

Ephesians 4:9

“Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”

Perhaps my friends dream was a real live event that happened. Jesus did ascend unto the deep and stole the keys to death and Hell that we may have everlasting life.

When I was still a young Christian, I had two out of body dreams. I know beyond any doubt my dreams were out of body experiences because of the way they felt.

I've never ever felt anything even remotely like this. I literally felt my spirit leave my body. It was one of those you know that you know that you know that it happened experiences.

The Out-of-Body Dream

I had an out of body dream at a time in my life when I was fervently seeking God and spending a lot of time with a spiritual teacher on a learning venture. I say "out of body" because at the beginning of the dream I literally felt my essence of spirit leave my body. When an out of body experience happens while asleep you will know that you know that you know you have left your human self. My physical feelings of the separation from my body were very strong. I began traveling upward at rates of speed so fast that the stars around me appeared as a lighted tunnel. I slowed down and the dark of space and stars were visible as one again. I reached a rope-like ladder hanging in space with no beginning or ending in sight. I began climbing up the ladder, which I believe was the ladder Jacob spoke of in Genesis 28:12.

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it."

The story of Jacob's dream experience and the revelations he gained by it in Genesis 28:12 through 28:22 include that of enlightenment and new concepts of where and who God was. My own encounter with "Jacob's Ladder" changed my spiritual views as well.

I was making my way up the ladder when suddenly I encountered a skeleton man hanging by one boney arm off the side of the ladder. The skinny creature frightened me so much that quicker than the blink of an eye I was back safe in my body. In retrospect, I have wished I had not been afraid because I believe then I could have gone further up the ladder to reach the third heaven. I define Earth's blue skies as the first heaven, outer

space the second heaven and the lighted place of God that requires no sunlight the third heaven.

Revelation 21:23 “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb [is] the light thereof.”

2Cor.12:2-4

“I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth ;) such a one caught up to the third heaven.” And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth ;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.”

Apostle Paul used the words "caught up" maybe because the man was taken up by accident or certainly without his own intent. Apostle Paul said, "I knew a man." I believe he was actually talking about himself. As many writers do, maybe he spoke in the third person to protect his ego. I believe also that if Paul or "this man" had been out of body he would have definitely known it. Therefore, maybe he travelled mentally by higher mind travel leaving his spirit in place in his body.

Alternatively, perhaps Paul really was speaking about another man who had an out-of-body vision of the third heaven and did not go into all the details with Paul. Whatever the case whether the event happened in or out-of-body, I relate my own experience to Second Corinthians 12:2. By my experience and this scriptural confirmation, I believe in enlightenment and the ability of the spirit and human mind to experience supernatural travel.

My reflective interpretation of my own dream is that it was prophetic, a warning, and an enlightenment. The dream took place a few years before I

plummeted downward into a long painful backslide from spiritual progress. The particulars of how and why the dream happened to me I do not know for sure. I was not practicing meditation at that time whatsoever to try to achieve an out of body experience. I had not asked God for an experience of that type. The skeleton on the ladder struck fear in me, before that I was not afraid during the supernatural travel. I do feel the skeleton represented my own fear laced emotional issues that needed addressed and worked through so I could avoid repeating grave mistakes in my life.

One fantastic result of having felt my spirit leave my body is that it grounded me in the fact that I am an immortal spirit having a human experience. Leaving my body made eternity very real to me. My understanding of man's eternal spirit is not just an idea that I believe in. The belief I am immortal is based on heartfelt experience rather than knowledge based intellectual awareness. The knowing of my own immortality gives me the benefit of having no doubts whatsoever about the biblical/spiritual ideas I am relating to you. My blessed out-of-body dream strengthened my faith one hundred fold.

Certain objects in dreams traditionally have particular meanings. I often refer to a very accurate dream book titled "I Had the Strangest Dream...The Dreamers Dictionary for the 21st Century" The author, Kelly Sullivan Walden has deep spiritual insight about dream types and what certain items represent.

SNAKE DREAMS

It is common belief by present day, dream interpreters that dreams about snakes represent either wisdom or temptation. My experience with snake dreams is that every time I have one temptation follows. Snake dreams are prophetic warning dreams. The snakes give me a heads up that I need to be

on guard. The exercises in this book connect me to God who guides me into self-revelation therefore I am aware of what my character weaknesses are.

I had a dream of a snake; it was huge and attacked me as I swam in a river. The large off white colored snake had a head nearly as big as my own. He chewed on my arm with teeth that were not sharp or large. I was unharmed by the snake and felt relieved in my dream. Next, I was in a classroom setting, a professor stood at the chalkboard pointing at a large drawing of the snake's head with its mouth wide open. He stated that the snake had 72 sharp fang-like teeth hidden behind his dull front teeth. He stated that any of the 72 teeth could kill a human. I had thought the snake was harmless but it fooled me. The dream represented that my future temptation would come in the form of a harmless looking enticement. The true danger of the temptation was that it would open me up to temptations that are more dangerous. The first dull teeth temptation would weaken me for the real danger of the next phase of allurements.

The snake dream prepared me for upcoming temptations.

Galatians 5:9

“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.”

If we experience, a dream of deep fear that wakes us from our sleep, heart pounding, sweat rolling you can bet we have a valid intense fear that needs processed. The intense dream takes a bite out of that fear. Falling or running from monsters translates into subconscious fear of loss. I sit down again and ask myself what is my core fear. I allow my heart to be heard by my head. Then I remember my life is in God's Loving care he is my security. I am reminded to trust God.

I can interpret my own dreams much more thoroughly than the dreams of other people. Nevertheless, interpreting other people's dreams usually comes easily even if I do not know the details of what is going on in their

lives. However, if I know the person well an interpretation can be done in a more thorough manner. Like the snake dream, I was able to identify exactly what type of temptation would come to me whereas with other's I may have to generalize on their brand of temptation although they themselves would know their own patterns of weakness.

I have a friend who has been trying to overcome drug addiction. She lost her nursing career because of her addiction. She has gone from saving lives and making a difference in this world to being unproductive. The deeper into addiction she falls the more unemployable she becomes. Her dreams are symbolic each one different but the message is always the same. She knows that she could be accomplishing much more if she could only break free of her bondage. Her dreams tell her story of struggle and self-condemnation over and over again. It is quite simple to interpret her dreams knowing her plight. Occasionally she will have a dream showing her success and deliverance when that happens I know it is a God sent dream rather than a processing dream. I pray for her and do not give up hope that she will find deliverance. The God sent dreams nourish her hope.

Each dream in our sleep state has a good purpose perhaps to quiet our emotions, comfort us, encourage us, give us warning or tell us a story of the future. Dreams enlighten us or fill us with the Holy Spirit while we sleep. Dreams can give us revelations, epiphanies and foretell future accomplishments. By our dreams, we can be healed and our emotional load lightened. The Spiritual, intellectual and emotional walk hand in hand tiptoeing or stomping through the theatre of our subconscious. The symbolism that our intellect uses to set the stage in our dreams varies. Look past the symbolic into the deeper meaning to find our truth we can be courageous with the help of Christ and admit our true selves. By turning the subconscious into the conscious with God's help, we can change our life's path and our opinion of ourselves.

Genesis 15:1

“After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

VISIONS

Something seen by other than normal sign, something perceived in a dream, trance, or supernaturally re* parapsychology an image or series of images seen in a dream or trance, often interpreted as having religious, revelatory, or prophetic significance the ability to anticipate possible future events and developments a beautiful or pleasing sight.

Joel 2:28 & Acts 2:17

“And it shall come to pass afterward, [that] I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions:”

The gift of “Vision” is available to every believer. Visions from God are pure and good.

2Cor12:1

“I must go on boasting. Although there is nothing to be gained, I will go on to visions and revelations from the Lord.”

Obadiah 1:1

The vision of Obadiah. This is what the Sovereign LORD says about Edom--
-We have heard a message from the LORD: An envoy was sent to the nations to say, "Rise, and let us go against her for battle"--

Numbers 12:6

“He said”, Listen to my words: "When a prophet of the LORD is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions; I speak to him in dreams.”

In the bible, there are many examples of prophetic visions. The next two scriptures show that a certain woman's use of visions was considered evil and demonic by Paul and Silas in the book of Acts of the New Testament this woman used her visions for monetary gain. Had she not been a slave perhaps she would have chosen to use them in a spiritual way. In my experience, godly visions are given for the same reasons as prophetic and anointed dreams. In the following chapter, I will illustrate how my visions have helped me on my spiritual journey.

Acts 16:16 through 16:18

“Once when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a slave girl who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune telling. This girl followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved." She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so troubled that he turned around and said to the spirit, "In the name of Jesus Christ I command you to come out of her!" At that moment the spirit left her.” NIV

Paul and Silas were cast into prison because Paul cast the money making spirit out of the damsel. I suppose her owner was very upset about his loss.

In Acts 16:9&10 Luke the beloved physician and apostle wrote,

“During the night, Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us”. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.”

It is evident that both the woman and Apostle Paul had prophetic visions. Paul was using his for the betterment of the kingdom the woman’s prophecies were used for her master’s income. Paul cast the divining spirit out of the women. I question whether or not the Damsels’ magic could have been used for good given different circumstances. Obviously, Paul perceived her supernatural insight as evil and since I was not there, I accept his interpretation. Sometimes the line between evil and good is barely distinguishable. Paul and the damsel both saw the future.

How do we know if our gift is from God? If the use of our gift lines up with the principals of Love and truth, then how can it be evil? If I am using my gift maliciously or selfishly, it does not make the gift evil it makes me a human being going against God’s will of goodness and Love. There is still the third possibility that a supernatural infilling itself is dark and evil as sin. Sister Petty used to say, “Evil has a counterfeit for every good principal and gift of God”.

Ezekiel 37:1

“The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD and set me in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones.”

Ezekiel is writing about travelling by the Spirit of the LORD his experience can be described as a vision.

Then of course, there is that famous vision of Saint Paul of the Third Heaven whether it happened while he was awake or asleep we do not know. Visions and dreams are very much connected because our dreams can consist of a vision. Most of Revelation was written due to the visions of John the revelator. Visions should be taken seriously and utilized for the encouragement and enlightenment of God's people. The Lord has a way of teaching us about our gifts if we are willing to learn. I imagine most people that have supernatural gifts at some point will question whether it is a divine gift of God. We may need confirmations to help us with insecurities at times and confirmations do come when we need them most.

A vision of another type is simply a hopeful, insightful plan for the future by which we carve out our own destiny. I recommend that every God seeking human aspire toward a vision of progress, hope, and success.

One positive motivator in my life is the vision of accomplishing completion of this book. Weather "Paradise for the Hellbound" is published or not it is a very enlightening project and goal for me to aid my spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth. I hope and visualize that other people are blessed by reading it. However, I do not have expectations therefore I will not be disappointed. The purpose of this book is in God's hands I am just doing the footwork.

TRAPPED-A VISION DURING MY OVERDOSE

I was deep into my Cocaine addiction. I had a few people who enabled my drug use and one was a guy name Ed. He was a drug dealer, not a street dealer mind you. He had a three hundred-thousand-dollar house in the late 70s and it was very nice. He drove a brand new BMW which was way too small in my opinion for his fat ass. Sorry I guess there is some resentment left. He was a greasy Italian not the beautiful kind like my daughter's

father. Those dark olive skin beauties with the almond shaped eyes that wear the top lid eye liner so well. My daughter is gorgeous and I am very proud of her Italian heritage. No this man was a pale skinned sweaty, greasy, over-weight (yet judged anybody that didn't have a models body) jet black hair, blood like ice coursing through his heartless veins, probably connected to the mafia, he sure as hell acted like it, Italian. I resent the hell out of him because of what he nearly did to me.

I remember one day I rode around with him in the BMW that smelled like cherries all the time. He stopped to drop money off to a woman at her house. I asked why she was receiving money from him. He talked in the "we" context about his organization of some sort. He said that basically one of his dealers went to jail while selling the organizations goods. So the woman was hand delivered compensation on a monthly basis since the man didn't snitch. They taught me at a young age YOU JUST DON'T SNITCH! Unlike the attitude of the people I have met in the later part of my addiction. I went to jail myself back then. Recently one of my old friends from back in the day said the organization or the group or whatever they were called almost had me killed for fear I would turn them in. Well, leaving town back then for a very long time may have saved my life. I refused to snitch and was on the run for thirteen years. They didn't know that I refused to snitch. How would they know? I was over the deep end in their opinion. I couldn't handle my drugs in their opinion. The drugs they supplied that is. Allot went on back then but this isn't a book about war stories. It's a book about my recovery and how it all happened. We used to eat Quaaludes and then break into the cocaine. We snorted it, smoked it, shot it, and any other way we could find to get it into our system that's what we did. Me and "Fat Ed" as we called him were on a three-day coke shooting binge. I was shaking so bad I don't know how I hit a vein by this time. There was blood everywhere. What a mess. God blessed me with some very large and very strong veins. I rarely couldn't hit myself. However, this must have been before I learned to inject my own drugs because Fat Ed was hitting me up at this time. We were shooting up in the bathroom for some reason don't remember why. He had a sunken bedroom but I don't know maybe we needed to be around the sink. Long story short I kept complaining "Ed it's not enough" give me more, I want more. And on and on I went. I can't say I blame Ed; he finally did what I asked him to do after many warnings. He knew it would kill me, he knew what he made up

would kill me. He was sick of me hounding him. Fat Ed is still alive today from what I have heard, unlike many other of my old friends.

HE GAVE ME THE HUGE SHOT

What they told me was they gave me C.P.R. and I finally woke up after a couple minutes. But it wasn't because Ed saved my life. It was because his roommate Mike was in the house and refused to let me die. Mike was Ed's longtime partner. He didn't approve of what we were doing in the bathroom. But it was what Mike told me after I woke up about his best friend that really shocked me. He said "Lori, if you ever date Ed again after this I won't have any respect for you." Mike continued, "Ed told me to take you and throw you into a dumpster. He had no desire to even try to bring you back." I was so lost back then. I had no identity. I didn't know who I was. I was back knocking on Ed's door a few days later once I recuperated from my shocking overdose.

THE VISION-OVER-DOSE

While I was out overdosed apparently I fell flat on my back to the floor. I could feel myself shrunk down to nothing my body left me. All I was, was a thought without a body. I was invisible as if I had been shrunk down into a minute fraction of my size so small the human eye could not see. But my thoughts were still just as big as before. My ideas were still alive. I had a consciousness about me. I was not aware of why I was shrunk down in the center of a rock prison. I didn't know that I had, at one time had a body and lost it. All I knew is I was crushed into the center of a rock and I couldn't move. I was imprisoned inside a rock without a body there was no time in that place. Something happened to me suddenly someone was pulling me from the rock. It was horribly uncomfortable to come back out of the rock. My body screamed! My consciousness screamed! No! I

wanted to be left in the rock, the rock would become my home even though I had no power at all to do anything crushed without a body to move. I was ripped from the rock and my body ripped with the movement. I see the rock now it was white and black speckles. Like a rock you would see in North Carolina in one of the rivers. But this rock was animated hanging in anti-space where there is no time or space. Space is a wonderful thing I tell you. I never ever want to return to that prison I was in when I died. My overdose happened before I met my God, before I knew Jesus. There was no white light my friend only a prison and a thought. And Fat Ed would have left me there he didn't care. But I didn't remember anything in my prison it was void of knowledge. All there was is a silent awareness. Mike was my angel that day back in 1978. Mike saved my soul from that rock prison. Mike acted in accordance with God, my God. Mike is in my prayers where-ever he may be. Please my friends seek God while it is still day. Get to know your maker lest you end up in that horrible place. Life and Love and having a vessel to call a body is the best way to be that I know of. My soul was imprisoned while I was alive, therefore when I died it was also imprisoned. I don't know if I would have ever been freed from that prison had not been brought back to life and then found God later in June of 1986 when I found that little Baptist Church and God introduced Himself to me in a big way. (see the Baptism of the Holy Spirit chapter)

THE VISION CLARIFIES OUR TRIALS OF FIRE

Our vision will speak to us in a symbolic language that we can understand.

Romans 5:3&4

“And not only [so], but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope:”

I had a vision during meditation of a ladder leading to heaven. This vision is symbolic and is akin to my out-of-body dream of Jacobs Ladder. (Genesis 28:12) Picture in your higher mind a ladder of steps surrounded by dark outer space and stars. The ladder has light steps and dark steps in the order of odd, and even. All the odd steps are black and the even steps are light. It is easy to stay on the ladder toward God when the steps are lit; these steps represent the times of gratitude and joy. The light steps represent times when we have a clear awareness of the blessings God has bestowed on us. The dark steps in our journey are just as important to our final destination although they are difficult times. The dark times in life can be deeply confusing we may not know what the next choice should be. These times of struggle may make us wonder if God is helping us at all. Nevertheless, if we stay the course of righteousness during perplexing and emotional times in spite of diminutive vision we shall be illuminated again with God’s light and Love. If we stay the course of hope which is a gift during dark times and will not go unsatisfied, our trust in God is increased. When we get through a dark trial, we are better prepared for the next dark step of human existence. The dark steps are scary. To admit to God and man we are scared sets us free from the power fear has over us. When we cry to God “I am scared”, this weakest prayer is the beginning of strength.

James 4:6

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

James 4:3

“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume [it] upon your lusts.”

In other words, there are prayers that come from our true heart acknowledging our need for God and there are prayers that surface from our ego or false pride that is unaware we are but children to our God.

Peter an apostle of Jesus Christ describes trials of fire written to the dispersed Christians scattered throughout Asia Minor during (evidently) the latter period of Peter’s life. The steps of Jacobs’s ladder in my vision represent the believers’ life experience of living from “Faith-to-Faith” which earns us true blessings when we climb the steps with hope and belief that God will make things better for us.”

First Peter 1:6 & 7

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:”

These trials most likely will produce temptation as a by-product but they are better described as intense difficulties.

The words “trial of fire” is a befitting analogy for some of our life’s most difficult circumstances. It is comforting to know there is a higher reason/purpose for our trials.

First Peter 4:12 & 13

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as

ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”

Roman 1:17

For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, the just shall live by faith.

When spiritual solutions are sought during trials in life it points us toward freedom from the mother fear, the fear of death, which in turn allows us independent joy. Meaning the power that people have over our feelings is diminished because we rely on God. If we do not call out to God on these dark steps in life, we could be stuck in a negative place invoking worldly solutions that only pull us deeper into darkness. If we slide back into our fleshly ways during one of these dark steps, we could fall into the black abyss of fear and stay there for a very long time. However, like my favorite apostle wrote.

Hebrews 6:9

But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Do not be discouraged it is human nature to turn to worldly solutions before we cry out to God. Nevertheless, the more we practice spiritual solutions the better we get at using them sooner rather than as a last resort. In the end, those that earnestly seek God will overcome evil by good.

“The Vision of death”

Ecclesiastes 7:2

“It is better to go to a house of mourning than to go to a house of feasting, for death is the destiny of every man; the living should take this to heart.”
(NIV)

At a time in my life that I was experiencing fear and worry about growing old and dying I had a vision. Most of my visions occur during meditation. I went into my bedroom to lie down and comfortably meditate toward God. After some time of settling down my thoughts and emptying my mind I heard God, speak. “Worry not of the flesh, see what I have given you.” I thought of all my wonderful blessings and slipped away into a vision. I entered a dim cave, in the cave stood Master Death he wore a tan colored robe-like garment, he had an egg shaped face with what appeared to be a smooth flowing mustache and beard. He appeared veiled to me as if I were looking through a soft lens camera. He was not intimidating or evil looking at all like popular illustrations. Father God spoke to me, “Death cannot hold you my child”. I looked back toward King Death as he bent down and kneeled before me. He kneeled as if I were his queen. I then experienced an epiphany that my God is the Master of death. Death serves God and death serves me by getting me to my next realm of reality. Death serves me! The King of death cannot hold me but he can aid and serve me by facilitating my exit from the flesh so I may leave behind the old to behold the new therefore... Death Kneels

I label death master because he takes life from the bodies of countless humans. I label death king because he is king in his own realm. These titles do not take power or respect from the Power Giver the King of Life our Heavenly Father of lights. “All things are of God” including God’s servant called Death. I believe death is neither evil nor good of itself. Death is a Love powered spiritual force. Love powered because the Great Creator that has allowed these higher entities to be set in motion is Love and Spirit. My death vision took my fear of death and replaced it with understanding and hope. The vision helped me to understand death as a tool to progress rather than something evil and dark. The vision instilled gratitude in me because my Father cares about me enough to teach me great truths individually with care and Love. The vision made me feel much

Loved and favored by God the King of kings. I encourage every person with a heart toward God to meet him in quiet meditation through visions.

First Corinthians 15:55

“O death, where [is] thy sting? O grave, where [is] thy victory?”

The vision of Jesus

I had a vision while wide awake sitting in church. I went to another place to another realm. I appeared as a child about six years old. I was wearing a white dress with a blue sash. The dress looked like dresses little girls wore back in the sixties all cotton with a full, fluffy skirt. Jesus was there with me He was young beautiful and had long brown hair. His Spirit was so loving and comforting he cared for me and I could feel it in a strong way. He swung me around in circles by my arms. We laughed and played. Even though I appeared as a child just how Jesus sees me, I was still adult as I am now. We had fun and then He picked me up and held me to His bosom. I asked him fearfully, Jesus will you save me from the dangerous evil that I wanted to ignore but evidently wants me dead. As we looked at each other that moment a dark entity began beating a path towards me, Jesus held up His hand and commanded that the evil being depart in haste. He showed He was so much more powerful than that dark mass. Jesus promised; "I will save you from the dark side." I was relieved but still had another confession and request of which I was ashamed. He still held me close in His arms. I told Jesus it is I that I fear the most, will you save me from myself. I asked Him this even though I was scared to admit my true nature to this sacred son of God and reveal that I was such a sinful soul. He was so sweet and pure, so comforting and protective He was my own personal daddy and savior. He said to me "Laura, because you have asked I will save you even from yourself." What a wonderful blessing to know such a loving God and to know I am saved already...it is done.

Hebrews 7:25

“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. or NIV Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.”

I had the following vision for the purpose of enlightenment. The vision was a reminder of the dark addiction from which I was delivered. “The creature” in the story is the embodiment of the allurements of prescription medications. The drugs kept me spiritually blind and emotionally stunted and most significantly kept me from doing God’s work.

**A VISION FOR PROTECTION
WILL YOU TRUST ME NOW?**

During meditation, I saw a face. The image was scraggly and ugly. I could not tell if it was a woman or a man, it looked like a supernatural mixture of both. The appearing of the creature exposed its evil demeanor of ill intent. Its face looked familiar somehow yet I could not remember from where. The genderless being spoke to me, “will you trust me now? Why would I trust such a vile monster-like phantom? Somehow, I knew the creature had wronged me in the past. I remembered taking her in repeatedly only to be cut by the knife of her wrath. She made me bleed precious life from my soul and live with eyes closed. She caused self-worth to flow out like blood. She took my truthful heart and caused me to bring to my breast lies. She steadily presented illusion to my soul and by my own hand, I spooned them in. I knew her well; she has no respect or value for me. What could she offer me now to tempt me? She offers me up some misery and to my own shame; by misery I am drawn. “Name your poison” she shrieks! “With this brew my love, I satisfy your lust for control and pleasure! Take the power you so deserve my pet!” Her words are seductive and delicious to the part of my heart that is afraid and empty.

Does this story leave me without a choice? Must I fall victim to allurements' fervent need to destroy my soul? A white ray begins to shine through the gray matter of my self-doubt. I was enlightened by what the light shown. I remember the reasons I ripped this horrid, evil vessel from my life. I remembered the lies the creature told me. I recalled the effects of consuming her tantalizing poison. The light ray that saved me this day from possible enslavement by the hateful bloodsucker was the light of Love that God gives by grace.

On this day, the light saved my soul. My prayers have been many, I have made my spiritual deposits into the bank of my soul, and I have seen the dividends pay-off.

Ephesians 2:8&9

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast”.

This was not one of my beautiful meditations nevertheless; it was a very important reminder.

MEDITATION IN CHRIST

The deepest questions of universal mystery posed by the most intelligent people on Earth will rarely be answered intellectually. They are answered spiritually through the heart and soul by seeking God in meditation.

Gen 24:63

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide; and he lifted up his eyes, and saw and behold the camels were coming."

First Timothy 4:14 & 15

"Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all."

Psalms 119:48

"My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love and I will meditate on your statutes."

Philippians 4:8

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things [are] honest, whatsoever things [are] just, whatsoever things [are] pure, whatsoever things [are] lovely, whatsoever things [are] of good report; if [there be] any virtue, and if [there be] any praise, think on these things."

Psalms 46:10 "Be still, and know that I [am] God."

Apostle Paul the author of the book of "Philippians" in the letter to the Church at Philippi instructs the people that they should think on good things. The above scriptures show that we should meditate on God's statutes. However, if your mind is anything like mine was before becoming conditioned by meditation; practicing positive thinking is easier said than done. Distractions, fear, and lack of concentration are the enemies of peaceful meditation. I was unable to stop fearful and critical thoughts even when I prayed for God to "please, guide my thinking". My thoughts were

laced with fears; ongoing dialogues of events that never took place in the real world and critical thoughts toward myself, other people, groups of people who were nothing more than a label placed on people I didn't know. Well the practice of meditation when done in the way that I will explain can accomplish in us patience, positive thinking, tolerance, and best of all peace of mind.

Meditation and prayer are in my opinion equally important ingredients in building a relationship with Jesus and the Father. Furthermore, these two Higher Powers are not the only Higher Powers that exist. There are many powers living a higher existence than ourselves with whom we can connect. Hold on do not shut the book yet let me explain. I do not mean worship other gods or put them before God I am talking about spirits from whom we can learn and be comforted. Most Christians believe in guardian angels. In this same way, our own personal Spirit Guide can gently guide us. I have discovered by meditation that I have a group of spiritual teachers and helpers who are truly one with God. They helped me by giving me good quiet suggestions when I was unaware that they existed. They still give me good suggestions though now I know they exist.

When I was new at meditating my belief-system required confirmation that the still small voice I heard was not my imagination or a dream. When two of my Spirit Guides told me their names during meditation, I looked the names up and to my amazement both; the words were Hebrew, proper nouns/names that have divine meanings. Spirit Guides do not make my choices for me nor am I controlled by them.

I do not think that every saved believer will have only one purpose in the afterlife, to lounge around with the lion and the lamb. There is more to the afterlife for humans than lounging no doubt. Some spirit-people that have died will be helping the souls still on Earth. The spirit guides I believe were once human and are now in Gods perfect will in a place where that is possible, they are "Just (justified by the blood of Christ) men made perfect".

Hebrews 12:22

“But ye are come unto mount Sion, (Zion) and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than [that of] Abel.

Jeremiah 1:5

“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, [and] I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”

God spoke to Jeremiah and said, He knew him before he was born. I do believe I existed with God before I became human. That is a concept that I myself at one time would have thought was unthinkable. However, God has taught me that we conventional Christians have presumed way too much about God’s world. By the visions God has given me I realize Heaven is much more than the way it is depicted by the limited and Holy Bible. Through meditation, I realize God is neither legalistic nor limited by man’s perceptions. Seeing God’s wondrous creations helps me know that the Heavens must hold so much wonder.

I do wonder why pretty much across the board Christian religion defines transcendental meditation as evil and an invitation to Satan and his demons to enter. Personally, I believe it takes debauchery or a harmful or hateful act for Satan to enter a human. If we seek God and transcend this reality into a beautiful place that refreshes us how can that be wrong? Howdy, neighbor I just picked up a diabolical evil entity while innocently seeking Jesus with my heart and mind so now I will torture and kill you! Really? What kind of Love would God be showing us if we could be invaded and possessed so easily? I will not apologize for the inability of some folks to understand the truths I have found. Seek to understand rather than to

be understood. Those who condemn meditation do not know how beneficial it can be when done in Christ.

Take into consideration all the diversity of the creatures on Earth. Our little Earth houses man, beast, insects, sea creatures, air creatures, dirt creatures, and so on. Now change the channel and envision God's realm where it really is "all good". How many types of beings do you see? Heaven and God are much vaster than our little Earth. It's okay to jump out of the box that contains God, Jesus, The Holy Spirit, demons, angels, Prophets and Apostles spirits. If we list God as one entity, we are viewing the totality of the spirit world as having only two types of Spirits and of course Hell having Satan and his demons that is two more. That completes our list, four types of supernatural beings acceptable to Christian believers. In all God's realms of magic and wondrous mystery, communication with any spirit other than God has to be evil. Furthermore, we had better curb our thoughts about angels because we could slip very easily into putting them before God. Why does the church plant such fear into the minds of Christians? Why is the topic of the supernatural so limited in the church? The origin of such limits comes from viewing reality by what we see with our mortal eyes rather than our spiritual eye.

An anonymous author wrote the epistle (letter) titled "Hebrews" primarily to the Hebrews or Israelites of that time that had converted from Judaism to Christianity. Remember, we will receive the most value from scripture when we apply the message to ourselves but it is interesting to know to whom it was originally written. The author was writing to those who by accepting Christ as their savior have come unto mount Zion, which as we read earlier represents the "new covenant" moreover we have come unto "spirits of just men made perfect." Once again and rightly so I have my own understanding of this scripture. The perfect spirits that now accompany us are former human beings who share our Living God they know the struggles we humans have to endure.

John the Revelator in The Book of Revelation shows one scriptural example of blessed communication with supernatural beings. St. John wrote the book of Revelation while communicating with an angel. St. John heard Gods voice as well. There are many examples of angelic communications in The Bible. Therefore, I see no more harm in receiving guidance from a Spirit Guide than harm in God providing an angel to save my life or transfer information to mankind. Angels are often defined as “ministering spirits” nevertheless, in most churches that I have attended a spiritual experience involving a guide that is spirit other than God Himself or angelic beings is frowned upon if not forbidden entirely and labeled [of the Devil].

Admittedly, when I first started my journey of meditation I feared Satan and evil. After all my mother taught me that when it comes to the supernatural Satan has far more power than God does. I did not want to open myself up to demons so I invoked the blood of Jesus for protection before each meditation for a long time. At this point in my walk with God I no longer, fear what is out there in meditation. I am in Gods care so I do not feel the need to invoke the blood of Jesus every time I meditate my protection holds fast, I am always protected by Jesus He has shown me this by the “Vision of Jesus” I wrote about in the “Visions” chapter.

Building a relationship takes time and care. Yes, prayer is vital in a relationship with God. Have you ever been in a relationship that the other person does all the talking and you do not have one opportunity to speak? Have you ever tried to talk to a person that just will not listen or let you finish a sentence? It is annoying is it not? Preachers tell us often how important prayer is and how spirituality is about a relationship with Christ but most explain very little if any about how to listen to God. Meditation is about listening to God and training our mind.

When practiced, meditation takes us to a sacred place where we meet God. Meditation is a place where we learn. It is a place to experience new visions, brilliant colors, and magnificent beauty, which cannot be put into human terms. Sometimes during a session, we may receive a renewing of

the mind or some much-needed comfort. Maybe it is direction and guidance that we need. Sometimes we have no idea what it is we need until after we receive it during meditation. The bottom line is Meditation is a time to receive and you are worth it; you are a child of God. Often times we cry for our answers and blessings from God yet we do not take the time to slow down and receive what God has for us.

Our meditation is as personal as our prayers and it is as unique as we are. I have meditated while floating on the ocean, floating on the river, lying in the yard, sitting Indian style on the grass, lying inside on the bed, meditation during stretching exercises, and I am experienced enough to meditate while in the dentist chair or riding in the car with my family. I recall one time I was lying in the sun meditating and enjoying my peaceful pleasure. When I came back to earthly reality, I was so hot and starting to get sunburn. It amazed me that during my session I did not even feel the hot sun on my skin. I am in complete control of my faculties during these times I am not in a trance and I stop when I choose to. My Meditation has also become a coping skill that helps me calm down when I am stressed. The benefits are amazing! When I seek, I find and what is waiting to be found during meditation in Christ will surely be an awesome jewel.

The “Songs of Solomon” is a book in the Holy Bible that most theologians believe represents the relationship between The Holy Church and Christ. When I say “Holy Church”, I mean the true believers, Gods children I do not mean a certain denomination or religion. The book abbreviated as “Songs” has a double meaning Christ and the church or man to woman. Either interpretation is a beautiful read. The book of “Songs” has been highly criticized because of its amorous language yet its right to a place in the Bible has been defended by many saintly souls in all ages. “The Church” refers to Christ as her “Beloved” whom she seeks diligently to find and Loves fondly. The sharpened and stirring expressions of “The Church toward Jesus are those of passionate desire and sensuality. Jesus said, “I am the Rose of Sharon and the Lilly of the Valley.” (Songs of Solomon 2:1) These flowers are sweet our closeness with Jesus can be sweet as well.

Sensuality: Stimulated, sharpened, pleasing, dazzling, being heightened enhanced appealing, delightful, luxurious, fine arousing, stirring, and moving.

“Songs” portrays the kind of sensuality that owns no lust. Jesus refers to the church, his bride as “my sister my spouse” which is written from a spiritual standpoint not an incestuous one. Shame-based notions of lustful sex are what disturb some interpreters of the book of Songs.

Songs of Solomon 4:9 through 4:12

“Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, [my] spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair is thy love, my sister, [my] spouse! How much better is thy love than wine! And the smell of thine ointments than all spices! Thy lips, O [my] spouse, drop [as] the honeycomb: honey and milk [are] under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments [is] like the smell of Lebanon. A garden enclosed [is] my sister, [my] spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”

Jesus explains in Mathew who his brothers and sisters are.

Mathew 12:50

“For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.” Those are the words of Jesus.

Songs 5:2

“I sleep, but my heart waketh: [it is] the voice of my beloved that knocketh, [saying], Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, [and] my locks with the drops of the night.”

During meditation, we can experience this kind of intimacy with Christ. We may learn and understand how beautiful it feels to be the sister or brother of Jesus. The scripture reads “Open to me” that is what we do during meditation we expose all of our heart and thoughts to Jesus.

Understanding Jesus as a brother and a spouse and inviting him in with the passion and intimacy we would a desired lover will bring fulfillment beyond that of a natural love. Does it make sense that we should desire and take pleasure in Christ even more than a natural lover? Meditate until you get to a peaceful closeness with God.

In my Thompson Chain Reference Bible, it is written that only the “mature spiritual mind can interpret the book of Songs.” Often When we work through our issues of guilt and shame about sexuality that have been instilled from our parents or abuse or sin we are free to enjoy an intimacy with Christ without fear and shame. If we are diligent about seeking God, He will put the people in our lives that can help us process and overcome our embedded shame issues. As I have said before ***Shame is the single most powerful enemy of a relationship with God.***

Shame is a self-condemning form of fear.

Psalms 4:4 “Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.”

Tears are an expression of feelings that words cannot cradle they are truth. Our minds distort and misconstrue what our own heart speaks. The ego abides in the mind and says our heart makes no sense. My intricate thought misunderstands and so changes my soul’s truth to fit what fear dictates. The mind such a great capacity for reason and yet our hearts truth alludes our sometimes enlightened mind. Void of the courage to set out toward the quest to know ourselves we transform truth into an egotistical rational of words. How may we listen to our own heart? Meditation will help us do just that.

Can your heart understand by faith that what the eye sees is of least importance? Mankind is as grass, temporal. My heart needs help to know that the things I cannot see with the eyes are the greatest most powerful keys to the abundant life.

Psalms 119:48

"My hands also I will lift up to Your commandments, which I love and I will meditate on your statutes."

New King James Version

"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most-High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

The places that I go during meditation are a "secret place" where God abides where it is just He and I.

I start by finding a quiet, serene place away from distractions. I light a candle and drink some water sometimes I light incense. Often I use my favorite precious stones (crystals) as listed in Revelation chapter 21:10-21 to aid in my meditation, Jasper stone sapphire, chalcedony, emerald, sardonyx, sardius, chrysolite, beryl, topaz, chrysoprasus, jacinth, and amethyst. John the Revelator who wrote the Book of Revelation mentions all these stones as "most precious". Sometimes I put a stone on my forehead or my throat. There are seven spots on the human body believed by many through the ages to be centers of spiritual power or energy power points. My body is the temple of God and the stones are most precious therefore, I do not accept that using such sacred and natural objects to seek God is evil or witchcraft. I believe using crystals just makes for a stronger

connection to the beyond. They are tools like many other spiritual and religious tools used to aid us in spiritual exercises. Tools like anointing oil, prayer cloths, crosses, statues, etc. The goal of meditation is to empty our mind so we can hear God's direction and receive whatever blessings await us supernaturally.

Lying down with my crystals on or around me I consider my most recent interactions with people because these thoughts are usually foremost in my mind. After processing my interactions if need be I clear up any guilt or shame by repentance and plan my amends if merited. Once I have cleared my conscience I spread my arms and invite Jesus and the Holy Spirit in. I pray for God to help me meditate. I ask God for the knowledge of His will for me and the power to carry that out. If I fear evil, Satan or his demons, I pray the protection of the blood of Christ. I then pray the Lord's prayer visualizing every sentence in my mind. I picture God in Heaven; I picture His kingdom alive in me and on Earth. When my mind drifts toward worries of this world I reel my thoughts back in and start again, each sentence of the Lord's Prayer can be visualized. I picture myself kneeling in front of the throne of God as I pray the Lord's prayer. I may have to reel my mind in several times to get to the end of the mantra. The key is perseverance to make my mind stay focused on the prayer I choose as a mantra.

I remember when I first started practicing meditation, as I laid still I felt such horrible energy clawing inside me. Candidly put it felt like I had an alien or demon inside my body. It was so hard to be still with no chaos or confusion to distract me from my feelings. I pressed on sometimes I had to moan to release the energy inside my body. Sometimes memories came up that needed to be resolved or processed. I use the exercises of writing and sharing when this happens. Meditation will give you the self-knowledge to clear up emotional issues and clear up your chakras.

Warning-Some Christians may find this content to be "new age".

"In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men

will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

Please don't view and label transcendental meditation as an automatic no-no. If we meditate in Christ protected by His blood, we are safe and will see visions and dream dreams according to God's word. You are of much value to Christ, there may be many things he has prepared to teach you during your meditation.

I practiced meditation like this for quite some time until I was able with God's help to clear my mind of all clutter and noise quickly and easily. When my mind became quiet, I began to have visions and travel to beautiful, exciting places. After a couple years of practice, I travelled to a place during meditation where I met my spirit guides. My Guides are a group of beings whose purpose is to help me fulfill the will of God in my life. My Spirit Guides are appointed by God to make my life easier and more fulfilling. We all have spirit guides though most people do not stop and seek long enough to meet them.

I practice meditation as often as I want. It is best for me if I do it on a regular basis. If I get away from it for a while, it takes time to clear the clutter and noise from my mind to get back to a quiet mind. When I let up on meditation, I tend to become more worrisome, agitated, and impatient. I react to people abruptly and have less self-restraint and control. When I let up on meditation, I may become fearful again. It is amazing how much it benefits me when I lie on my bed, spread my arms, and show God all of my heart. Meditation is communing with God. Meditation is listening to God. Meditation is seeking God at a higher level.

First Corinthians 1:9

“God [is] faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Remember the only explanation we have of why we were created is to commune with God. Meaning to glorify Him, to praise him, to cry to Him and to listen and talk to Him.

Let Him get to know you at a deeper level. We will never be free of human nature while we are human. It is ok that we are not perfect before God. We can still approach Him dragging our guilt and shame behind us. I notice many times when I get close to God in this way it provokes crying and then I feel such relief from stress and worry.

Meditation starts with being able to focus on one thing, the mantra. Then the next phase you will notice with your mind's eye is the presence of a black space or black energy this is the place of doors, windows and who knows what all. There is nothing for us in that region of black except the doors God is pleased to let us walk through. Let your mind travel past the dark into the lighted visions of beauty and Hope.

Once you allow yourself to take time and seek God in this way, your astral-travel will come naturally. Just as a child learns to walk, we can learn to travel with our higher awareness one-step at a time.

Supernatural travel starts in the black... I want to call that black "outer space" but It may be a place of consciousness void of actual physical "space" by our earthly terms however it looks like dark outer space. I usually see crosses and triangles in the black, which represent my own personal symbols of Christ and religion. The triangle is about fellowship, unity, and sharing what God has done for me. You will probably see something similar that has meaning for you in that place. These shapes are somehow the door which I pass through into other realms. Focus on your door then allow your mind to move on from there. You will not have to travel through the black darkness to get to the light it is more as if you hit hyper-drive into God's realm in a split second once you find your personal door.

Sometimes I fall asleep during meditation that is good I must have needed the rest.

MANDOLINA

I had such a wonderful meditative experience I wrote it down to share it with you. I call it "Mandolina"

I entered a place where the air was like a light green blanket of mist

I saw a woman suddenly she was gone. Her dress looked like flowing silks and satins. Her hair was long and swaying, she moved past me as if she was floating. Next, I saw a male figure. His head appeared to me like a translucent rainbow surrounding his skull the colors stopped at his eyes. He seemed to be flesh but his color and texture were without blemish all one shade. He called to Mandolina. The man's arms stretched out bidding her "come". Why did she run from him with a tear in her eye? He was so comely; perhaps he was a god of sorts.

What was this misty place of peaceful sensuality? There were two moons in their hazy sky one yellow and the other beige. The sun was as a blue star placed in a white moon bright as the Star of David. "Come away from this sacred event you stranger to this world!" I gazed at two crocodile type creatures that were speaking to me with their minds.

I was not physically in the place only my third eye gazed. Moreover, what was the "sacred event" of which the mysterious crocs spoke? The crocodiles stood in a stance like statues face to face as if they were going to kiss. "It is a time of passionate anticipation!" They spoke. "Either the gods will kiss or they will part ways their power un-joined. Their choice will change the destiny of all time and space. When the gods join it affects all worlds by their burning fiery fervent Love it travels through the ages."

Their Love if joined will rend the veils of heaven and earth. We will all see the unseen. The spirits of the dead that linger on earth their work unfinished, all the fantasy creatures of the land, the fairies of light, the shadows of day, the leprechauns and elves all will be visible to the human eye. Come away sister of peace, come away I hear their sounds of might."

I felt I should respect the creatures' request and so I withdrew. I fervently hid from the creature's sight yet I remained hidden in their midst. I saw the two figures, the silken woman, and the rainbow god; they spoke to one another softly. "Come Mandolina sacred god of youth I have exquisite fruit from my vineyard, come and taste." The rainbow god bid Mandolina "come hither". She hesitated then moved toward him. They held out their arms to one another and then as they touched they literally became one. With translucent color, they appeared to blend as two ghosts in the night becoming one. Suddenly a loud noise like the sound of a trumpet straight from heaven knocked me far from my meditative state. I was no longer in that place I was back in my earthly vessel.

I gazed out my window to get an idea of what the weather was like. I spotted a small green fairy flying gleefully around my flowers. The small feminine creature was throwing color dust on the plants to brighten and enhance their tint. I was shocked, how is it I can see her I thought! Next, my little niece ran into my bedroom, "Aunt Suzanne" she screamed excitedly "come quick, look outside at the seedling fairies planting seeds everywhere for next season!" We watched as tiny well-dressed men threw endless amounts of seed to the ground from a small pouch in their jackets. I stood in wonderment. I was startled but then began to understand what the crocodile creature meant when he said "The veil of heaven and earth would be rent.

Luke 6:45

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh."

"Meet me"

In quiet meditation, I pondered the fact that I was not getting the affection I craved. I pictured my beautiful fantasy man, a god. He was the best picture of sensual beauty my mind's eye could see. I want to meet you I

told this higher power during meditation. I call this eternal being my Spirit guide. I was in the place where fantasy and eternity are one. He spoke in my thoughts. "Walk down the country road in the morning and you will meet me." I wondered how he would appear in person. What would I see? After my coffee in the morning, I rose up and walked down the yard. I turned onto the quiet country road my immortal being had shown me in my mind. The stillness entered my spirit. The calmness danced through my heart; still I looked with my eyes for my comely guide. Would he drive up in a truck? Would he come out from a yard? Then my guide spoke to me these words. "Come, do you see me in the stillness, come, do you see me in the quiet peace? I am in the eagles' soar, I am present in the setting dew and sparkling sun that hits the water. Meet me in your minds beauty. I am here and I wait. Learn to feel me during your walks; learn to hear me in your soul. For there are many wise words to read and put to paper, but pretty words not carried out are words that have not lived. Learn to hear me, learn to see me, I am right here."

Wow, I thought to myself this was Jesus speaking to me. I thought to myself, this was also my Spirit Guide speaking to me. I believe this was even the Holiest of Holy Spirits speaking to me. I do need to work on keeping my mind's eye open!

"THE PINNACLES OF TIME"

I lied down to sleep, the next thing I knew I was walking in an unfamiliar place. I moved bare foot down a row of twelve huge towers that appeared as icy snow pillars, taller than the highest height. I wondered; what are these magnificent monstrosities?

Two figures appeared in the distance walking toward me. One, a fine looking man with dark skin, and a fit body he looked like an Indian. He had sleek black hair, it shown blue and shiny as crow feathers. He wore clothing fashioned of fur and leather, his physic strong and defined. The other figure came into sight as a young woman dressed in the finest Roman toga, soft blue and white were her colors. A small yet stunning jewel of crystal blue held by a silver cord rested on her delicate chest. She looked like a gorgeous Indian queen. I know these two beings where something beyond human. Their skin glowed almost transparent yet was perfectly colored, flawless, and sensual. Their appearance was so mystically charged that I was entranced. The Indian man had welcoming eyes; there was no threat in these black dove eyes. And she, I thought could surly be trusted with blue eyes so large and clear no malice could live in her.

The mystical woman in blue waved her hand across my face. I then saw a vision of earth, the rising and the setting of the sun over and over. I saw my father as a young man, slowly he grew weaker and older, finally his eyes and health failed. I saw my mother grow old and return to a childlike innocence. These visions filled my soul with grief. I screamed "Time, time look what you've done, you're a mighty instrument of God's timeless plan, seems your purpose is set! Have you no remorse?" I realized that without hesitation or care, time would slowly take from me all those I hold dear. I remembered how I danced with time in my youth believing he would always be there for me, but now to me Father Time is the twin brother of death, for without time; death's absolute rule over the fate of all mankind desists.

The enlightened couple summoned me to walk further; we came upon a small pool of water. The supernatural pond looked like glass, reflecting a sky enormous and blue as a dark sapphire. "Stir the waters" the woman suggested, "Stir the many waters and look upon the hand of time." I knelt down and dipped my hand gently into the wet picture of the sky. All I see is clouds; I thought. "Look beyond the clouds." She spoke as if she could hear what I was thinking, and she could.

The water's spoke these things:

I wrote a poem describing a vision I had during meditation pertaining to the end of days. What does "the end of days" mean except the end of time? This vision reminds me of topics I have read in the book of Revelation. I can still see the towers of time like great pillars of white crystal taller than any mountain or earthly tower. These towers stood side by side in a place secluded from any other geographical structures. The towers stood alone in a mist of emptiness.

"THE PINNACLES OF TIME II"

The pinnacles of time shall melt as sugar in the light of the sun

These towers are set in the IS to regulate life and influence the fate of our soul

When the pinnacles of time are gone, the earth will stand still

The sun and planets will not rotate for time nothing will grow

The sun will no longer be the giver of life

The waters of humanity will no longer confuse our choices

the distraction called time will be gone

There will be a rush toward God

Screams of repentance

Anger toward God and the final separation will be at hand

The body shall die quickly, eternity shall settle in

The "I AM" will be revealed to the mortal man in those final last days

the choice will be easy our choice will be clear.

This vision could represent the end of Earth, as we know it or it could figuratively represent the onset of death itself. Either way we all have a colossal choice to make. Best if we begin the right choices now.

Just as quickly as the vision began, so it ended. I rose from my rest and contemplated choices.

I sat in meditation and prayer and pondered.... Where is the place that fear of the future and fear of the unknown meet with trust, faith, and relief that everything will be okay? I touched and stirred the waters of Higher Vision the waters revealed her truth. That place is the place where pain reaches a point I can no longer tolerate. Then a sacred door to the light opens for me to walk through into understanding and true spirituality. This is the place where I meet God. I pondered my two most prevalent white light deliverances and asked the question.... Will my God come into the darkness to redeem me from destruction? Can He enter the darkness? Yes, all things are possible with God. Although, all my experiences small and great of meeting my Higher Power have been when I literally take steps into the places where the Spirit of the Father of Light abides. Every one of these places are locations where people seek God and exercise Faith. So for me, my quest for relief from pain and hopelessness is fulfilled when I step out of my comfort zone to seek God in the Lighted places of this Earth, not just once but continually as Step-eleven suggests

THE MYSTERY OF THE ONE UNFORGIVABLE SIN

Mathew 12:32

“And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven Him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.”

Did Jesus just imply forgiveness in the “world to come”? It sounds like it to me. He is also suggesting here that the Holy Spirit of God is more consecrated and sacred than Himself. If I ignorantly attribute a work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, can I be forgiven? (Mathew 12:24) I believe I could. I interpret the unforgivable sin as being an act done hatefully and rebelliously against the Highest God. A deed of conscious decision not only to turn my back on God but to blaspheme His Spirit as well. If the non-Christian woman I mentioned earlier received the gift of Love from The more sacred than Jesus Spirit, could she not also meet our Lord and Savior in the “next world”? I do not believe that Jesus was merely exerting false humility when He spoke of the great importance and sanctity of The Holy Spirit in contrast of His own value. (Mathew 12:32) Jesus was not shy about telling us His own sacred magnitude as Lord and savior. I believe that when He gave God’s Spirit Spiritual Precedence He was speaking truthfully and literally.

What power The Lord gave his right hand men! What a scary story in Acts 5 starting at verse 1-11. Ananias and Sapphira where members of the early church at Jerusalem they paid dearly for their dishonesty toward the church. In those times, members put their resources’ together to further the church. The couple withheld monies that they had agreed to give to the church. They received more money than they said they had for the land that was sold they lied. Members considered this a great hypocrisy and betrayal. Consequently, Sapphira and Ananias quickly dropped dead after they lied to Saint Peter and the apostles. It has been suggested in bible commentary that Peter did not command their death by the Holy Spirit but rather stated it as prophesy. (Acts 5:9) Immediately after they lied to Peter swift retribution was carried out, not by the church but supernaturally by the Spirit of God. I conclude from this disturbing story that the Mighty

Spirit of God is no power to be trifled with for He bestows all the blessings of heaven and imparts all the punishments of Hell.

The Holy Spirit was there that fateful day of Passover when children died and mothers cried. (Exodus 12:12) He is referred to as the “Destroyer” in Exodus 12:23. He impregnated Mary with the precious seed of Jesus. (Mathew 1:20) He brought to life the dried bones in the” Valley of Despair” (Ezekiel 37:14). By God’s Spirit He created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:2) David; the great king “a man after God’s own heart begged the Lord in Psalms 51:11 “take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” following his sin of adultery with Bathsheba.

Powerful is this word of God and powerful are the Old Testament stories, in some ways they are so foreign to us yet they are timeless, we are the same as the people they portray. I believe we all have some of this Holy Spirit the second life enters our hollow soul.

I understand why King David begged The Lord “take not thy Holy Spirit from me.” I know how I felt and acted before my baptism of the Holy Ghost and I do not want to return to that unenlightened and fearful state of ignorance. I have found that the more I share love and encouragement and give my testimony of God’s great works in my own life the more I am refilled by the Spirit with peace and joy. The river of living water flows in as we give out. (John 7:38) That is definitely a good feeling, a Spiritual high! Doing the will of God gives us the opportunity to tap into The Great Spirit of Truth for the sake of God’s bidding.

I recall sometime after receiving the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, I was not doing any of God’s work, and I was not ministering in any capacity for quite some time. I wanted so badly to receive another wonderful experience as I had before. I did not understand the concept of the “river”. I went from church to revival seeking that Spiritual high. I was applying typical fear based, carnal behavior to Spiritual matters. I recall Bill Petty preaching a

sermon on my exact behavior. Naturally, I assumed it was to be applied to others and not myself. I was not thorough in self-examination at that juncture of my life. When I heard sermons, I often related them to others and not me. I was dwindling away in self-will confusing it with the will of God running from church to church like a junkie looking for a fix. There were others I knew seeking more Spirit highs in the same way. Then was the time for me to give not the time to receive. I was truly a baby in Christ destined to make mistakes. Eventually I fell into sin; I had no idea how to implement the power of The Holy Spirit into my life. I have since been blessed with a Spiritual experience of the educational variety. I have meticulously been educated on how to maintain Spirituality, thank God by His grace.

John 6:53:

“Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.”

John 6:63:

Jesus Himself stated, “It is the Spirit that quickeneth (Meaning: revive, stimulate, and improve spiritually) the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.”

The Spirit gives life to the unborn child; The Spirit gives life to all living creatures, celestial and earthbound. When Jesus talks of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, surely He meant it in a Spiritual sense. This was hard for His disciples to understand and many of them stopped following Jesus. Maybe they thought He implied the literal consumption of His flesh. Jesus said, “The flesh profits nothing” These are difficult words to understand unless we thoroughly take into account our certain impending death. Really, in our daily lives how often are we currently aware that those we interact with and we will soon be six feet under? Do we treat others with consideration of their transitory state? We are all so shocked and alarmed when people close to us die, as if unaware of humanity’s temporary and

mortal existence. Jesus saw things for what they really are. He was very aware of the long-term consequences of being human. He knew firsthand how to avoid the soul's demise. Maybe if He had used a different allegory, rather than eating flesh one of lovers, showing how they passionately consume each other on every level possible. Exemplifying how we need to consume Jesus unto our own spirit and soul, passionately and with fervor. Would the soon to flee apostles have then understood? No doubt, the passing followers would have then been appalled by his symbolisms' flagrant and close proximity to sex.

Do we really consider the spiritual ramifications of our actions? From what standpoint are we reasoning? If we receive the Baptism of the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16) we are given a stronger spiritual perspective which may seem foreign to others. It is a perception through a brand new pair of eyes that makes little if any sense to the carnal minded. To Spoke of Star trek emotions made no sense, he had none. Like-wise spiritual reasoning makes no sense to the carnal minded, spiritual enlightenment is first experienced in our heart and then understood with our mind. We may try with all our emotion and all our intellect to make another understand spiritual reasoning, still we can never ever deposit it in a heart this is a task only The Great Spirit can carry out.

I was searching through the satellite stations and came upon a Catholic program. They proposed an interesting theory on the unforgivable sin and its' possible origin. They explained that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, which facilitated the crucifixion, was the original unforgivable sin. They continued to explain that it was not Judas' suicide that was the great blasphemy but rather that great ominous treachery toward Christ. This makes a lot of sense to me on one hand because The Holy Spirit of God was in Jesus. Then again, to me this matter is still a mystery. Judas obviously regretted the betrayal to the point of wanting to snuff out his own life by suicide. On the tree, he hung himself. (Mathew 27:3)

WHAT ABOUT THE AFTERLIFE?

I believe that our afterlife is directly related to our faith. I believe that our vision of our own afterlife dictates to a point what it will truly be like. Surly Jesus has tried to tell us over and over about the power there is in just “believing” in something. Belief and faith are pretty much one in the same. When the topic is God or the hereafter we call our belief faith. But faith as always is belief in something unseen or unproven at the time.

We can have faith that our husband will come home from the war and believe it with our heart this also is faith. We can have faith that we will be provided for in our old age mingled with hope. Hope as I have said previously is made up of doubt, fear, and faith all mixed into one. So we “hope” that our husband will come home but if there is fear mixed in there by a belief that there’s a chance he won’t come home its hope again.

It’s when we have a belief that is so unwavering that there is no doubt or fear mixed in it that we create a miracle and our belief has moved mountains. Just a mustard seed of that kind of belief and we can make a basket full of fish appear where there was only one. Jesus insisted that we humans have this power of belief to create miracles. That is how He brought Lazarus back from death. That is how he fed the thousands. Let’s think back, Jesus also prayed to His, Our Father and asked for the miracle every time. He told us that it was Our Father that gives us the power to work miracles. I think He prayed aloud during each miracle that he performed back in the day so the onlookers could see how it’s done. All of what I am referring to is written of in Mathew, Mark, Luke, and John the gospels.

So it never fails when a preacher is talking about heaven and hell he will always recant one of the instances of afterlife illustrated in the bible. And our hypothetical preacher will tell us that the afterlife only happens one. Preacher Joe will always tell us backed up by the word of coarse all about what it will be like in heaven and where we will go given certain circumstances. The Jehovah’s Witnesses will call our paradise

Armageddon. Where the lion will lie with the lamb and there will be no more tears.

The Baptist minister will tell us about Lazarus and the rich man. And how Lazarus a poor beggar begged at the gate of the rich man who never gave him any help. And so that beggar in the afterlife is happy with his family and the rich man is suffering with a great thirst across a great gulf from the beggar. The rich man tormented begs Jesus to go back to Earth that he may warn his family.

There are so many different examples of death and after death in The Bible I refuse to be doctrinally paralyzed by thinking things only happen one way for believers. I can say Jesus' assurance to us about Everlasting life is written in stone.

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whoever believeth in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life.”

Wait! Don't Satan worshippers believe in Jesus? Of course they do if they believe in The Devil they believe in God. This stands to reason by all practical purposes.

John 6:47

"Verily, Verily I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Let's start with those whose bodies die and they sleep a while in Christ

1st Thessalonians 4:14-16 14

“We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.”

To Preacher Joe this scripture says that everyone who dies stays asleep until Jesus returns and wakes them up. No ifs ands or buts about it. There

is no conscious life after death in his mind there is only sleep. Asleep in Christ.

I simply won't believe that our Spirit dies with our body The Spirit is eternal and immortal.

Why did Jesus refer to Lazarus as merely sleeping when he came to resurrect him? His body was dead! But his soul, it slept, resting until the resurrection. (John 11:11)

He spoke the same of the damsel He resurrected (Mk 5:39) "The damsel is not dead but sleeps."

A good long rest for my heart and soul doesn't sound to bad

to me after this perplexing human experience. Though I would prefer going straight to my Lord if I were to have a choice.

1st Thessalonians 4:14-16 states that those who sleep in Christ and are dead will rise first at the sound of a trumpet.

Daniel 12:2&3 "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."

I believe that much of the scene of our afterlife will depend on our beliefs in this life and our faith. There are so many different examples of death and after death in the Bible. I refuse to be doctrinally paralyzed by thinking things only happen one way for believers. Although I can say Jesus' assurance to us about everlasting life is sure and written in stone.

John 6:47

"Verily, verily I say unto you, he that believeth on me hath everlasting life."

Let's start with those whose bodies die and they sleep a while in Christ:

First Thessalonians 4:14-17

For if, we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.

For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

I believe the reason He said “first is that He included the understanding that others will be raised unto life.

Daniel 12:2 & 3

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”

There are other examples of translation from flesh to Spirit; such as Elijah in the fiery chariot who did not experience death at all. God does not live by man's rules; He did what He wanted with Elijah.

2 Kings 2:11&12

“And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces.”

Hebrews 11:5

"By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God."

There is a story in St. Luke 16:19-31 about a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus who begged outside of the rich man's gate. I am assuming the rich man did little or nothing for the man that lay outside his gate begging for food. In death the beggar Lazarus lay in the "bosom of Abraham" he was comforted.

I think the reason he wasn't sleeping in Christ may have been because Christ had not ascended or descended yet.

FIELDS OF DESTRUCTION

The first time I did a mind altering drug I was 12 years old. Just out riding a mini bike in the very early 70s. some bogs chased me and I wrecked the bike into a moving car. I got some painful muffler burns. My mom did not like to see her little girl suffer so she gave me my very first valium. I got high, I liked the way it made me feel. A year or two later while at a pool party I tried my first beer, which turned into beers and I got drunk. Dad was not too pleased but he didn't say a whole lot. Another year or so passes, I am fourteen years old and my sister's friend is turning me on to my first joint. It was some potent stuff! I got extremely stoned and paranoid but two weeks later I was smoking it again. I felt I must be weak if I couldn't handle my pot like everybody else. I just kept smoking it even though it made me uncomfortable till I got used to it.

So I was steadily making the kind of friends that liked to get high. By the age of fifteen I was getting drunk every weekend and loving it. Being drunk stilled the fears of reality. Intoxication stopped my head from saying, "I'm not good enough".

Living in fear is a dismal existence. And the disease of addiction is progressive. Meaning it starts fun & gets bad in many ways as time goes on. Finally realizing my life sucked I tried several times to stop using drugs to no avail.

Trying things like just drinking liquor or just taking pills staying away from cocaine. Inevitably I'd end up saying "Oh God why have I done this to myself again?" My lack of power was agonizing as I watched myself continually do that which I did not want to do.

Why do I do what I don't want to do? The question haunted me it was torturous going against my own heart. My dismal existence continued with near death overdoses. Near death situations, compromises of morals, Ideals, compromises of all sorts were my bedfellows.

I overdosed on heroin, cocaine, probably alcohol. All the while powerless to stop. It was amazing I kept surviving these experiences. This makes for a traumatic state of emotions which begged for even more sedation. There does come a time when logic and proportion have fallen by the way. And stages of denial are just that time.

Putting myself at risk for all kinds of disaster was habit. I was moving further into addiction. Some addicts have children who they inadvertently put at risk for death and worse.

Drunk drivers who have accidentally killed or maimed innocent people can attest to the horrific consequences of drug abuse. Imagine sobering up after a catastrophic event. Addicts can rarely deal with the guilt of their own actions.

So continues the vicious cycle of addiction. Then there's the fun addiction of crack cocaine! (sarcasm) I suffered so horribly from the paranoia and fear cocaine produced I managed to quit using it for quite some time. Then crack came along.

In the beginning it was very alluring with no paranoia. And what a high, what an elation. But as it progressed it took me to a very low bottom.

Years passed by the time I was twenty-five, I was on the methadone program. (for the third time). I had an opiate habit thanks to methadone that couldn't be touched by any other opiate. Methadone is very strong and causes the user to not feel any other opiate, hence why shoot heroin if I can't feel it? I'll just drink more methadone after all it's a hell of a lot cheaper! But I kept increasing my dosage to the point I couldn't get high. I was just preventing withdraw, keeping myself well.

Taking drugs to be normal was too much reality for me. At this point I ask myself, why was I so afraid of life? I had to find a drug that would get me high! Crack cocaine came to my rescue. Crack took me to very dangerous places. The crack drug culture was very different from what I was used to.

I was killing brain cells; my intellect was in danger of never returning. My vocabulary was limited. Short term memory loss was prevalent. Good sense has been gone for a long time. I have developed survival skills such as manipulation, denial, running away, oblivion, bargaining, and more. I developed street smart skills to survive and my heart was hardened.

I've been very irresponsible for many years. I've hurt many people intentionally and unintentionally along the way. I've been in detoxes along the way and hospitals as a direct result of using drugs. I've spent time in several county jails. I had guns pointed at me. Had a machete blade set to kill me. I was raped and nearly murdered, I would have been killed had I

not befriended on of the rapists. I used to hitch hike. I jumped out of a moving vehicle to escape abuse and God knows what else. Been in domestic conflict and oppression for years.

I have been just plain suicidal a time or two. You may be able to imagine the emotional implications of such a life which few recover from.

I suffered greatly and my story is long and hard. I hit two bottoms in my lifetime and don't ever want to hit another. I landed in jail over and over. Long story short, between God, The Holy Spirit, Alcoholics Anonymous. Therapy and a few good friends I have been sober ten years this time and I am not going back to that dismal place ever again. I am here to let you know, you do have a choice.

DENIAL

Denial in respect to addiction is what keeps us using and abusing drugs continually. It affords the disease of addiction the right to destroy lives on a daily basis especially our own and take no responsibility for what is happening. It tells us things like, 'it's everybody else's fault this is happening to me.' Or if it weren't for certain circumstances I would be happy and wouldn't have to use. Or just one more drink or drug and then I will work on quitting. Or maybe, if I don't use drugs or drink I will be really miserable. Or, I will die if I don't have my dope. How about, I am only going to drink one six pack this time. Or, only take the pills as prescribed this time so I will have some left at the end of the month. Another one is, I am going to sell these drugs not use them. I bought them to make money. And if we are real addicts we rarely keep these promises to ourselves. And if there is no minor or catastrophic disaster in our lives we can stay in our addiction till we die or worse. All the time looking in the mirror and seeing a distorted view of ourselves at best. Our perceptions while in denial are twisted.

It seems that whatever true reality threatens our disease, must be interpreted in our brains in a way that we can continue medicating.

Our disease usually tells us if we don't have our medication life will be terrible. And partly it's right in the short term anyway. Not in the long term. The realities and feelings we work so hard to suppress, if realized, take major changes to work through. Not to mention our circumstances; if sober we would have time improve on. So that's just too much reality and it seems easier to just continue medicating.

Quite frankly denial is plainly lying to ourselves and others. It is believing our own lies to our detriment. And as far as addiction goes pertaining to daily life we do well to stay in denial, for, to come out would mean guilt, major guilt, and if we plan on continuing using no matter what, we may as well use in denial rather than in the misery of guilt. We should use guilt free if it is our choice. Staying in addiction while knowing we are sick and causing pain to ourselves and others can be torturous. Denial can actually help us maintain a degree of sanity and serves as an unhealthy emotional survival skill.

So denial maintains some sanity in us, granted as delusional as it may be. But also denial has aided in taking down vast numbers of addicts and alcoholics to the point of no return. It is a baffling and powerful occurrence. But our minds are intricate and we must realize this disease is part of our minds and very intelligent to the point of deceiving even ourselves. Annihilation

Part of our denial process can include selective amnesia. Sometimes when undeniably the bad times get really bad, to enable ourselves to use again we must forget the terrors which have occurred. Forget the bills we need to pay. Forget the loved one's who are waiting for us to show up as planned. Just as a severely abused child can have no memory of the adolescent abuse, we addicts have the capacity to forget whatever bad circumstance that could stand in the way of our next drink and drug. Whatever responsibilities lie unchecked our drug or drink must come first for the disease.

Then there's the old justification rationalization that suppresses our guilt and cries for responsible action. Such as, I can pay that bill a little late, they won't turn off the electricity THIS week anyway. Or, those kids don't need to see me this weekend, their better off without me anyway. Ouch!

JESUS THE MAN

Mathew 19:10

His disciples say unto him, "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry."

Mat 19:11

But he said unto them, "All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given."

Mat 19:12

"For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

Mathew 19:17

"And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments"

Jesus was a man, the son of God yet a man nevertheless. Men, humans I believe all live under certain earthly laws. For every action there is a reaction. Karma is in place. Laws of gravity, nature, and spiritual laws such as grace, Love, forgiveness. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice it says in the Bible. But He was not perfect in the way we think. He did have perfect Love within Him so powerful that He was magic. Jesus has told us "only One is good". And by the word good I think he meant good all the time. Always right, never making a mistake.... perfect. I do not believe that Jesus

suffered from false humility, no, He was a humble man with true humility and was guided by truth more so than any human alive. He said He was “not good” and He was not lying when he said it. He was human and could not possibly be without mistakes, blunders, growing pains etc. My God He was a teenage boy, an adolescent he was not God on Earth for if He were no man would have been able to look upon Him. Men would have been dropping like flies around Him if He were the almighty God perfect in form the creator of Nations. God told Moses on Mount Sinai when He gave Him the 10 commandment that no man could look upon Gods face or He would truly die. Moses’ hair turned white just seeing Gods back as He walked away. (Or floated away.)

But the preachers and the word tell us that Jesus never sinned that He was sinless. I am sure He was sinless but I am also pretty sure He made mistakes. Sin is a gray area. What is sin to some is not sin to others. The above scripture about the eunuchs and celibacy illustrate that. Jesus is my savior, God put a plan in place for my salvation. Jesus is the one who answers my cries in prayer. He has revealed Himself to me and He Loves me like no other. This is why I Love God, because He First Loved me. I don’t have to white wash Jesus the Man but He is the Son of The Most-High God therefore he is sacred and just.

REINCARNATION

Please interpret these scriptures for yourself rather than allowing some dogmatic preacher to do it for you.

"And as he was passing by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who has sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but the works of God were to be made manifest in him.'" (John 9:1)

The disciples ask the Lord if the man himself could have committed the sin that led to his blindness. Given the fact that the man has been blind from birth,

"For all the prophets and the law have prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, he is Elijah who was to come." (Matthew 11:13-14)

"And the disciples asked him, saying, 'Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?' But he answered them and said, 'Elijah indeed is to come and will restore all things. But I say to you that Elijah has come already, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also shall the Son of Man suffer at their hand.' Then the disciples understood that he had spoken of John the Baptist." (Matthew 17:10-13)

Here again is a clear statement of preexistence. Despite the edict of the Emperor Justinian and the counter reaction to Origen, there is firm and explicit testimony for preexistence in both the Old and the New Testament. Indeed, the ban against Origen notwithstanding, contemporary Christian scholarship acknowledges preexistence as one of the elements of Judeo-Christian theology.

As for the John the Baptist-Elijah episode, there can be little question as to its purpose. By identifying the Baptist as Elijah, Jesus is identifying himself as the Messiah. Throughout the gospel narrative there are explicit references to the signs that will precede the Messiah.

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." (Malachi 4:5)

This is one of the many messianic promises of the Old Testament. One of the signs that the true Messiah has come, according to this passage from Malachi, is that he be preceded by a forerunner, by Elijah.

Although the Bible also contains other reincarnation passages, these Elijah-John passages constitute clear proof of reincarnation:

PARADISE FOR THE HELLBOUND

If all Bible's on the face of the Earth were burned today. Men (mankind) would still have Love in their hearts. I believe man could sit down and write from his own heart by the Spirit of God in him another Bible. A Bible without torture, violence, and Old Testament wrath. After-all let the truly evil go to Hell because that is where they will be most comfortable. Seriously those that go to Hell would not want to be in the place that I believe I am going when my body dies. Hell will be a fine accommodation for those who crave violence, lust, wrath, hate, and all things vile. See! God does Love all of us! We all have darkness in us however some of us allow the darkness to overtake and consume us one hurtful action at a time. As we make dark, selfish and destructive choices those negative actions grow further inside of us and we become darker and more negative. Becoming evil, vile, and hurtful is a progressive condition.

(Leviticus 19:19) I ask you, why was it a sin to wear a garment woven from two different kinds of fabric? More-over the rules and regulations that supposedly came down from Mt. Sinai are on the most part; ridiculous. I refuse to ignore this fact any longer. Please I Love the word of God and believe most of it IS just that however, in all candor I am beginning to think that man had a heavy hand in the writing of Leviticus, Deuteronomy and

more. Not to mention how can I believe that every word in the Bible is the anointed word of God when I can pick up ten different Bibles that say ten different things? Over-Simplified translations and mistaken translations are right in front of me. I would be blind if I did not question parts of the book. I am a born-again believer in Christ and have had the baptism of the Holy Spirit not to mention have experienced many of the gifts of the Spirit. However, I think my God has finally allowed me to accept that the Bible has errors a plenty in it. My God is Jesus, The Father, and the Spirit **not the Bible**. I read and Love the Holy Bible more than most people but it is not my God. I am sorry if this offends anyone. Faith, Love, Charity, Hope, Christ, and The Holy Spirit these are the important things. God has given me a conscience and a sixth sense so I know truth from lies and right from wrong.

The evil will enjoy eternity in a very dark and disgusting hole that is their hearts desire. While others will dine on truth and go to the place where dreams are reality to be joined with family, and friends by The Great Spirit who made us from the beginning.

Light is our guide and justice our reward. Time will melt and die like the flame of a fire. We won't need time any more. We will have what we need, we won't be abandoned this I promise for God is good. Pure meditation is the grandest communication with God we can enjoy at our own leisure. What a great thing to know that the creator of the Earth takes our calls.

What if instead of a bank account with two million dollars in it we had an invisible account with an un-ending balance to meet every need we ever have on this Earth. We can't spend this magical money on stuff we want only on what we need. Yet we can't see it or grab it, it alludes us. How frustrating our invisible bank account makes us so our response, is fear! So while all our needs have and will be met we can't see the account or hold it in our hands. We must live by faith.

I want all my security in the local bank so I can see it with my eyes and rest at ease! Oh what a luscious and false security that would be. Yet how grand would it stand in my heart until its failure to meet my needs would shout its true advantages, so shallow and temporary.

The invisible account is where my help truly lies. That my friend is true security, but it takes faith to live comfortable and secure. Instead we grasp and fear, we think that God will desert us. Not so! You are God's child you have an invisible bank account too. You're on a vacation called human life and it's time to enjoy it.

Ecclesiastes 12:6

“Yes, remember your Creator now while you are young, before the silver cord of life snaps and the golden bowl is broken. Don't wait until the water jar is smashed at the spring and the pulley is broken at the well.”

Thee Eternal

