

*Living in balance and harmony is a fine art.
Nonetheless, most people claw their way through life finger painting.*

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PRINCIPLES OF THE SPIRIT...

...is an enlightening, practical guide to everyday living. Almost every sentence is an axiom or an idea that can stand alone. Each paragraph is composed of principles and concepts that will edify in or out of context. Each chapter is presented as a set of eclectic images rather than as illustrated stories. This is a powerful straightforward writing style that is not intended to flow in sequence like a novel or a storybook.

Principles of the Spirit deciphers many encrypted Bible anecdotes and lessons. It offers common sense guidelines that will help bridge the gap between Christian dominations without compromise.

Principles of the Spirit is an effort to bring *God the Father's Universal Principles of Morality and Decency* into practical application. Therefore, if you have any bitterness, animosity, or prejudices concerning Christ-like behavior: please do not read this book--as I will be despised and hated by many of those who try to interject their personal impressions into God's laws.

I invite those filled with the Holy Spirit to read *Principles of the Spirit*, to ponder in their hearts the many ingredients for successful living, and then to ask God the Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, if each part of this book is accurate and true.

Those who pursue this course and ask in faith will gain personal insight of this manuscript's potential and by the power of the Holy Spirit aid in its development.

I can't--we can. As we grow in numbers, we multiply in strength.

Love, Glen Caulkins

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATIONS	7
AUTHOR'S NOTE	9
ALL-MIGHTY GOD	11
FAITH WITHOUT GOOD WORKS	13
INTRODUCTION	15
EFFECTS OF THOUGHT	17
LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS	19
THE OBSESSION WITH SELF	23
RELATIONSHIPS	25
DENIAL	29
HIGH RISK BEHAVIOR	31
THE ILLUSION OF SHAME	35
SUBMISSION	37
ACCEPTANCE	39
SURRENDER	41
FREEDOM THROUGH STRUCTURE	43
THE INFLATED EGO	45
HUMILITY	51
VIRTUES OF WISDOM	53
TWELVE INGREDIENTS OF PERSONALITY	55
TWELVE KEYS TO AVOID TEMPTATION	61
TAKE TIME FOR TWELVE THINGS	63
IS ANYBODY OUT THERE?--UNANSWERED PRAYERS	65
A LOOK AT SPIRITUAL TRUTH	67
SOME LAWS OF LIFE	73
GLEANINGS: PREPARE THE WAY	87
GLEANINGS: A TESTIMONY OF JESUS	89
GLEANINGS: A GLANCE AT THE BIG PICTURE	91
GLEANINGS: GOD IS WITH US	93
GLEANINGS: THE FEAR OF GOD	95
GLEANINGS: THE ROAD IS NARROW	99
GLEANINGS: CHILDREN OF THE SPIRIT	101
A VISION FOR US	103
PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION	103
FRIENDSHIPS - GETTING AND KEEPING THEM	107

TABLE OF CONTENTS

SOME BASIC CONCEPTS FOR FRIENDSHIPS	109
THE LIVING FAMILY - A GOD-CREATED INSTITUTION	113
PARENTHOOD - DUTIES	117
LIVING IN THE SOLUTION OR THE PROBLEM	121
BE HERE NOW	125
FROM THIS MOMENT ON	127
SPIRITUALITY VERSUS RELIGION	129
SPIRITUAL INSIGHT	131
VISIONS OF WISDOM FROM A HIGHER SOURCE	143
A COMMENTARY ON THE LORD'S PRAYER	145
BASICS FOR CONTINUED SPIRITUAL GROWTH	147
WE BELIEVE	149
KEEP THE FAITH	153
A TYPICAL PRAYER GUIDE	155
GOD'S FURY IS AT HAND.....	157
BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FOCUSING VISION	163
COACHING CHILDREN TO VOLUNTEER	167
ABOUT WORDS	171
MEETING GUIDE.....	173
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	175
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	177

DEDICATIONS

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ALMIGHTY GOD,
THE SUPREME CREATOR.

WE ALSO LOVINGLY DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO YOU WHO WANT TO IMPROVE
THE QUALITY OF YOUR LIVES, WITH HOPE THAT WHAT IS GATHERED INTO
THIS BOOK MAY BE USEFUL TO YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY.

FROM THE AUTHOR

I want the world to know the understanding that has come to me. What the enemy intended for bad or evil, God has turned around for good. God has made a way, where there seemed to be no way.

I have taken my stand in the midst of the world. I find the majority of mankind deluded. I find few people impassioned and serious in the pursuit for truth, knowledge, and wisdom.

My soul aches for mankind en masse, because they are blind in their hearts and do not see. For they came into the world empty, and unless there is intervention, they will depart from the world empty.

Congratulations to those who have toiled and found the true and living God. I pray that emptiness and restlessness brings all of the other people into a right relationship with God. These lost souls fritter away time in blind pursuit, with misplaced motives, inadequate perception, and secular aspirations striving to achieve temporal goals and thrills. One day they will stand before God, and if they have not changed their ways, they will then realize that most of their lives were squandered in a vain attempt to satisfy misconceptions.

Temporal goals and achievements can merge with eternal aspirations and accomplishments and be truly worthy when done with proper motives and adequate perception.

My reason for being on earth has something to do with the way I function: I am possessed by one all-consuming purpose: to help liberate humanity from principalities, powers, and the rulers of this present darkness and spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

The doctrine within this manuscript merely sets a goal, the line has been drawn. I am not pointing my finger at anyone -- I am as guilty, if not more than anyone. God help us!

Peace, joy, and blessings,

Glen B. Caulkins

GOD OF ETERNAL GLORY

We give You thanks and praise for this magnificent opportunity to be redeemed and for all that we have.

We ask that You empower us to understand our trials and tribulations and that our hearts may be filled with confidence. Give us the insight to comprehend that You love us and will always be here with us. Fill our hearts with empathy and compassion.

You have given us emotions and somewhere in our broken hearts is a desire that wants to be worthy, happy, joyous, and free. Your word teaches us that the way for us to receive these gifts...is to do Your will.

Quiet the fears and distractions so we can feel the movement of Your spirit and discern Your guidance. Reveal to us what we should do today to walk in harmony with You and bring about Your will.

Help each of us to discover our identity. Teach us how to use the gifts You have so lovingly lavished upon us in preparation for our journey together. Free us from hardness of heart and the bondage of ignorance. Instill in us the desire for knowledge and wisdom.

Give us the courage to face life as it is and fit ourselves to it. Train us to depend on you and keep a positive attitude. Give us strength and good judgment to understand and accept the things we cannot change, and give us courage and wisdom to change the things that need to be changed. Deliver us from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism. Teach us to diligently seek, implement, and abide by Your commandments.

Lord, help us find the path that leads to humility and wisdom. Empower us to deny ourselves unhealthy traits and habits. Show us the way that leads to righteousness and truth.

We pray that You now transform every barrier into a way of finding and accepting truth. *Lord of Eternity* – grant us spiritual strength and wisdom as we affirm our innocence.

FAITH WITHOUT GOOD WORKS...

...will not bear healthy fruit. Nothing takes the place of *faith through Jesus Christ with good works*. Education will not; the world has its share of educated derelicts and dupes. Talent will not; there are plenty of unsuccessful people with talent. Skill will not; the unfulfilled professional is proverbial. Blind faith will not; the world has multitudes of so-called enlightened know-it-alls or religious radicals doing diabolic, evil, or profane things on their way to eternal punishment. Worldly knowledge will not; there are droves of deluded people steeping in the knowledge of the world who think they have solved the mysteries of man, the world, and the universe – yet, self-knowledge eludes them.

Faith through Jesus Christ and implementing the many ingredients for successful living into our lives are vital to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Moreover, serving God through unselfish service is essential for right-mindedness.

INTRODUCTION

Principles of the Spirit is an elaboration and extension of many spiritual and religious ideologies brought together in pursuit of wisdom and moral self-discipline: a system of philosophical demonstration that will beget pure joy and equanimity.

The content of this book comes from an assiduous gathering of knowledge. This means I, Glen Caulkins, did not *create* the many ingredients for successful living and edification; I only discover and make use of them.

This outline for successful living is based on what we believe to be universal truth, under one law, the Law of the Supreme Creator. We see these principles and concepts as part of the universal system, a part of universal Law, penetrating into full-circle awareness.

Having a basic familiarity with spiritual language, principles, and concepts may help you better understand the primary issues. However, even with a limited spiritual education, if you realize that you have unresolved issues about living life on life's terms – or simply want to expand your horizon – we believe this book can help guide you on your spiritual journey.

People already attending studies may find this book helpful for expanding their awareness and invalidating the denial and illusions they may have.

Principles of the Spirit delves into God's universal laws of life, health, friendship, and nature. In treating the whole person, it encompasses universally spiritual, sociocultural, and objective health-related concepts and principles.

One of the many ingredients for successful living as presented in *Principles of the Spirit* is "violation of body temple" and God's universal principles of morality, decency, and health. Moreover, premature death as a result of poisonous water and food, malnutrition, self-inflicted maladies, and sexually transmitted diseases, will become major epidemics that threaten global well-being. They will be a major symptom, as well as source, of our social problems.

We focus on freedom through structure (including the structure of sound spiritual principles). This is a paradox that can be put in another way: *full-circle awareness offers a life of limitless boundaries.*

When there is enlightened surrender of the lower will, we often catch a glimpse of a new kind of freedom and the possibility of a life of physical and spiritual prosperity. (Perhaps for the first time, we may realize that physical prosperity is often *bound* to spiritual prosperity.)

INTRODUCTION

This book is designed to help guide those of us who have found the courage to allow spiritual prosperity to come into our lives. We then let it and the joyous pursuit of living become one.

Principles of the Spirit offers a positive approach for living. Its many ingredients for successful living come to us to enlarge and enrich our lives, and to make our lives fuller and more expansive. It does not require that we be perfect. What it does require is an honest, genuine striving for progress.

Many people are satisfied with their thoughts and content with their knowledge while living in perpetual ignorance. We emphasize that with diligent efforts to comprehend and implement the many ingredients for successful living as presented in this manuscript, the possibility of seeing through those thoughts and ignorance can then begin, and the desire for real knowledge and real growth then can blossom.

Principles of the Spirit is an ongoing education lifestyle that will help us combat the negative force of misconception (Lucifer and his subordinate demons) which hinders spiritual growth. Spiritual development is an integral factor in freeing us from the disabling bondage of self--*delivering us into full-circle awareness*.

EFFECTS OF THOUGHT

We need to pay attention to and keep a restraint on our thoughts (in regard to ineffective behavior); they are a source of our motives, words, and actions. We need to keep a watchful eye on our behavior; it becomes our character. We need to be perceptive of our character; it becomes our destiny.

Thought helps determine perspective. Perspective helps determine thought. There is power in thoughts we make about ourselves. There is also power in spoken words and written statements. Moreover, there is a basic relationship existing between the way we view ourselves and how we behave. It is difficult for many of us to realize how much of our reality we actually create from our perceptions.

For example:

If we perceive that life has divine purpose; that our lives are challenging, fulfilling, and worth living, our comprehension will help perpetuate that reality.

Thoughts are energy. As we think, we develop (to some degree).

Many people think their thoughts are secret; they are not. Thought affects our demeanor and character. Negative thought reeks. Pure thought has a charismatic effect. Many times people sense our nature and personality through our aura or body language (which manifest from our habitual thoughts).

A wholesome disposition tends to promote good posture; it can also help us age with grace. An unwholesome disposition promotes harsh ill-favored contours of the body and on the face. Good thought is salubrious.

We now understand that the mind leads the body. When we are positive and focused in what we believe, many times we can actually change what we are capable of doing. However, to bring things around full-circle, it is critical to understand that the body leads the mind, too. We need to eat pristine food and drink pristine water; exercise, stretch, and massage ourselves regularly; stand up straight, pull our shoulders back, hold our stomach in, and walk tall; this will actually help us think and feel better. The facts of the matter are, when our muscles and tendons are healthy, and we maintain correct posture and keep a positive attitude we are predisposed to be calmer, more relaxed and productive, and more physically and mentally stable.

The spiraling decent of a negative attitude and outlook, unhealthy muscles and tendons, and poor posture can be seen all around us: stiff hunched over necks, abdomens protruding, and shoulders hunched forward. Backaches, neckaches, headaches, stress, limited mobility, and other painful symptoms are often the unfortunate result.

Negative thought and action, as well as slothful behavior will, we hope, lead us through a progressive experience of what not to do. We are meant to learn by both suffering *and* joy. Many times, suffering mentally and emotionally is meant to be a learning experience, to help us grow and move on, it should not be a self-imposed life sentence.

We cannot always change our circumstances; nevertheless, if we maintain our perspective and pray for discernment, we can learn to see the greater meaning behind our trials and tribulations – this will add new insight to our circumstances. Circumstances tend to shape our thoughts to some degree; they will also reveal our strengths and weaknesses and help us assess who we really are.

Prayers are only sincere when they harmonize with our thoughts and lifestyle. When our prayers, thoughts, and actions align, we are ready to receive more spiritual responsibilities. We should always strive to reach God's cherished aspirations for ourselves.

We now realize that to a large extent that we create our reality with our thoughts. Research in the health sciences also indicates that positive thought and attitudes aid the healing process, and that negative thought and attitudes contribute to ill health.

As we focus on the power of thought, we come to realize that every experience is integrated, whole, complete, and valuable in itself. All experiences are interconnected and interactive; they relate to a greater Connectedness, a Wholeness that supersedes them.

As we put ourselves into the flow by turning our lives over to the Holy Spirit, we acquire power. The better we treat ourselves, as a result of healthier thoughts about ourselves, the better we automatically treat others.

Our battles are not against substance abuse, lust, gluttony, coveting, envy, sloth, fear, hate, anxiety, and the like. Every defiant or misaligned attitude, thought, and behavior is a direct oppressed manipulation of the negative force of misconception. Moreover, every wholesome, calculated and rational attitude, thought, and behavior is inspired by the Holy Spirit.

"Commit thy works unto the Lord...and thy thoughts shall be established."

LIFE ON LIFE'S TERMS

Not only did Almighty God, Creator of Life, set in operation the laws that govern the clockwork-like movement of the universe, He also set in motion universal laws and rules for all of creation and for human beings placed on Earth.

God has predestined us (the elect) an opportunity to be redeemed. We can be reconciled with Almighty God, not by our own will, but through Jesus Christ. Without the assistance of Jesus Christ, we cannot succeed. With Him, by yielding our will in faith, we cannot fail.

The laws and rules of the universe enhance life rather than inhibit life. When we conform to them, we are more apt to be balanced and live harmoniously. These laws and rules hold before us an ideal and imply a promise. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we can measure up to these ideals.

God has given many of us money, spiritual gifts, material blessings, skills, and/or talents--all for use in service work. This means we must consider Him the real owner of these gifts and ourselves as the managers of them. When we do so, we feel moved to surrender *everything* to Him. Service work then becomes a pleasure.

Do I see myself as the manager of God's gifts? The command of these gifts involves responsibility that I cannot evade. I must receive, manage, invest, and dispense them wisely or face the consequences--for eternity.

God can humble people, cities, and nations. His power also lets many of the wicked and selfish prosper in the worldly sense, but be assured—their secular treasures and achievements are merely a foundation for discontentment. Luxury and comfort do not produce lasting health, security, peace, or joy. Furthermore, misdeeds and selfishness are a sure source of condemnation.

Our priority in life should not be the desire to obtain as much money as we can. Our hearts desire should be the yearning to live a life that is pleasing to God and do as much as we can (in our present circumstance) to help others. Gifts are not the goal; they are the gateways to service and for giving to others. In reality, the gifts are given so we may give again. Godly knowledge and wisdom are paramount.

Material prosperity is no sign of godliness, nor is hardship a sign of reproof. A prosperous life does not consist of an abundance of possessions. Hardships *or* so-called material blessings may come as an attack of the enemy, due to divine testing, or for reasons we cannot fathom. The reward for godliness is a clear conscience, a pure heart.

Do we trust God enough to surrender ourselves, our resources, and our capital to the service and well-being of our fellow humans? Living in balance and harmony through spiritual truth tends to move us toward purity, joy, and contentment.

Our bodies are temples--we are to care for them intelligently. We need adequate rest and exercise. We adopt the most healthful diet possible. We get education on prevention of health problems and maintenance of ourselves. We avoid drug abuse, including alcohol and nicotine.

We all know that there are sexually transmitted diseases. Ungodly behavior must be shunned. In our actions from this point on, we must intend to be pure, as we are meant to be. We desire to reflect the purity of Almighty God imbedded in us.

God wants us to be balanced. Many people do not smoke, abuse drugs, or drink alcohol, but they do not take in account what they eat. Most people do not get proper exercise. These people are violating the law of health, planting the seed of future illness.

Why do some people rebel against these principles and follow unsafe degenerative pathways? They are caught up in the illusion called denial, a decline in the ability to face reality. An apparently healthy person violating any of the laws of health is not really safe or healthy. Eventually if he/she continue in these unhealthy habits, unnecessary disease or physical impairments will develop.

Good health is not the mere absence of disease. It is a one day at a time process. We need to do the right things everyday--all day long. A truly healthy condition is found only in those of us who, by the grace of God, consistently yield our will in faith, act responsibly, and instill God's word into our mind and heart. The mind and heart become dwelling places for spiritual truth. This helps us to condition our heart and mind—properly.

The mind and heart facilitate our control center. We must strive to keep our mind receptors clean and discerning. Our hearts must be kept as pure as possible. God empowers the attuned, the holy ones alert to the Spirit.

OUR LIFESTYLE EMPLOYS:

HONESTY -- OPEN-MINDEDNESS -- WILLINGNESS

HEALTH: SPIRITUAL -- MENTAL -- EMOTIONAL -- PHYSICAL

NUTRITION -- EXERCISE -- EDUCATION

ACCEPTANCE -- AWARENESS -- ACTION

KNOWLEDGE -- COMMON SENSE -- WISDOM

LAWS OF: LIFE -- HEALTH -- FRIENDSHIPS -- NATURE

PRAYER -- MEDITATION -- FAITH

TRUE SPIRITUAL SUCCESS BRINGS A PEACE BEYOND UNDERSTANDING. THEN WE
COME TO REALIZE THE TRUE FRUITS OF THESE BASIC PRINCIPLES:

“TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE.”

LOVE THY BRETHREN, HAVE COMPASSION FOR THOSE SEPARATED FROM THE
LORD, AND LEARN TO LOVE YOURSELF.

TREAT OTHERS (HONORABLY) AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM TREAT YOU.

THE OBSESSION WITH SELF

From the moment of our birth, the customs into which we were born helped shape our experience and behavior. Before we learned to speak, our environment began conditioning us. We developed the ability to listen and comprehend, yet could not differentiate truth from falsehoods. We constantly received ambiguous messages about the world, from a variety of sources, how we should think, feel, and behave.

Living our lives based on these values did not always aid us in overcoming obstacles. In fact, many times they *created* obstacles. Eventually, many of us realized that most of these traditions, morals, unhealthy, or impious behaviors were passed down through generations of misinformed people, whom we did not esteem. We began to realize that self-centered people, with self-serving goals, devised the so-called values of the world. This left many of us so confused that we went along with the insanity, only modifying situations and circumstances. Many of us became desperate to find something that would make us fit in.

For many of us, this started our search for comfort and fulfillment in short-lived worldly pleasures. At first, our behavior was like a haven from having to deal with so-called reality, a place where we could lose ourselves, our feeling of selfhood.

Eventually, these so-called pleasures turned on us, they left us empty, or they became painful sources of persecution. With shame, hate, and insatiable desires, we met our fate. We ended up alone, in a void, dejected, unhealthy, or "hanging out" with others who we felt were worse off than us.

Most of us were introduced to the idea that God could provide the lasting fulfillment we could not provide for ourselves. Yet most of us disregarded this. We never found a balance between spiritual acceptance and self-sufficiency. We failed to recognize and accept our weaknesses and limitations. We refused to accept that we could not obtain lasting fulfillment through external sources.

Our worldly desires became materialistic demands or a fetish of carnal thrills. We sought relief from our mental and emotional anguish in our self-centered behaviors. We reached a point where people, places, and things could no longer pacify us. Our desires had become insatiable obsessions. We became self-obsessed as our lack of spirituality continued. This obsession with self poisons our system, shortens our lives, and deludes us. It is at the heart of our separation from God.

Today, we are given a path for dealing with self-obsession. Here is a list of our main ways of this path:

1. We write about our dysfunctional behaviors. We keep a daily inventory. Sometimes it may be necessary to write about our ingrained or more severe character defects two or three times throughout the day, as well as have an evening review. A variation of this technique is upon arising each morning, we write for ten minutes. We write down whatever thoughts come into our head. We also need to write about our plans, goals, and aspirations, as well as what we do not want to be. Then we need to read over what we have written and underline the important things. We then ask God for strength to face our ineffective behavior and character defects. We ask God to empower us to remove or transform our disabling behavior. When we have the opportunity to write down and view our dysfunctional behavior trauma loses its dominance over our consciousness and begins to diffuse; and our plans, goals, and aspirations become more real to us. This process gives us spiritual direction – it allows us to focus on and become what God desires for us.

2. We talk it out, in conversation with others.

3. We use positive self-affirmation (healing, positive self-scripts).

4. We take advice from and have regular communication with spiritual advisors.

5. We fellowship, study, pray, meditate, and do service work regularly.

6. We are accountable, reliable, and willing to ask for help.

When confiding in others or when communing with God, we open our hearts and let the emotions flow. We end the facade, exposing our misaligned behaviors.

Many people miss recovery and spirituality by one foot: the space between their head and their heart. Through God's grace and by implementing the many ingredients for successful living into our lives, we begin the internalization process of bringing knowledge from our head into our heart. We think, act, and feel, rather than feel, react, and then think. This does not mean we bury our emotions, but we do what is right in spite of how we feel. Then we can find freedom from self-obsession.

We learn to replace resentment and animosity with forgiveness and goodwill; anger and hostility with acceptance and love; fear and aggravation with faith and serenity; lying and cheating with rigorous honesty and fairness; self-loathing and false pride with legitimate self-esteem; manipulating and posing with trust and humility.

We *must* learn to depend on God in every situation. We *must* strive to live devout lives and learn from our mistakes. We *must* take action and engage in unselfish service, demonstrating accountability and credibility, or the confusion and disharmony of our lives will only increase.

RELATIONSHIPS

Co-dependency is one of many elements of the dysfunctional relationship. It can be extremely painful. It is often blinding. It can be fatal--if the co-dependent puts their life in the hands of an abusive person or someone at high risk of having or contracting HIV, hepatitis, tuberculosis, etc. Co-dependents often create havoc for their family and friends with their irrational conduct. When two co-dependents are in a relationship they generally cannot let go; they drag each other into ongoing misery and blame it on their partner. Sometimes it is hard to diagnose co-dependents because they often do seemingly good deeds with misplaced motives and inadequate perception.

Co-dependents put others first in their lives, before God, before themselves. They seem to thrive on the so-called strength of other people, depending on others for their approval. They feel they need another person to look out for, to idolize, and to reflect pleasure from their deeds. They may sacrifice themselves unsparingly for others. They generally focus on seemingly good deeds, denying that they are motivated by instability.

Many co-dependents try to control inner feelings (security) by manipulating the outside world--via succumbing. Control, or the lack of it, is a dominating factor in their lives.

Co-dependent parents can become so enthralled with raising and appeasing their children that they neglect their own development; because of this, they are incapable of teaching correct behavior by example. Many times co-dependent parents lead multiple lives in order to please their children and themselves.

Most co-dependent parents have a hard time properly instructing and disciplining their children. Consequently, it is not unusual for their children to have improper eating habits and suffer from undernourishment and unbalanced nutritional intake. This unbalanced diet combined with the parents' dependent love and character defects brings on learning disabilities and behavioral problems for the children.

The counter-dependent parent is another factor of the dysfunctional child. Many counter-dependent parents put their will before God's will and drive their children to extremes. They try to live out their dreams through their children. They invest in their children like racehorses and prod their children to spend vast amounts of time and energy to develop specific talents. They push to create musical geniuses, world-class athletes, intellectual and spiritual giants (to name a few). However, most of these children never make the grade. The parents' egoism forces the children to undergo unhealthy, unnatural, and unnecessary stress. Many end up with permanent handicaps. It is healthier for children to achieve their own personal best. We know from experience that self-will, manifested in various ways, will compromise our children's well being.

RELATIONSHIPS

The counter dependent is another element of the dysfunctional relationship. They put themselves before God, and before others (egomaniacs to say the least). Counter dependents generally hook up with co-dependents. (Who else would put up with them?) They let co-dependents feed off their so-called strength. They tend to believe that everything is under control (denial). They put great emphasis on their power and let everything ride, up to a point. *Nevertheless, do not get in their way!* These self-made people idolize themselves. Expressing humility has a low priority, if any, in their lives. They covet satisfaction through control, external thrills, and possessions.

One characteristic of an overly dependent relationship is manipulating to gain a misguided sense of control. A good example would be *the technique of requesting at another's expense*.

Ironically, we enter dysfunctional relationships in an attempt to gain control of our emotional and physical needs. In so doing, we lose control of our lives by relinquishing our identity to another person (instead of God). We try to nullify our insecurities by allowing another person to become the source of verification for our worth. We usually become volunteers for abuse, not victims of abuse.

Intimate relationships and love addictions are often mistaken for each other. It can take years to move from addictive relationships to *healthy belonging*.

Drug and alcohol abuse go hand in hand with sexually transmitted diseases. Statistics show that most chemically dependent people are sexually disloyal to their partners at above-average levels. This behavior probably relates to a general breakdown in inhibitions, and a decline of the ability to cope with reality.

A personal survey of chemically dependent people who are in recovery revealed that up to half of the women, and nearly three-fourths of the men, have been involved in high-risk behavior. The majority affirmed that they had some form of herpes, and that they had not recently been tested for HIV, hepatitis, or tuberculosis. Most of them repress the facts, live in denial, and continue to have sexual relations with others. These statistics portray that STD's and other illnesses will affect people at above-average rates in many recovery programs.

Many young people and people in recovery find venturing out into the world presents them with rewards and dangers. Not only are they in a new world with new challenges, but they also can no longer rely on their addictions, ignorance, denial, and/or innocence to veil reality. They may be extremely vulnerable. This can sometimes have disastrous results.

For example, in many church, recovery, and social meetings, sporting events, etc., you will come across sexual predators. Check with your sponsor or mentor before you get involved with anyone, and before getting rides from or giving rides to anyone you do not personally know or trust. Be selective in giving out your personal phone number. *Do not set yourself up for high-risk behavior by being alone with someone you find intriguing.*

Most of us have been, want to be, or are in a primary love relationship. Healthy people are interdependent, self-contained through surrender, and independent through faith. When we are interdependent in a relationship, we can trust our partner and ourselves. We can maintain our individuality, even as we are part of the relationship.

When we are content and interdependent as individuals, we are more likely to have a content and interdependent love relationship. Naturally, we prefer to carry our own weight. We emit self-confidence, self-love, and a willingness to give. This allows us to express and receive actual love. This non-egocentric love experiences giving and receiving, it is not obsessive or dependent; therefore, we are free to complement others.

We see healthy relationships as being this way:

1. We place our relationship with God first. Our common bond has to be God – to avoid running on an inflated ego.
2. We put our personal lives and ourselves second. This does not mean self-centeredness; it means that when we take care of our personal needs first, then we can better serve our fellow human beings.
3. We put our relationship with others third. When our personal lives are in order, it paves a way to do God's work more honorably. To transmit unadulterated love – *we* must be whole.

There are no virtuous relationships when our common bond is not God. When we live without God first in our lives, we become dysfunctional and self-destructive. We may criticize and condemn. We can be easily angered and may learn to hate. We can become hostile and learn to fight. We can become engrossed with shame, consumed with guilt, and enthralled by self-pity.

When we ask God into our heart, we begin to feel our positive qualities. The negative ones start to drop by the wayside (in the presence of the positive feelings). For example, we might see the good in a person where before we could only see what was ugly in them. This can be the beginning of having real friends and finding love in the world. We replace a temporal outlook with an eternal perspective; fear and doubt, with love and faith; despair and confusion, with joy and purpose.

RELATIONSHIPS

There are co-dependents with counter dependent traits and counter dependents with co-dependent traits. Furthermore, many of those striving to become interdependent (or think that they are interdependent) may still have co-dependent and/or counter dependent characteristics.

The curse of liars is not only that no one can believe them; it is also that they can believe no one. The curse of thieves is not only that no one can trust them; it is also that they can trust no one. Furthermore, if we would cheat together, obviously we would cheat on each other. Lying, stealing, and cheating destroy trust, and once trust is gone, it takes much time and effort to restore it.

Peer pressure is another problem that can affect our relationships, and many of us struggle with it long after adolescence. It is one thing to say we live our lives without undue regard for what other people think about us; it is another thing to do it.

One of the main problems with peer pressure is that it can cause us to act on someone else's values, instead of God's values. Peer pressure exploits emotional weaknesses. It preys on a lack of faith and low self-confidence. We must trust God and allow Him the freedom to guide us into true dependence on Him, not on other people's opinions. Learning to resist peer pressure has many advantages, one of which is a strong feeling of belonging to God or conversely, the strong feeling of belonging to God causes us not to succumb to peer pressure. When our relationship with God is right, the approval of others can take its proper place in our lives. This relationship can manifest as a tremendous feeling of freedom and joy.

When you believe in a world that takes, you believe you can get by taking; and with that belief, you have lost sight of the real world. In the positive sense, it is far better to give than to receive, *because the only possessions we take with us to heaven are the deeds we have done in Jesus' name.*

The effects of not being inter-dependent are so far-reaching that we have merely scratched the surface to rhetorically emphasize the suggestiveness of what has been omitted.

In relationships of all kinds, it helps to remember the Serenity Prayer:

God grant me the serenity

To accept the things I cannot change (today)

The courage to change the things I can (today)

And the wisdom to know the difference (today)

DENIAL...

...is a defense. It can be used positively as well as negatively. For example, positive denial: I deny the nonexistence of God. This is a type of faith. Denying self can also be positive denial: "Thy will, not mine, be done." We can receive divine inspiration and experience true fulfillment as we become willing to be emptied of self.

Negative denial is a psychological defense or process by which we try to avoid seeing ourselves as we are. It seems easier to deny our unpleasant traits or habits, or to rationalize unhealthy attitudes, feelings, and behaviors to others and ourselves. Denial is at the core of estrangement from God.

It is the denial system that prompts many people to ignore the latest warning to stop high-risk behavior or else they will inevitably contract disease--possibly hepatitis, tuberculosis, HIV, etc. Some people become so disillusioned and dominated by denial that they cannot quit high-risk behavior.

Denial is progressive. It is characteristic of a life without proper spiritual direction. Thus, lack of faith and lack of truth feed and develop denial.

Do you know what uncontrollable fear is? It is a lack of faith, generated by the inability to unconditionally surrender to God. This uncontrollable fear is an intrinsic trait that is meant to lead us into unconditional surrender.

In this sense, our afflictions are quests to fill spiritual needs. To live a fantasy is to try to control reality according to false needs, with false associations and false pleasures. Many of us believed we could fulfill ourselves through strategic manipulations and external sources. We may deny truth, but when we do, we cannot prevent its inevitable boomerang effect. Denial has no power in itself, but we can give it the power of our mind, whose power we cannot comprehend.

Thinking, reading, listening, talking, and writing about denial are steps on the path toward understanding spiritual truth and recovering from the darkness of satanic delusion (talking only to a certain point; after that, we have to be still and quiet--and listen to God's guidance). We can learn to dismantle false constructions.

High-risk behavior thrives on shame and secrecy. If we break out of shame-based silence and become accountable to our spiritual advisor or sponsor, we take a big step. We need to talk with and listen to *other people*.

High-risk behavior often thrives on and protects itself with denial, with repression. It is frequently armed with hostility; it tends to shield itself with defiance.

Many people feel driven or lonely – ashamed of themselves. They retreat to sexual promiscuity to relieve their underlying insecurities (trying to fill a spiritual void, searching for divine love – in the arms of another human being). The voyage of sexual promiscuity, the preparation, the anticipation, and the conquest are ways they protect themselves from honest self-confrontation. They refuse to admit that their lives are out of control, destructive and driven by forces they actually need to combat, not deny, or repress.

Denial cuts us off from our true feelings. It is not repression. Repression is a complete blanking out of what happened – not translating and coming to terms with the past. Denial is the rejection of the present truths about ourselves. Both are infections of the inflated ego. The inflated ego prods many of us into a pathetic state, demanding perverse outlets and compulsive/obsessive intake. It catches us in an elaborate web of distortion.

EIGHT OF THE MANY OUTWARD EXPRESSIONS OF DENIAL

1. Straightforward denial is maintaining that something is so, when in fact, it is not so. For example, a condom means safe sex.
2. Belittling our behavior is a way we can admit to our problems, however, we make them seem less serious than they actually are.
3. Blaming our problems on someone or something else is another way we try to avoid personal responsibility for dysfunctional behaviors and motives.
4. Alibis are used to rationalize and offer excuses for behavior. We do not blatantly deny the behavior; however, we give an inaccurate explanation of its cause.
5. Theorizing can be used to avoid truth by generalizing and analyzing it according to our perception of reality.
6. Diversion is used to change subjects. This way we can avoid threatening topics.
7. Anger is used to make people back off. This way we can continue doing things our way with minimal interference.
8. Ignorance is used as a sanctuary. We hold on to the premise that if we do not know the truth, we justify that responsibility is outside of our grasp.

Denial obviously distorts our perception and impairs our judgment so that we can become incapable of real self-awareness. Unattended, it gains more and more strength. Then it can become extremely difficult to penetrate.

A spiritual solution with a positive awareness is our only means of penetration.

HIGH-RISK BEHAVIOR: ALTERED ATTITUDES AND AIDS AWARENESS

In the present situation high-risk behavior is more less a halfhearted attempt at suicide. So-called safer sex is absurd, when condoms have been known to have a failure rate of 10% to 15%. It is common knowledge that sexually transmitted diseases are running rampant, that there is no cure for HIV/AIDS and the medicine to treat HIV/AIDS is very expensive, and treatment can be nearly as agonizing as the disease itself.

Impure thought tends to lead to impure action; it also affects our aura. In addition, that action can contribute to many of the bad habits we develop. We must realize that we can never be free or fulfilled while harboring unhealthy thoughts or by acting defiantly.

High-risk behavior has its roots in carnal man. Unregenerated man seeks rewards and gratification in self-centered behavior. Popularity, position, wealth, power, and self-righteousness reign in the carnal idea of what success is.

As spiritually minded people, we desire a full and rewarding life, yet witness a world of lost people destroying themselves, others, and the planet. These people are under the influence of an inflated ego. The warped relationships that the inflated ego wants do not even include whole individuals. Certain parts of the body, the personality, the financial status or social set are weighed out and used as a standard for *acceptance or rejection*. These are exchange relationships: *I have what you envision you will not be happy without*.

With an eternal perspective, our perception and actions are so different. Our relationships with others hold new values. We perceive others as God's children who need guidance, spiritual support, and love; not objects to lust after, manipulate, or exploit. We immediately rebuke and denounce unhealthy and impure thought; we ask God to cleanse our mind and instill in us pristine thought in Jesus' name. With God's help, we develop healthy thought and behavior and live a hallowed life.

God is a personal and loving Being who wishes us to enjoy the gifts of this world, each other, and our physical selves, and in many cases to have a rewarding and fulfilling sex life. Marital sex can be enjoyed apart from its procreative function. The gift of sexuality has been entrusted to us to give God and us pleasure, to assure the continuation of our species, and to add to the closeness of marriage. God blesses those who strive to achieve their own personal best. Many choose to serve Him without a mate. They are not alone, but at one with God. Whatever our desires or circumstances are, we know that our wholeness is still a reality.

Sex, relationships, and pleasure are gifts that can indeed enhance life and living in this world. However, they are not meaningful in themselves; they cannot provide healing, ultimate meaning, or lasting hope. Like all sin, abusing these gifts will destroy our lives.

VIOLATION OF BODY TEMPLE

Sometime after Adam and Eve transgressed in the Garden of Eden, all viruses were placed upon the earth. Growing in divine awareness as a result of affliction was initiated.

We are merely identifying and working with this sanctifying process. Many of today's commonly cured illnesses were chronic or potentially terminal illnesses until 1928, when penicillin was discovered. The onset of HIV and the array of other diseases have merely reinstated the age-old pattern. The process of coming to terms with death or any illness is part of a universal process of sanctification.

This process comes from God the Father. It is part of the universal system. If someone finds a cure or a vaccine for AIDS or any of the other diseases, it is obvious that other viruses will take their place. These viruses are not always punishment in the eternal sense. To the contrary, many times disease is used as a way of cleansing the soul from the leprosy of separation. It is called sanctification: the state of growing in divine awareness as a result of affliction.

HIV and the array of other diseases often are the consequences of debased behavior and personal irresponsibility. These diseases frequently result when we violate God the Father's universal principles of morality and decency. These Laws enforce themselves. Other times these diseases may come as an attack of the enemy, because of divine testing, or for reasons we cannot fathom.

Get to know the facts. Chlamydia is currently the most common STD, and now there is LGV Chlamydia which is incredibly hard to diagnose. Health officials estimate that more than 50 percent of sexually active women and men will be infected with one or more types of human papilloma virus in their lifetimes. An estimated 56 million Americans have an incurable viral STD other than HIV, such as genital herpes or genital warts. There are over 15 million new cases of STD's in the U.S. each year. Furthermore, STD's affect one in four U.S. citizens over a lifetime. Around the world, over 100 million persons contract an STD annually. Add to this another 5 million intravenous drug users at high-risk for HIV around the world.

A only decades ago, there were only five of these diseases activated; today there are more than forty. Most diseases have symptoms, so the individual knows that they have contracted it, and thus are able to seek treatment. Many times a person infected with HIV may not have symptoms for years. HIV is transmittable even at its earliest undetectable stages, with no cure available now. There are many strains of this virus; some of which are not even tested for routinely. It also appears that some strains of HIV are undetectable.

This silent killer could penetrate and destroy or indirectly affect the life of every person on this planet. AIDS is moving up the scale in full force, and the other diseases are progressing. Obviously, it is Russian roulette to get involved in high-risk behavior.

THE MAINTENANCE OF DECEPTION

It is a spiritual law that conflicting beliefs will keep us in bondage. This process is known as cognitive dissonance, which is the separation of a combination of mental and emotional activities into independent functioning units. Cognitive dissonance is a distorted process of thinking. When conflicting belief systems come together, or when we attempt to join them, they can become a source of self-condemnation and/or multiple personalities. As conflicting beliefs are maintained, authority teeters. As we focus on either, it claims to be the sole truth. We can try to maintain them both, however, until we discover the falsehoods and let go of them, we will never find true spiritual freedom.

At some point, we must face reality and realize that many times what began as so-called pleasurable experiences have led us into degenerative pathways or turned into a deadly behavior pattern.

A good example would be:

1. On one hand, for many people sexual promiscuity is a part of life.
2. On the other hand, God is relentlessly trying to impose an awareness of the violation of our bodies as a temple (when that is the case).

Many times, we attempt to maintain dissonance with repression and denial. It can lead into a bottomless pit of disesteem. Cognitive dissonance can produce spontaneous unpredictable reactions.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER

These Universal Laws are put here for our benefit, not for us to try to figure out ways to beat them. The concept of safe sex or safer sex with a condom is misleading. Would you knowingly transmit a deadly disease to someone? If you had HIV and your partner did not, would you trust a condom and have sex with them, when condoms have been known to have a failure rate of 10% to 15%? Think about this: would you deep-kiss, trust your life to a condom, and have sex with someone with who has AIDS, hepatitis B, or tuberculosis? Denial is not a shield, nor is ignorance a sanctuary.

It is obvious that God is showing us the results of *Violation of Body Temple*, with AIDS and its kind. God had our best interest in mind when we were told of Biblical ethics.

When we are unfaithful to the Laws of God, we degrade ourselves. We may be walking within the realm of God's plan, as we are learning lessons, but ultimately we are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, high-risk behavior is a direct commission of the inflated ego, inviting destruction.

We must realize that we can never reach our full potential while outside the realm of God's will. Impure, unhealthy, and impious thought and behavior will deplete and displace the spiritual energy that fuels our relationship with God. If we are to live in balance and harmony and develop our relationship with God, we must implement spiritual truth and deny ourselves misaligned thought, and behavior, and also inaction.

Awareness and understanding are of course useless, unless followed by action. When we penetrate the denial system in-depth; there is almost automatically a decision to act constructively.

Success in bringing about acknowledgment of high-risk behavior is the goal (then the work has just begun). The denial system is both widespread and persistent. More public education must be done if there is to be more awareness, clear recognition, and acceptance of the risks involved. It is a task that requires life-long vigilance, effort, and a focus on maintaining self-honesty (through surrender).

If we cannot change the course of these viruses--we can help lessen their power in our future.

THE ILLUSION OF SHAME

Shame was originally a defense. In the garden paradise, our ancestors realized they were naked, and clothed themselves. The negative force of misconception immediately exploited this inherent trait.

This exploited sense of shame comes in many guises. One of shame's objectives is not to expose itself. Many of us attempt to defend ourselves with denial in order to survive falling into this misguided sense of shame. What is this twisted sense of shame that prods or incapacitates so many of us?

An underlying facet of shame is our conditioned belief in perfection. Many of us learned that we were judged and classified according to how perfect we could be. So of course, not being perfect meant being less than. Many times, we felt we would not be accepted or loved if anyone discovered our character defects or inadequacies. We felt as if we were not whole. Many of us failed to realize that all of us are born with imperfections; no exceptions, we all fall short.

We must realize and accept that to be human is to be imperfect: not sanctioned, not bad, just human. We can never be perfect or free from all ineffective behavior or thought. We need to value ourselves for who we are, rather than merely what we look like, or for what we do, or do not do. As spiritually minded people we will always be working on ourselves. We *strive for progress* rather than perfection. When we strive for perfection, our inflated ego tries to fortify itself to keep us from ever having to be vulnerable.

Another element that contributes to shame is not fully trusting God. When we are not fully trusting God, many of us have the need to get approval, reassurance, or unhealthy assistance from human sources. These unhealthy dependencies are often an effort to compensate for a profound sense of shame and inadequacy resulting from doubting God. Many people engrossed in shame seek unhealthy reassurance through relationships and sexual activities. We may use sex compulsively, as an anesthetic for undesired feelings.

For healthy interdependent people, relationships and sex are sacred. They are as instinctive as sleeping and eating. We may need to examine our feelings and behavior and acknowledge if there is something we would like to change in our relationship to our sexuality.

For many of us, desiring or being in a relationship, desiring or engaging in sex means being out of control--driven. We try to fabricate defenses to make sure we are never found out. We usually end up with what we tried to protect ourselves from.

This type of shame sustains itself. It appears to be a self-contained, spiraling descent. It usually begins with feeling insecure, vulnerable, threatened. Shame fortifies itself with embarrassment and a false unworthiness in order to drive and control us, or incapacitate us. It manifests itself in lack of self-respect. Very few people have shame without unhealthy thought or behavior.

This misguided sense of shame makes God's will appear to be outside of ourselves, because we are so self-conscious. Shame and worthiness cannot coexist (they are mutually exclusive, obviously).

We strive for progress rather than perfection. Yet, in high-risk behavior, one slip could mean HIV. When we can recognize shame and inadequacy for what they are, our horizon is expanded. We have taken another vital step in our spiritual development. We must trust God and accept ourselves for who we are.

Each day is a growing experience. As we develop spiritually, we learn our way out of the illusion of shame and inadequacy, into the glorious reality of self-acceptance, self-worth, and legitimate self-esteem. As we *find ourselves within*, our approval from others can come in the form of dignity rather than in the form of physical, mental, emotional, tangible, or sexual necessity.

SUBMISSION

Periodically, in submission, we accept matters consciously; however, we do not accept them unconsciously. We apathetically consent or halfheartedly act in accordance. There is an underlying reservation. In this type of submission, our inflated ego has been suppressed, but not dislodged from sovereignty.

We accept that we cannot at the moment do things our way, but in our subconscious mind is the feeling: *there will come a day--when I will*. This means of course that there is still a struggle going on. With this partial yielding, unpredictable reactions can take place. We carry unwanted stress, and tension can result.

We need to call upon God for strength, and trust Him. We must yield our will in faith and be persistent in our attention. We must resist and disallow temptation. We should remain accountable to our spiritual advisor and follow their advice. We must implement the many ingredients for successful living into our lives. When we eventually accept it on the subconscious level--there are reservations no longer. We are freed from the disabling bondage of self. There is true spiritual freedom.

Moving from denial to submission and maintaining balance is a process of directing our energy toward absolute surrender. It requires willingness, time, and scrupulous attention.

ACCEPTANCE...

...can be said to be the art of facing life. In this type of acceptance, we admit and face our disabling behaviors, and accept truth.

Sooner or later, many of us reach a point where our problems seem too big to cope with. This actually never happens, but can appear to happen--if we lose our perspective.

We must maintain our perspective. We live one breath, one moment at a time. We must adjust ourselves appropriately by thoughtfully modifying our ways and our circumstances. All of our challenges and problems can be met head-on and managed according to God's loving wisdom--if we simply *do not remove ourselves from the solution*. We put our existence and priorities in proper perspective through the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit (we yield our will in faith).

For many of us, life has been one problem after another. There are diseases and medical conditions, financial hardships, and mental and physical disabilities. There are disasters, floods, fires, earthquakes, wars, etc. that claim the lives of millions of children and adults worldwide. Suffering and destruction may come as an attack of the enemy, because of divine testing, or for reasons we cannot fathom. This is the real world. God promises His presence and comfort, *not* everlasting health, a trouble-free life, worldly success, or wealth. We are now learning to live life on life's terms. If we cannot solve our problems, we learn to live with them.

When we accept the reality of today, it is an exercise in faith, which strengthens our relationship with God. Acceptance is the only real source of tranquility and peace; we can gain it if we have an urgent desire to ask God to help us, through Jesus Christ, the author and perfecter of our faith. Without Him, we cannot be delivered from the darkness of satanic delusion nor can we experience truth.

When we turn to the Lord, we can begin to *perceive* truth. Doing this generates a gut-level realization of one's own destructive behaviors, one's hypocrisies, and one's involvement in deceitful situations.

Faith starts to destroy selfishness and pretense. If we seek the Lord's glory and not our own, we can more easily discern His will for us. As we grow, more wisdom can come. It empowers us to witness this truth.

Acceptance of truth results in fruits of the spirit. Some of them are peace, joy, empathy, compassion, and love. It is an integral step that helps propel us out of the grip of satanic delusion.

ACCEPTANCE

An active, thoughtful, and attentive state of mind fosters acceptance of ourselves, of reality. It prompts us to act compassionately. It dramatically affects the quality of our lives.

Knowing we are good and whole, despite our defects, is self-acceptance. As long as we strive to improve, we are free to experience joy in who we are now. In this sense, we are perfect, despite our imperfections.

Acceptance is not humiliation. It frees us from the warfare that struggle can bring. It is many things, including trust and faith.

SURRENDER

To many people, *surrender* implies weakness, shame, and failure. In our idea of affliction's purpose, *surrender* is seen as a source of power and positive evidence of strength. This type of *surrender* is not giving up or giving in—in the ordinary sense. It is giving up the idea that *we* could ever do anything about our maladies, and transferring dependence upon self to dependence upon God.

We come to see vividly: *I cannot totally control my life or find lasting satisfaction living outside the realm of God's will.* Therefore, I am in a state of affliction, blind pursuit, and/or dissatisfaction. Therefore, we now have to let go—and let God walk us through our problems (or withdrawals) toward true spiritual freedom.

After we have let go and started letting God control our lives, something happens. Eventually, we find we have surrendered on more than one level of consciousness: including the subconscious along with the conscious.

Before this happens, however, we must focus on *maintenance of surrender*. It is a one-step-at-a-time process. Reverence is a substructure for *surrender*. Obedience and self-denial are in the structure for *surrender*: "Thy will (obedience)--not mine (self-denial)--be done," allows *surrender*. God's call to *surrender* is not for His benefit. It is for ours. God is determined to show us that full obedience and self-denial will bring gain, not loss!

The understanding, skills, and support we gain through our mentor relationship concerning obedience and self-denial help us combat the negative force of misconception. When obedience and self-denial manifest themselves in our lives, we discover that all our needs fall into perspective. We are, of course, actively involved in our transformation by putting our ego into its healthy relation to God's power.

God knows courage can come when we surrender. For our protection, He requires obedience. Acceptance of Truth is seen in the way we live; it is not an obstruction.

Salvation by *surrender* includes more than justification; it also includes sanctification. It includes more than forgiveness; it also offers the power for service. Faith is demonstrated by exhibiting religious reverence and striving to live a holy life.

Growth in Christian life is demonstrated by constant *surrender*. One of God's goals is to bring us to absolute surrender. He constantly reminds us not to be caught in the trap of dependence on self. We need *surrender* our will and our lives to Jesus in order to develop a working relationship with God; and for most of us, this involves time.

SURRENDER

New meaning comes into our lives. With this relationship, we realize it is not necessary to manipulate people, places, and things anymore. We are in His care. We still need to pray for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power, and the means to carry that out. We set out goals and aspirations. Without them, we could lose direction and not bear any fruits of our labor. However, we learn to be flexible with our interpretation of His plans.

Those of us who do come to such *surrender* consistently say that something happened within us. Something we did not make happen. It happened, "by the grace of God," we say (without Him we would have never recovered from the delusion of satanic darkness).

We learn that if there is to be any healing, hope, and meaning in life, we must realize we cannot find a state of lasting satisfaction by our own means. That we must *surrender* to find divine purpose. In addition, we learn that peace, joy, and freedom are only given to us when we deny ourselves, do God's will, and live a life that is pleasing to God.

FREEDOM THROUGH STRUCTURE

Freedom and structure are not mutually exclusive. Does this surprise you? It is a paradox, but they are inseparable companions. Principles of the Spirit are life giving, they do not inhibit life; they help give us a future.

If we perceive spiritual principles as restrictions, rather than gateways to freedom, we will fall prey to a lie. A similar one fooled our ancestors in their garden paradise. If we allow this gullibility to go on, we can be deceived into thinking that a lie is the truth and the truth is a lie. Then we could lose the freedom we thought we were seeking, and fall into the bondage we thought we were escaping.

By *freedom through structure*, we mean that by following certain spiritual principles and right actions in our daily lives, we can become free from bondage. "Bondage from what?" You may ask. We are freed from our self-imposed limitations (including compulsions, addictions, unhealthy fears, denial, etc.).

By becoming who we really are (that is, by cooperating with the structure of universal Laws in our daily lives), limitations drop (eventually, or sometimes sooner). We can rise above circumstances--to spiritual, emotional, and mental freedom.

Knowledge of spiritual principles leaves us with both hope and warning. We cannot choose which principles we want to comply with (truth is true--our decision cannot alter it). We are cautioned. We all have self-serving tendencies to screen these principles, to one degree or another. Instinctively, we may ignore the portions that might unsettle our lives too much. In doing so, we plant seeds of pain for the future.

The process of changing our behavior is usually not an overnight one, and it can be painful. Rigorous honesty and courage are necessary to identify self-centeredness as a violation of truth. Perseverance is necessary to understand and deal with self-centered patterns at every level: heart, mind, and behavior.

Violation of truth can be defined as lack of the right kind of faith, love, and trust. It is self-centered and self-seeking--going our own way with our backs turned on God and our human family.

Positive changes are possible if we are willing to take the first step, a step of obedience and self-denial, a specific application of God's truth. Undoubtedly, obedience and self-denial can seem costly and painstaking to a finite mind. However, the rewards eventually come to outweigh anything else. Remember that God is forming and truing our character.

God wants to teach us lifelong self-surrender by directing our steps *one day at a time*. Adjusting our walk daily with Him, we practice this obedience *one step at a time*. Gradually these steps add up to be a life journey.

Focusing on a step or a stage helps maintain perspective. We try to avoid staring down the long road ahead. This way we do not lose the daily joys or get overwhelmed as conflicts occur (because conflicts are part of the process). In fact, conflict is necessary for change, growth, and spiritual development.

We cannot afford to lose sight of *one step at a time* (being in the appropriate stage for us). If we do, it may become too difficult to live out today's commitment. It can be overwhelming to envision what might test us tomorrow. We do not want to swing from excited self-satisfaction to dejected self-incrimination. Self-incrimination is senseless, although many of us fall into this illusion. The Laws of the universe often determine our clashes and so-called failings. These clashes and so-called failings are meant to be eye openings and growth in understanding.

It is healthy to be aware that we are in the stage of development appropriate for us, that we are focusing on freedom through structure, and working *one step at a time*. It is also healthy to know that everything, including so-called mistakes, are learning experiences, and they can have value.

The *Word* of God the Father is living and active.

“You will know the truth... and the truth will set you free.”

SELF-DENIAL IS IN THE SUBSTANCE OF THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS CHRIST

THE INFLATED EGO

Different people see materialistic values in different ways. We see efforts to exalt oneself with material possessions or lavishing oneself or others with extravagance as the *false premise of materialism*, which contributes to about 24,000 people dying every day from hunger or hunger-related causes. That translates into one person dying every 3.6 seconds—75% of which are children. For those who don't die, an estimated 1.2 billion people—chronic malnutrition causes impaired vision, listless, stunted growth, and greatly increased susceptibility to disease.

Materialism has helped the world to progress economically more effectively than *selfless communism*. We are not saying in any sense that economic progress is a zero-sum system in that one person's gain is another's loss. What we are attempting to do is emphasize the destructiveness of selfishness, glorify the art of generosity, and reveal how to keep our lives balanced with brotherly and sisterly love. It is fairly simple, at the feast of the inflated ego--all parties leave undernourished!

To us, this is clear: the *false premise of materialism* corrupts the heart and fosters distrust; it separates us from each other, and from God. However, we should not be afraid to enjoy what is truly beautiful, and things that are God-given pleasures. There is nothing wrong with wonderful homes and vehicles, beautiful clothes and furnishings, reasonable hobbies, or awesome vacations. We are talking gaudy—flashy—unnecessary extravagance. We must realize we cannot find lasting fulfillment by adding to our possessions—it is found when we surrender our selfish desires and help others.

Many of us are in a state of denial. At the core of the world's problems is self-centeredness. This defiance and obsession with self, based on ignorance, and a lack of spiritual knowledge and faith are at the root of all-evil. Reality for many rests on three chief principles:

1. Individuals feel they are in control or ought to be in control of all that has to do with their lives.
2. Individuals aim primarily at their personal interests.
3. Individuals so-called personal interests are so interrelated that one person's satisfaction depends on the reactions of others.

Thus, *possessions* become the basis of social prestige. Coupled with the expectation that there will be immediate satisfaction of needs and desires, they think that the acquisition of possessions is mandatory for peace of mind and self-respect. The controlling ego will seek to enhance itself by thrills, power, and self-centered manipulations.

Inflated egos may join in temporary alliance, but always for what each can get separately. *Things, power, and thrills* are what the inflated ego wants. Power, possessions, and thrills are its fundamental creed: a cornerstone in the temple it builds to itself.

The inflated ego is in a state of self-deception. With it, we have a false sense of omnipotence. We are a legend in our own mind--the center of our own little world. We do not just want to *do* things our way--we want them to *be* our way.

When controlling, the inflated ego obstructs our *efforts to contact and maintain a relationship with God*. It tries to lure us with physical, mental, or emotional gratification. It often attempts to entice us by offering a shortcut or a path that seems easier, not entailing as much struggle or sacrifice.

Many times the inflated ego tries to decimate the premise of God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ and fabricate a God that fits the mind's eye. It may attempt to persuade us that it is up to us to decide what is true. Its debasing influence is constantly exerted upon us to distract us and distort our senses.

When an inflated ego makes a decision, it often involves a contradiction. Of course, a split mind is not stable. When it recognizes that it has opposed thoughts, it becomes a source of confusion, fear, and multiple personalities can result. God is not inherently present in a split mind. Therefore, it cannot abide within the knowledge of Him. The controlling ego can make it appear that God's will is outside of our reach.

Under the influence of an inflated ego: God and ourselves are in opposition. In this state of being, we impair or even paralyze the Holy Spirit's regenerating power. We have a hard time receiving blessings and revelations from God, because there is a communication failure. This is a reason for a large number of unanswered prayers.

Undermining the inflated ego may be perceived as painful. Babies scream when we take away their synthetic formula--even though it is poison. In this sense, many of us are still babies. Our sense of separation from God is the primary deficiency we need to remedy. This sense of estrangement would never have arisen if we had not developed a distorted perception of truth, and then perceived ourselves as lacking.

The Holy Spirit teaches us that truth preexisted creation and union with Almighty God comes first. This is the conflict: the negative force of misconception analyzes truth and misrepresents it; the Holy Spirit accepts and honors truth. Wisdom comes only through acceptance and honor, for to analyze means to break down and to misrepresent is to detach from it. There is no substitute for truth. God is unalterable because He is Truth--perfect and changeless. We cannot be whole apart from truth, only *in* truth.

We do not have to willfully serve the inflated ego to come under its domination. We only have to neglect to ally ourselves with the true and living God. However, we can elect whom we want to serve. We know that we cannot be faithful to two masters who are asking conflicting things from us. We must inevitably be under the control of one or the other of these forces.

The negative force is in combat with Divine Agencies, battling for the supremacy of the world. Spirits of darkness battle to debase us; Divine Agencies fight to free us, to offer Salvation.

The inflated ego is a characteristic of our sinful nature. A creation in the mind--a body of thought. It is an accumulation of selfish ideas and the result of years of unprincipled guidance, exploited by the negative force. The negative force plays on our selfish, debased, predisposed, and intrinsic tendencies.

The controlling ego is really our dedicated enemy. It is diligent. It tries to recapture control at every opportunity. Despising weakness, it makes every effort to induce it. Most of the things it tells us we need are things that will hurt us. The slightest distraction and it is back in charge, undermining or attacking.

Many times the inflated ego instructs us to rebel against God's commandments to satisfy our anger. It may try to coerce us to venture our soul in order to satisfy our pride. Remember, there is no place in heaven for those who let anger and hate override love and rational behavior.

The inflated ego is appalled that we would seek counsel from anything other than itself. It tries to make us believe that it has all the answers (and we have given it plenty of reasons to think so). We have often relied on its judgment.

Too often, we have done what the inflated ego wants. We have not thought to ask what God desires for us. It will do almost everything in its power to regain control and to foil us; and the power we have given it is considerable. Many of us can identify with these tactics:

1. It showed us a way to instant self-gratification.
2. It lead us out of God's will by enticing us with worldly pleasures and thrills.
3. It then made us feel inferior and dejected.
4. Then it terrified and confused us.
5. It then offered us the means and motives for our death.

To entangle us with self is a game for the inflated ego. For it does want to foil us. The unreasoning power within the inflated ego's oppressive manipulations is unfathomable to the finite mind. Yet, if we identify with it, we must believe its goal is our own.

The negative force is trying to *edge God out (ego)*. It inherently strives to be separate and independent. Therefore, it has no allegiance to the Supreme Creator. The thought of a Supreme Creator is unacceptable to the negative force, yet it makes it tremble; because He clearly points to the temporal existence of this subordinate reign. To overcome its doubts, to exalt itself--it tries to exploit and discredit circumstances.

Can it perceive what it has denied? This negative force looks straight at the Supreme Creator (the Invisible God) and does not see Him, for it has denied His Son, Jesus Christ.

Though familiar with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, the negative force has an irrational use for them. It uses them as a standard by which it can measure its own exalted sense of self-worth. Because of their reputation for power and wisdom, the negative force considers them an opponent, but not an equal. It considers them inferior.

Do not underestimate the appeal of the negative force of misconception, and its demonstrations. It *attracts* many people, rather than repelling them. Many of the deluded become willing to *sell their souls* in return for thrills, gifts, and recognitions of no real worth. If you deny the existence of the negative force of misconception, you can only remain in its possession. Only if you deny what it has done can you possibly deny its presence.

The negative force of misconception can be a frightening concept. It seems so powerful and destructive--so active. One of its maxims is, "seek but do not find." It is skilled in confusing, so it does not hesitate to make us think we are afflicted with insanity, and insubstantial if we do not listen to and obey it. Many times, it tries to persuade us to believe that this life is our only existence. It tries to substitute chaos for truth.

The negative force of misconception literally lives on borrowed time; its days are numbered.

This is our analysis of the inflated ego and its relationship with the negative force of misconception. It is a complex subject, and never without our own ego's involvement.

This is the bottom line: we are powerless when separated from Jesus Christ. Because when separated from the Lord, we are powerless over the negative force of misconception, and we are under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We begin to overcome the inflated ego by accepting Jesus Christ as our Savior. One of the ways we strengthen our relationship with Him is through *fellowship*.

Fellowshipping with other Christians is *an antidote to inflated ego*. When we isolate ourselves, we can lose our perspective; areas of our lives can become disproportional, and our problems may become seemly unsolvable. When we isolate, we may fall back into the trap of that diseased self, that self-pity, that false pride, that vanity. False pride and the illusion of self-sufficiency in their various forms are at the root of our self-imposed estrangement from a quality relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. The egocentric person cannot have a sincere relationship with the Lord: “For the Lord, is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”

Today we are blessed with this new spiritual insight. Communion (non-separation) is the natural state for those of us who know God. When this happens, the seemingly incurable state of the inflated ego, has met its Conqueror--Jesus Christ.

Another noble way to avoid falling into an inflated ego trap is to cultivate an attitude of *gratitude*. It is the admission that we are not self-sufficient. When we are truly grateful, we are no longer selfish. Gratitude is a spiritual virtue. It is the reverse of the overblown ego: it is when we shift allegiance. How grateful we are that we have found this new way.

One of the ways God works is through people. What we share with others, we strengthen in ourselves. (We have only what we give away.) What we acknowledge in our sisters and brothers, we acknowledge in ourselves.

The abilities, strengths, and insights that are really ours cannot be seen by us at first. We gain confidence in them as we share in fellowship. We can see the result of our actions.

Action and good works are not salvation, of themselves--but they reveal a faith, when they are done in Love. This helps purify the soul.

WE CAN FIND FREEDOM THROUGH STRUCTURE. PROSPERITY, JOY AND SERENITY CAN COME TO US: THROUGH AWARENESS, ACCEPTANCE, AND FROM TAKING ACTION ON SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES.

HUMILITY...

...is like our eyes, we use them, but we actually never see them. Its nature is righteousness, conformity with God's laws. To name humility is not to define it, to live humbly is to know it. Humility is not mere knowledge or wisdom; it is a progressive experience in divine demonstration, wholeheartedly choosing to fulfill God's will.

Some people despise humility because they feel it implies inadequacy, lack of dignity, and worthlessness to them. This is not the meaning of humility as defined by God.

God makes it clear, by putting pride in its right place; we are able to perceive that *by ourselves* we are inadequate.

We need humility to recognize the severity of our sinful nature; acknowledge the limits of our human power; appreciate the enormity of God's power to transform and direct our lives. To experience this life-changing honesty, we must be aware that:

1. We cannot attain lasting joy and fulfillment outside the realm of God's will.
2. Secular accomplishments or material successes will never satisfy our spiritual needs.
3. Surrender to God's leadership cannot occur until we acknowledge our own limitations and the need for His guidance.

Humility is truth. It consists of keeping oneself within one's own bounds. To do this we must maintain our perspective, which means we are humble, not proud or haughty, not arrogant or overassertive. Being humble is reflecting, expressing, or offering something in a spirit of submission. It is to let you see me as me--which helps let me be me. It is the absence of false pride.

As false pride devastates the character, so humility builds it up. Humility is a prerequisite to other virtues, because it removes the greater obstacles to faith, upon which all rests. Humility is the recognition of the presence of God in every aspect of our lives. As we grow, our understanding of humility deepens and our view of it includes acceptance of both our assets and our liabilities. Of course, like any virtue, it is not meaningful unless it is sincere and motivated by love.

In God's sight, the only sincere Christians are those who render humble service. Rank, wealth, beauty, or intellectual greatness should never be placed before union with God. The love for reward or distinction has no rightful place in ministry. Until brought into a state of humility and love, we are not prepared for the spiritual journey of life, or for services to be performed.

HUMILITY

In living a Christian life we continually discover that the less self-centered we are and the more other-centered we become, inasmuch as we empathize with and acknowledge the views, desires, and rights of others: the more full and rewarding our lives become.

The process of re-centering our lives on what we can give or impart to others and how we can share what we have received, is indeed a quality of living attributing to humility. It does not mean we are not concerned about ourselves. However, the remarkable thing is that the more we re-center on other people and their needs--the more we receive.

When we can fully trust God and accept ourselves, we can accept others into our lives in a healthy manner. We are then free to emphasize our assets gratefully and move humbly away from our defects.

God created humility and its radiance. Humility is a virtue through which He expresses His love. He desires it to be manifest. Obviously, humility is a hard lesson for the inflated ego to accept.

Humility is a characteristic of the Law that touches upon every facet of a spiritual life. When we apply spiritual principles and concepts in our daily lives, we are safeguarded from the negative force of misconception. Christianity offers us a process to center our lives; its far-reaching theories are to be implemented in our daily lives. We show the reality and glory of these spiritual principles and concepts by translating them into deeds.

Humility helps us maintain the perspective that human resources, as directed by the will, are insufficient. As we know, false pride, self-centeredness, and self-sufficiency, in their various forms are at the root of self-imposed estrangement from God.

The eternal perspective develops through acceptance, awareness, and the action of spiritual truth. True peace of mind comes from understanding the laws of God and demonstrating them in all areas of our lives. This transformation is a radiant and vibrant experience, we are free to become *whole* human beings--and this can help every one of us remain humble and grateful for all that God has allowed us to do and become. This brings us to the realization that this is the best and happiest way to live!

Only a changed heart can bring about an understanding of spiritual truth. As the unseen roots of a tree, humility helps keep us steadfast in the storms of life.

VIRTUES OF WISDOM

Many of us may have felt the humiliation or disappointment and sometimes the anger that comes in the aftermath of many of our self-willed manipulations. Others may have felt the heartbreak that comes with failure. If we desire to improve our understanding of our fellow human beings and relate to them in a more perceptive way, we need to identify with their shortcomings, character defects, trials, and tribulations in the same manner. We should not just put *ourselves* in their circumstance, but experience what *they* perceive. We need to empathize with others--without bias.

Empathy is very different from sympathy, tenderness, or kindness. Empathy is identification with and understanding of others' situations, feelings, perception, and awareness. The understanding of empathy predisposes us to respect and encourage rather than judge, hurt, or exploit others. As empathy develops, it deepens our concern for the whole human race. The internalization of empathy will prompt us to work with God to selflessly serve others in need.

The systematic teaching of empathy may be attempted, but internalization of empathy cannot be acquired through mere knowledge. Empathy is a spiritual gift that helps us relate to others. It is a foundation of good relations. The strength embodied in this type of empathy also provides a basis for coping with stress; it has the power to prevent and resolve conflicts.

Empathy is the activity of vicarious introspection or vicarious affective response through which we are able to share the feelings and responses of others. Recovery and spiritual development without empathy can become arrogance. Empathy without humility can trigger a form of co-dependency. Without empathy, there is little humility.

Genuine humility and sincere empathy are imperative for their preventive potential in preserving mental, emotional, and spiritual health; they are interwoven virtues which future spiritual, social, and cognitive development depends upon. They are virtues through which the light of God shines in our lives; they are in fact, *a catalyst that could change the course of mankind.*

TWELVE INGREDIENTS OF PERSONALITY

Let's look at some basic elements of personality:

1. The ability to think, to reason, to acquire knowledge.
2. Feelings and emotions.
3. The capacity to decide, to make choices--to use the will.

Keeping these in mind, let us consider:

How do we avoid an adulterated and impotent life? This chapter has some ideas for a full and rewarding life. Implementing these ingredients will help develop a base for a sound psychological structure:

1. FRIENDSHIP, AFFECTION

Every one has a need to be appreciated and respected by others. As we grow in wisdom and go beyond self-centeredness, we find a need for friendships. We seek people who are like us, who have things in common with us. We have a great task ahead of us if we are to meet the needs of our fellow humans as they seek real friends and affection.

2. EMOTIONAL & MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF-RESPECT

We need to pay special attention to our mental and emotional condition. It is possible to get into accelerated learning (through constant studying) to increase our mental capacity. However, emotional growth is a gradual "one-day-at-time" process. Recovering emotionally takes time. It usually means being involved in something that is completely unrelated to the minds' involvement in recovery.

Emotional challenges not only stimulate our spiritual growth, they also help build us psychologically. Another thing affecting emotional health is an understanding of the emotional growth that comes when the eternal and the temporal merge.

Self-respect is basic to good mental and emotional health. Healthy people do not beat themselves with guilt and shame. Basic to the treatment of personality disorders is rebuilding self-respect. *Principles of the Spirit* tries to do this with its many ingredients for health (through surrender). It offers ideas for practical application to support us in this new life.

3. FREEDOM: Ideas on growth from dependence to independence; maturing from independence to interdependence.

One of our first yearnings is to be free. One of our first expressions is--"no." Among the first ideas we learn to express is--"I will do it myself." We are born with a natural resistance to interference and assistance from outside forces. This is healthy. However, as we grow, we balance this with consideration for *other people's rights*. No person or government has the rightful liberty to deprive any other person of liberty, of the right to love and be loved, of the privilege of worshiping God, and of serving his fellows. This is a part of realizing that (paradoxically) *freedom comes through structure*.

4. RESPECT FOR OTHERS, FELLOWSHIP AND SPONSORSHIP

Respect for others should not be confused with fear. Respect cannot be mandated. Like love and trust, respect must be earned.

None of us is sufficient unto themselves. Humans are usually more effective as humans when they are part of a group. If we do not fellowship, it is a self-imposed limitation.

Each of us needs someone upon whom we can rely with complete confidence, who *will not tell*. The sponsor relationship in 12-Step Programs or a mentor relationship offers exactly this.

5. CHALLENGE

Each human is born with the urge to grow. The stimulation of this urge that we call challenge is essential to build a healthy personality.

Our imagination can challenge us, just as other people can challenge us. We can challenge ourselves physically and mentally by what we see in other people. Genuine humility can be learned from humble people whom we hold in esteem. We tend to create ourselves in the image of people we admire. We must challenge ourselves to be like our Lord, Jesus Christ.

6. EXPERIENCING NATURE

Since we are a part of nature, we need to participate in its processes. By influencing growth, for example: properly caring for plants, flowers, trees, etc., and loving and caring for animals. This kind of nurturing responsibility helps fulfill our inner needs. Walking or exercising in nature is another way to get in touch with our inner nature.

7. CREATIVITY

Man is made with the capacity to create. A genuinely creative experience is often found when we are fulfilling our divine purpose, or when we are cooperating with others who are doing God's will.

To create is to yearn for a response. There are many ways to express ourselves. It is no accident that an act of love was intended to create our children. Unless we have divine purpose, we are unfulfilled.

8. VALUE, APPRECIATION

We need to be needed--to have places where our abilities and talents are used for the benefit of others. Our talents and abilities should be assets to our associates, never claims of distinction from them. *Application of this principle could change the world.*

9. FUN, ZESTFUL EXPERIENCES

Human gratification is necessary. Where do we find it in today's world? A disheartened development in modern civilization is unwholesome so-called fun. Many people seek synthetic fun by throttling their glands with alcohol, drugs, junk food, abusing sex, excessive eating, etc. Other people stimulate themselves and fritter away precious time listening to contemptuous music, singing counterproductive lyrics, studying or playing music that is not pleasing to God, or conducive to building the kingdom of God. Other people fritter away time and undermine their character by excessively playing games, playing on computers, reading objectionable material, listening to distasteful talk shows, watching disgusting movies, television programs, etc. We have found that any excess can do harm.

We need to include in our lives adventure and action. Physical activities and challenges are imperative for obtaining a full and rewarding life; they contribute to a well-developed personality. Engaging in unnecessary, potentially terminal activities is selfish. Our pleasures and thrills should not risk leaving our loved ones with an invalid or a corpse. Riding motorcycles on the street, hang-gliding, or skydiving (to name a few) are unnecessary risks.

As we get wiser we realize that we do not need excessive thrills and adrenaline rushes at the possible expense of our bodies, we simply avoid unnecessary pain. We are not saying that challenges are not intriguing or healthy--but the risks of unnecessary pain or permanent disabilities more than offset their exchangeable value for most of us. When our focus is right; the results we are seeking will manifest themselves. God instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires; He wants us to be good Christians and bring Him glory by living sensible and holy lives.

10. MAINTENANCE OF STATISTICAL PERSPECTIVE

The ability to realistically confront and evaluate the world around us, assigning experiences, circumstances and things their appropriate degrees of value and importance

as they relate to our eternal destiny; while implementing the many ingredients for successful living that will allow us to live a healthy and prosperous life in balance with nature.

Most of the things people worry about never happen. Many of us worry about past events and health problems. We become overly concerned with trifling things that really do not make a lot of difference. The intelligent person tries to look at parts of life in relation to the whole. They remain wholesome (aware of the whole). We should not let anyone or anything rob us of the joy of experiencing *our own personal best in the moment*.

Life is full of compromises. If we are to live in balance and harmony with nature and ourselves there must be compromises. This adjustment of conflicting interests is a foundation of good judgment and common sense--it can serve to provide the basis for a full and meaningful life. Yet, compromise in itself is not the panacea. If we compromise basic truths and moral principles, we defeat ourselves.

A sense of humor and laughter are a sense of perspective: they can aid mental balance.

11. PRAYER AND MEDITATION

We seek to improve our conscious contact with God. Prayer and meditation are two parts of a process: communicating with spiritual realms. Prayer is more of a monologue or the active part, more local. Meditation is the highest form of communion (including a receptive process). Both set up and maintain a channel between our conscious mind and the spirit world.

TWELVE BASIC STEPS OF SUBJECTIVE COMMUNION WITH GOD

Any position of the body will do in this prayer. This prayer can be used as a guide for prayer or we can follow it step-by-step. At first, our attention may be limited and brief. Later, as the prayer is memorized and the experience becomes more vibrant, it lasts longer.

As this prayer begins, focus on your breathing. Imagine that a reservoir of spiritual energy is held within. Imagine it as being somewhere below the heart region. Inhaling--draw it up to your heart region. With the eyes closed, the hearing ceasing to attend to outward distractions (although you still may be aware of them) and the body staying perfectly still.

1. Father God, source of all creation, fill me with your perfect Love.
2. My life and being are yours.
3. Fill me with confidence and your healing presence.
4. Thank You for the opportunity to demonstrate my faith and to be Redeemed.

5. For a moment, experience nothing but self-existence; the joy of pure being.
6. Pray for the well being of all persons and for the world. Pray for troubled regions and for the men, women, and children who are experiencing trials and tribulations. Pray for the workers and the organizations that are providing aid for those who are in need. Give your blessing to your friends, relatives, associates, and for those with whom you experience conflict.
7. After you have spread your gift of prayer for others, return your focus to observe your own feelings.
8. Enjoy the assurance that God permeates your entire being and is with you always.
9. Engage in passive recollection, experience your personal growth.
10. Calmly reflect upon points of interest. (A rule of thumb is to try to keep your personal prayers focused on things that will bring honor to God).
11. Ask God to please let me love me--as You love me; let me forgive me--as You forgive me; let me accept me--as You accept me.
12. May I live in thankful contemplation, in Jesus' name, amen.

MEDITATION...

...helps us establish and maintain a contact with God. It allows peace and serenity, happiness and joy to flow into us--and *through us, to others*.

There are many forms of meditation, but all have one basic purpose: to eliminate or reduce mind chatter, in order to clear a channel for communion with higher realms. Meditation can be receptive contemplation or paying attention.

Just as drugs can be used to induce mystical experiences, certain *transcendental meditation techniques* can also alter the state of consciousness. This type of meditation is often self-deceptive rather than self-transcending.

In *our* type of meditation, we focus on paying attention, reading and studying scripture and other daily devotionals. Certain types of meditation require advanced skills, so they should be approached with caution. For example, there are people who run their lives on so-called spiritual guidance. Have they forgotten that we all have deceitful hearts? That it is a human tendency to rationalize matters according to our preconceptions. Combine these factors with the influence of negative forces, and we are talking severely distorted so-called guidance? With good intentions, they can forge their inflated ego into all sorts of situations and circumstances—with the comfortable assurance that they are acting under their Higher Power's specific direction.

In such an illusion, they can create havoc. It takes years of *attentiveness* to know which voice is true (discernment of spirits).

12. TRUE SPIRITUAL WISDOM

The threshold of wisdom is a sincere desire for instruction, and the desire for instruction can become a passion for wisdom. Wisdom is a kindly spirit, radiant, and unfading. It will help shield us, guard our path, preserve us, and deliver us from evil.

The *desire* for wisdom is a *longing* to experience truth. Wisdom is given to those who diligently seek. It tends to grow in proportion to our awareness of our ignorance; that is, when we realize we are not as wise as we thought we were, we are wiser.

Wisdom is fundamentally the supernatural virtue of humility in the domain of thought; a breath of the power of God, a pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty, a reflection of eternal light, an image of God's goodness. Defiled people obtain little wisdom, as long as they remain in that state.

Wisdom teaches self-control, prudence, justice, and courage. It has a subtle essence in it that is holy, overseeing, and discerning all. A practical application of wisdom also consists in the elimination of nonessentials.

In wisdom, there is a heightened awareness. One aspect of this is purpose, on which it thrives. Committed to action, it is a blend of intelligence and love. Of course, without integrity there is little wisdom.

Wisdom is demonstrated by intelligent decisions and choices, and by deeds done in the humility that comes from doing our best to be like our Lord, Jesus Christ.

*Worldly wisdom is foolishness...
it's merely opinion (or conditioning).*

*Wisdom from the past is important...
for it illuminates the future.*

*If any of you lack wisdom for today...
ask God, who gives openhandedly.*

*The beginning of real wisdom...
begins with reverence of God.*

*Wisdom is a precious gift.
Praise God for the wisdom that He bestows upon us.*

TWELVE HELPS IN AVOIDING TEMPTATION

Materialism, abusing sex, lusting, coveting, eating disorders, dishonesty, co-dependency, greed, and substance abuse are principal temptations that many people can identify with. They are usually driven by egotism, false pride, fear, and/or a lack of faith.

1. We must perceive and acknowledge our temptations and be aware that when temptation comes we are not alone in it, and trust in God to overcome it.
2. We need to be alert and attentive, clean and sober; realizing that drugs and alcohol destroy our will to resist.
3. We may need to change playgrounds, playmates, and play things. Avoiding temptation often involves physically leaving the source, mentally readjusting, and changing activities.
4. We must realize that many of our friends experience the same temptations as we do. Many of them can offer encouragement and support when needed.
5. We must be willing to identify and expose our weaknesses and confront temptation head-on. One of Satan's tactics is to convince us that we will lose the respect of others if we expose our weaknesses.
6. We must not lose hope, knowing that God is with us. We need to write a daily inventory and keep our prayer journal updated.
7. We might need to develop *different activities* and *positive thought patterns*. Find pleasure by going to church, Bible studies or other spiritual meetings, engaging in sports, doing service work, listening to wholesome music, singing, etc. Reviewing our journals can also help reinforce new thought patterns.
8. We need to call our sponsor or spiritual advisor when we are tempted with drugs, alcohol, eating disorders, unhealthy anger, lust, sexual disobedience, pride, or other serious problems. One of our best defenses is to talk it over with them. We also need to pray, meditate, and *write* about our temptations.
9. We need to do our best, remain focused on the goal, endure, and give this new way of life time to take hold. Vital to resisting temptation is to disallow any distractions that will impede our progress.
10. We must continue to study, keep an open mind, and learn from our mistakes. We need to have people praying for us on a regular basis.
11. We must be willing to be accountable to our spiritual advisor or sponsor, having regular communication and visits.
12. We need to call upon the Lord. God promises to listen to us when we pray for help. However, if we choose to disobey, we can expect God to void that request!

TAKE TIME FOR TWELVE THINGS

- 1. TAKE TIME TO WORSHIP GOD –**
It is a highway of reverence... it opens our eyes to an eternal perspective.
- 2. TAKE TIME TO LOVE –**
It is the real sacrament of life.
- 3. TAKE TIME TO WORK –**
It is the price of success.
- 4. TAKE TIME TO PLAY –**
It is essential for a full and rewarding life.
- 5. TAKE TIME TO HELP AND ENJOY FRIENDS –**
It is a source of fulfillment and happiness.
- 6. TAKE TIME TO THINK –**
It is a source of power.
- 7. TAKE TIME TO STUDY –**
It is a foundation of knowledge.
- 8. TAKE TIME TO LAUGH –**
It helps us maintain our perspective.
- 9. TAKE TIME FOR HEALTH –**
It can give us more time to work with God.
- 10. TAKE TIME FOR BEAUTY –**
It is everywhere in nature.
- 11. TAKE TIME TO PLAN –**
It creates the path to quality time and effective living.
- 12. TAKE TIME TO DREAM –**
It can open our hearts to the future.

IS ANYBODY OUT THERE - (Unanswered Prayers)

We must realize how important private prayer is to our personal well being, as well as to our fellow human beings who are looking for assurance and meaning in life.

Those of us who are born again know God answers prayer because we have experienced it--but we also must know that His answers are not always predictable. Many times when it seems God is not doing anything about our prayers, it is tempting to lower our expectations, based on the feeling that prayer does not make any difference. Other times, just as many people blame God for their self-incurred plights, so do many of us blame ourselves for *unanswered prayers*.

We need to learn to discern between trust and manipulation. Trust means accepting the reality of today and leaving the results of our prayers to God. This frees us to live in the moment and have high expectations, without demanding that God answer our prayers in a certain way or within a particular time frame. Grateful acceptance and trusting God must replace anxious striving to manipulate God and anyone or anything.

The key to prayer is to simply start from where we are. If we are open and honest before God, He will take care of us according to His loving wisdom, not our desires. When praying with others, we need to use comforting words that will uplift them, without making promises that are not ours to make or keep.

It is important to remember that we are asking God, not demanding. God definitely teaches us that there is a direct connection between *giving thanks* to Him and receiving His grace and mercy.

We need to maintain our perspective and realize that God's answer to our prayers will always be for our best. He is sovereign and for Him all things are possible (except defeating His purpose).

Allowing the ordinary experiences of our day to prompt us to pray is a way we can incorporate the discipline of prayer into our daily life. For example: upon rising and before going to bed; before and after eating; or when we see people in need, sick, or handicapped. One way of praying is seeing God in life's commonplace experiences. We can pray while driving, working, or doing other tasks that do not require undivided attention. Listening to the birds, soft music, or silence; looking at the stars, a beautiful sunrise or sunset are natural ways to maintain awareness of God's presence.

Rather than allowing our thoughts to implode, we need to turn them into a dialogue with God. Keeping a prayer journal and a daily inventory is better than talking to ourselves; and it can be very encouraging to look back and *read how we made it through* past crises.

Not keeping a prayer journal and a daily inventory is like trying to paint a detailed picture from memory. A current black and white portrait (daily inventory and prayer journal) is essential to catching a glimpse of the design or pattern of our unique life. Furthermore, keeping a tab on our lives will help us change our negative or unproductive thought and behavior patterns.

Having the support of prayer partners is invaluable during stressful times. Even when our circumstances seem to give us no reason to be thankful, true spiritual friends will remind and encourage us to be grateful for God's love and mercy.

God warns of the hazards of ungratefulness, lack of faith, and prayer. This negative attitude contributes to the moral decline of humanity.

A LOOK AT SPIRITUAL TRUTH

In the spiritual life, we explore the fifth dimension and the sixth sense. The fifth dimension and the sixth sense are of the spirit. We often become so preoccupied with the five senses (seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, and tasting) that we are oblivious to the sixth sense: the sense of the spirit. Many times we tend to lose ourselves in the four dimensions: the emotional (feeling), mental (thinking), physical (doing), and space-time continuum (distance) dimensions--forgetting the fifth dimension: the dimension of the spirit.

The sixth sense and the fifth dimension are perceived through intuition. They flow into our intuitional function, which flourishes in those who yield to the Spirit's initiative (conscious penetration of Spirit), and latent in unregenerated man.

Most of us know the experience of intuition, that feeling of *knowing*, without the aid of the five senses. There is no doubt that it is divine intervention that we can *know* without the five senses. Through it, gifts and/or revelations can come to us.

We can develop this intrinsic aptitude and become instruments of benefit to others and ourselves--or if we are not careful, we can lose our perspective and become preoccupied with the five senses. This can entangle us with the insanities of a four-dimensional existence, with its limitations and its predestined course of denial, chaos, and insatiable desires. We can end up focusing on creation--rather than focusing on, serving, and worshiping God.

Everyday scores of people succumb to certain *powers*: seeming powers of wealth, pleasure, fame, knowledge, or deceptive personal powers of other kinds. When our priorities are out of order, it perpetuates disharmony. Because, where our desires and priorities are--our heart will be also. Obviously, in order to keep our lives balanced we need to get our priorities straight, humble ourselves before God, serve and worship Him.

We reap what we sow (*that is, what we give out is returned to us by Law*). However, our hope and our comfort is that though we have all sinned and we continue to fall short, it can be invalidated in the eternal realm: Jesus Christ is the total solvent for all negative return. (*If we turn to Him, and consciously claim His word, and His gifts.*)

Human science is too limited to understand the Atonement. The plan of Redemption is so far-reaching that ordinary philosophy cannot explain it. The mystery behind Salvation has not been solved by science. Nevertheless, these things can be experienced, when we surrender to Jesus Christ.

Everyday we have to deal with the inflated ego (human nature) or a beast attempting to manifest itself in us. If our relationship with God is not paramount, the inflated ego or this beast takes over and self-will runs rampant. The inflated ego tends to make people idolize or despise themselves. It will try to twist truth and distort reality. Highly prominent manifestations of the inflated ego are insatiable obsessions of the mind, compulsive and/or destructive behavior.

Faith and action go together. Surrender of the inflated ego is an act of faith. The inflated ego is self-seeking, enthralled in grandiosity and it deceives. It separates us from God.

In our efforts to transform obsessions, compulsions, or addictions in to positive strengths, we label them as diseases. This does not imply that personal responsibility lies outside the individual. Rather, it is an effort to identify them as treatable conditions.

Many times, we cannot perceive spiritual truth until we experience its opposite (often truths are not really felt except in adversity). Furthermore, it is hard to know how people will behave until they are put under a heavy load in a variety of circumstances.

With the acceptance of powerlessness, we admit to ourselves that we must yield our will in faith, if we are to overcome disabling thought and behavior. Only spiritual wisdom and knowledge will let us surrender humbly (honestly). This surrender gives strength beyond human comprehension. Whoever humbles himself (sees honestly his own powerlessness) has unseen strength.

Spiritual wisdom and knowledge are the principal things. Therefore, we pray for the knowledge of God's will for us and for the power and the means to bring it about. Furthermore, we must seek to learn what we do not know. Overcoming disabling thought and behavior and maintaining equilibrium is a daily reprieve based on the quality of our spiritual condition. Spiritual knowledge is *possessed by sharing* and safeguarded by wisdom.

On the spiritual level, we must nurture infused wisdom (our relationship with the Spirit). It is the still small voice that many of us have spent years ignoring.

A right relationship with God begins with repentance, baptism of the Spirit, and conversion. It simply means that you turn around and make a change. It begins in your heart and shows up in your life.

Right living will not produce salvation (salvation is a gift). Positive thinking will not produce faith (faith is a gift). Faith here is the act of channeling unseen strength. It is the "*substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*"

Jesus Christ is the way, the truth, and the life: no one comes to Almighty God except through Him. Whoever does not enthrone Jesus is the servant of evil. They may talk of freedom, but they are in slavery. While they may flatter themselves that they follow the dictates of their own judgment, they obey the negative force of misconception. They are spiritually blinded. Many with the leprosy of iniquity crave to debase others. To deceive, seduce, corrupt, exploit, or destroy are a few basic objectives of the negative force of misconception.

Because of the distorted objectives of the negative force of misconception, it seizes upon what it can. Sex and drug abuse are major areas it has seized upon. Multitudes of people will get and spread sexually transmitted diseases. Drove of others will become or remain addicts of every conceivable sort.

Right at this moment drug abusers and abusers of their own sexuality are infecting others with viruses. Their acts are vicious hate crimes, and they are as lethal as homicide. Denial is not a shield--nor is ignorance a sanctuary. *Where are the children to go?*

We are warned not to develop intimate relations with people who are not Christians. To risk your life by engaging in sex with a spouse that has (or is in risk of having) a serious transmittable disease or virus, or by not being restricted to one tested and loyal sexual partner, or by engaging in any high-risk behavior is absurd. We could be as safe as a prostitute or a drug addict shooting drugs. We cannot control others, but be warned: having sex with an immoral or infected person is basically a type of *Russian roulette*.

We are spiritual beings having a human experience. Human nature is imperfect--it is a pull in the direction of vanity, self-gratification, and self-interest. The impulses of human nature and the Spirit are at war. This battle is precisely for the removal and annihilation of weak and/or evil beings; and for the preservation and elevation of true and faithful spiritual beings--in sanctifying grace.

This catastrophic battle has gained momentum. It is taking its toll on a large segment of our planet's population. Those lusting in their human nature who survive the initial epidemics will hopefully fear for their lives, repent, and surrender to God. Others will attempt to save the voracious life and themselves through strategic manipulations and/or draconian measures.

Mankind is created with the capacity for growth. Abundant living can be ours. This success is not inherited--it is earned. Wisdom is not the mere accumulation of facts. Wisdom is the proper use of tools and attitudes for successful living, as they are revealed by God, and implemented by us.

Principles of the Spirit makes available examples for the practical application of God's laws. It is our duty to achieve our own personal best. May the richness that has become ours--be yours.

Most people do not perceive spiritual truth. They cannot experience or comprehend the things of the spirit; neither can they know or appreciate them, because *these things are spiritually discerned*. They look, but do not see; read, but do not comprehend; listen, but do not hear.

God created the world; to Him it makes sense. Total comprehension of this sense is beyond the grasp of our finite mind.

We are a devolutionary species--eternal spirits, given human nature and form. We do not just have a soul; we are a mortal soul, composed of matter. We are a triune creation: body, spirit, and soul. We are not evolving spirits, reborn in new bodies or reincarnated in new forms of life.

There are many theories attempting to grasp the depths of infinite. There are concepts of a super universe or even an inter-universe government. Some claim to have seen or been on UFO's. Others claim to have been with extraterrestrial or angelic beings. However, we realize we were not sent to earth to figure out God's universal knowledge. We are not here to presume or penetrate its mysteries. It is beyond us. We of *higher awareness* that realize truth--have our work cut out for us.

We live in a well-ordered universe. It is apparent that we are isolated from direct contact with other created beings.

The opportunity for the elect to be redeemed demonstrates that God is merciful. That He controls the judgment of His creation. His mercy gives time to repent, and He will never destroy that which mercy can save. Every being gets due justice.

God has made some of us for noble purposes and some for common use. He has done this to make His glory known to the children of His grace and mercy: those whom He has predestined in advance for the opportunity of glory.

There are different gifts and blessings--disabilities and tribulations. They are all ultimately the work of God, and He gives or allows them to each of us as He predetermines. The manifestations of God and the permission that He gives to Satan to try to foil us are for the common Good. However, remember that there are no temptations to great. That God will always provide the power to overcome if we sincerely ask and act earnestly.

There are many mysteries and none of us know everything the future will bring. However, with diligent efforts and careful observation we continue on our spiritual journey. We must keep our guard up in order to combat negative forces that are trying to destroy us. Being soberminded, alert, attentive, and staying close to God will help us to deflect these forces that are trying to impair our awareness of the seriousness of our plight.

SOME LAWS OF LIFE

We must not gamble with the Law, nor tempt God, nor use His name in vain. We are to be disciplined in the ways of the Lord.

We must answer to God for our thoughts, words, and deeds. We are accountable to God individually, as well as collectively, for we are members of one body--the body of Christ. As we follow Jesus, His Spirit will guide us into an eternal perspective, growing toward Christ-likeness; demonstrating His power in our lives. Rejoice and be glad, for our reward in Heaven is great.

THERE ARE NO IDLE THOUGHTS

How we think largely determines our experience, and our actions. *All thinking produces form at some level.* Entertaining the thought of an act detrimental to life is ineffective behavior. It can result in negative actions if repeated often enough. The truth is that the majority of our life's experience is but outer expression of inner thought. Wrong thoughts are as destructive as wrong deeds--because our thoughts also influence our destiny. Obviously, we should not indulge in thoughts that might lead us into any action with negative results.

For example, if we covet, flare with irrational anger, or lust in our hearts, we stir distraught forces. We are committed to sin and liable for judgment.

In short, impure thought defiles us. It tends to obliterate impressions of the Spirit. Impure speech and thought must be shunned. A relationship with God and ourselves will never blossom fully if impure thought is a dominating factor.

BAPTISM

We are to be baptized with water as a public, external proclamation of our internal faith. We are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, the body of Christ. Those who are elected to grace are given one Spirit to baptize us with fire: to refine us. This baptism gives us the ability to receive power, discernment, and wisdom.

We are to offer the Gospel to all people, calling them to discipleship. We can offer baptism to them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

WE ARE TO PARTAKE IN HOLY COMMUNION

In the communion ritual, placing a piece of bread in our mouth is receiving the body of Jesus into our hearts; and drinking wine or juice from the cup is to receive the blood of His covenant, which is offered for the forgiveness of sins.

WE SHALL NOT MURDER

There is no place in God's scheme of things for the person who willfully destroys others in a profane manner. However, we must defend when necessary – in a God-like manner. We are not conscientious objectors. In light of justice, we must sanction *the death penalty*; however, it must be strictly regulated.

Suicide and euthanasia are murder. To enter the kingdom we must endure until God delivers us from the flesh. We, with our finite minds, should not try to interfere with divine plans. However, we must never endanger or sacrifice a human life by refusing medical procedures and/or practices deemed acceptable medical standards. On the other hand, we are not obligated to extend mortal life by means that are unreasonable.

Taking the life of an unborn child for selfish reasons is impious. Children in the womb are God's children. However, abortion may be acceptable in certain medical circumstances. For example: major health risks for the mother, the child has severe medical certainties, rape, or incest (to mention a four of many potential reasons). If you are not ready for a child and become pregnant, you should consider giving the child up for adoption as a better alternative – not having an abortion. Pray and seek the counsel of your family, friends, and your spiritual advisor. Contraception, artificial birth control, male and female sterilization are permissible.

We cannot totally stop abortion; we would only push it underground. There are already too many deaths and women hurt and maimed from malpractice, illegal, or self-induced abortions. Abortion must be strictly regulated and legal, or we will do more harm than good. Only a change of heart will save lost humanity. If you have had an abortion, God still loves and forgives you. However, His love is glorified when we are obedient today.

RESPECTING SEXUALITY

People who willfully or ignorantly endanger or destroy others by careless sexual behavior are liable to judgment. If we endanger the lives of others with high-risk behavior, we are guilty of disregard for human life with intent to debase and corrupt others. Ignorance and denial do not invalidate truth. High-risk behavior is the fury and hatred of Lucifer and his subordinate demons (a pretext often labeled *consenting adults*).

Homosexuality, bisexuality, trans-gendering, swinging, etc. are ungodly, and it is truth that any high-risk behavior is just as ungodly as the aforementioned. Many people have homosexual or bisexual tendencies or are bi-curious. This is a notorious access of our sinful nature. As we can develop our strengths, we can also sicken our weaknesses. Fostering ungodly thought or acting out dilates vulnerability--they can become progressive disorders. Lust can produce an obsession that fuels itself.

Many people experience these thoughts and feelings; resist and disallow them in honor of the Lord, and they will eventually subside. Recovering from sexual disorders may be as hard as or harder to overcome than a severe drug habit. Furthermore, the synergistic effects drug abuse and sexual addiction is so consuming that it usually warrants unbridled high-risk behavior.

Ungodly relationships violate a basic aspect of creation. They are contrary to natural laws. Under no circumstances can they be approved. God intended men, women, and children to have distinct roles and functions. By dissolving or warping these God-given distinctions and giving in to ungodly behavior mankind has undermined Divine Order.

HOLY MATRIMONY...

...is called that because it was created for a high purpose – to please God. Marriage is the total unity of one man and one woman: physically, emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually (it can also include the bonding of groom’s family and bride’s family). As husband and wife, your marriage depends on the unselfish giving of each to the other. A high value is placed on unconditional love, purity, and procreation.

It is true that “a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife and they become one flesh.” So when are a man and woman married? Of what does marriage consist? Some people maintain that marriage is inaugurated through sexual union. They maintain that a person is considered, in the eyes of God, to be married to that member of the opposite sex with whom intercourse is shared. They maintain that intercourse is viewed as the agent through which God effects an actual marriage.

In the pre-Mosaic times, when wedding proposals were accepted and the marriage price given, the bridegroom could come and get his bride. Many wedding vows consisted of “Thou art my wife.” Fathers sold their daughters. Polygamy was acknowledged in the Mosaic Law and made the basis of legislation. Many fathers were selecting wives for their sons. Moreover, what was that concubine fiasco all about? What is really going on?

There are many stable and loving relationships between committed partners. True love, commitment, and companionship are salubrious – not merely a paper certificate that can be voided at any given moment. Were adulterers ever really married? Did their subconscious ever make a commitment?

Despite the confusion, God has made it clear that marriage is brought about as the result of a declaration of desire to be married, accompanied by the expression of mutual intentions of enduring fidelity and responsibility; in the presence of accredited witnesses. Bottom line, couples need to get engaged and have a proper wedding ceremony.

God deplures the marriage of Christians with non-Christians. It is considered a disrespect of God's will and purpose. Adultery is still adultery if you are separated, but not legally divorced. Fornication is regarded as *degrading*; it superficially binds two people without proper accompanying intentions and commitments. Fornication serves improper ends--another person is usually exploited.

For many of us not being in high risk and restricting ourselves to having only one sexual partner is a step up from our old ways that included high-risk behavior. God allows us to be in the *process* of spiritual development. If a Christian man and woman are having a difficult time remaining celibate, if they are hanging on for their lives and trying to live devoutly, they could follow these guidelines:

1. Go through a proper courtship to get to know, trust, and love one another.
2. Ask for advice and get approval from your spiritual advisors.
3. Abstain from illegal drugs, and do not abuse drugs or alcohol.
3. Get a medical check up and show each other a current documented report giving a clean bill of health for *all* sexually transmitted diseases and infectious diseases.
4. Take responsible measures for birth control and accept the possibility of a child.
5. Study the word of God together, pray together, and fellowship together.
6. Make this rational vow of fidelity and spiritual union:

(The man says this.) "Almighty God, we come before You asking to be joined in Spiritual Union. I take you to be my wife, soul mate, lover, and best friend. Under God's laws I will love, honor, respect and treat you as God desires a man to treat his wife."

(The woman says this.) "I take you to be my husband, soul mate, lover, and best friend. Under God's laws I will love, honor, respect and treat you as God desires a woman to treat her husband."

(The man says this.) "Lord, You have promised the gift of eternal life. We have chosen to be obedient to your Laws. In Your great power, we earnestly ask You to accept this covenant as a valid resolution of fidelity and commitment until our formal wedding. Anoint us with Your power. Bless our relationship. We want to express our gratitude and praise You all the days of our lives – amen."

If a man and women do theses things, the Holy Spirit will be there to support them, to guide them, and sanctify them (be ready for hard times) as they become equipped to discern spiritual truth and defend themselves from spirits of darkness.

SO-CALLED FRIENDS

If our associates cause us to sin or stumble, we should dissociate ourselves from them. It is better that we lose all of our so-called friends' than be coerced into stumbling or lead from His path. Remember, dispirited companionship – can corrupt good character.

We teach that everyone who dissociates themselves from their so-called friends should engage in intercessory prayer for them. We need to help and pray for our lost brothers and sisters. When appropriate, we must also give and forgive unconditionally.

WORSHIP...

...is more than song, dance, prayer, meditation, or supplication. The heart of worship is whole heartedly choosing to fulfill God's will and denying of ourselves unworthy action and inaction. From our motives, thoughts, and the words we speak – to the things we consume; from the things we do – to the things we do not do. True worship is obeying God's will, honoring His commandments, and sustaining a life that is pleasing to Him.

All of the singing, waving, and clapping of the hands is basically irreverent worship if we are ignorantly or callously living unprincipled lives. As we look at all of the problems in the world, and then we have 76.5% (159 million) of Americans identifying themselves as Christians, it is obvious that we are getting more song and dance than true worship.

WE ARE TO PRESENT AN OFFERING TO THE LORD

At least a tenth of our earnings should be paid as a voluntary contribution to the Lord. When we have finished paying our tithe, we must remember that all the blessings entrusted to us were given, so we could give again. It is an owner-manager relationship, God owns everything, and we are to be His stewards.

Stewardship is fourfold and it applies to everyone, including churches, charities, (and similar organizations) and their leaders. It consists of receiving, managing, increasing, and giving. Excess in one area will not compensate for lack in another. Receiving, managing, increasing, and giving are to be balanced. However, remember, all we can do is try to do our best; many good people have failed financially and/or have had serious financial problems.

It seems that many church and charity leaders exempt themselves from Matthew 25:14-30; they give away money before they increase it. Other church and charity leaders misemploy the system and misappropriate astronomical sums of money and resources. The New Jerusalem is not going to be built giving money and resources out as fast as they come in. We need to employ a business model that will increase capital exponentially as we build the Kingdom of God. "To whom much is given – much is required."

If a person is has little money or they choose not to tithe, they can work for, or help support a ministry or charity of their choice—implementing alms giving and aid.

Do not get conned or cajoled by so-called men and women of God. Excessive reaping, spending, buying, or giving is not good stewardship.

DO NOT STEAL OR BE FOOLISH

Given opportunity, many people would steal if they thought that they could get away with it. Others blatantly plunder or inconspicuously steal. Some people defraud others when they are selling or buying things. All sacrifice their eternal inheritance.

Gambling can destroy our values. It can be addicting. With about 24,000 people dying everyday from treatable conditions and about 1.2 billion people being underfed and undernourished: obsessive, compulsive, and/or high stakes gambling is a form of malice. We cannot find lasting fulfillment by playing games, adding to our possessions, or entertaining ourselves; it is given to us by God when we surrender our selfish and misaligned desires and commit ourselves to living a life that is pleasing to Him.

We can also steal (in a sense) by wasting or misappropriating money, or not sharing and putting to good use the blessings that have been entrusted to us.

We should not feel guilty for enjoying beautiful things and God-given pleasures. Instead, we should know that as we give to the world, God will give to us according to the dictates of His judgment. We should be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with wisdom and loving kindness correcting those who are in opposition.

“JUDGE NOT, THAT YOU ARE NOT JUDGED”

Those of us who deem others unworthy at a glance have a long way to go before we find peace and freedom. Judging others confirms that we have not reached the point where we are able to empathize with others. This biased and opinionated perception will keep us in spiritual bondage. Furthermore, until we learn to empathize with others and act compassionately we will never find out who we really are.

When we pass judgment upon another we set ourselves up for failure, in a way. For example, we all have trials and tribulations coming our way; and a way of not compounding these challenges is not to pass judgment on others.

As we sin and err, then repent and mature we become sanctified and ennobled. Although we may fall short as we did before, we can still grow in loving wisdom and reach out to others if we do not make a habit of judging and condemning others.

We should not give credence to the critics who judge us. However, we should not automatically ignore our own critics. There are times when we may need to quiet down and listen to or review what our critics have to say about us in a non-judgmental, impartial way; *they may reveal things about us that our friends never would.*

The art of criticism is exclusive to those who are reluctant to exercise introspection. It is far easier to vindictively take someone else's inventory than take a humble position that requires integrity. Bear in mind, that our vain attempts to judge others and exalt ourselves – will by and large produce some type of backlash.

DO NOT DECEIVE

We shall not bear false witness against our brothers and sisters. A false witness is a person who lies, one who stirs up controversy among his fellows. Those who withhold information that can destroy an untruth, or pour out lies, will not go unpunished. Misrepresentation comes from our sinful nature--it will keep us in bondage.

FOUR BASIC UNIVERSAL RULES

“Love God with all your might.” Holiness is wholeness for God, it is also power, and by being shared, it gains power. “Love the brethren, have compassion for those separated from God.” “To thine own self be true.” By being true to ourselves, it sets a stage to become true to other people. “Treat others (honorably) as you would have them treat you.” This rule recognizes that others and we are the same.

Application of these principles would revolutionize social practices. They could change the course of mankind.

RESPECT PROPER AUTHORITY AND LIFE

This extends to parents, relatives, humanity, government, and God. Supreme love for God and unprejudiced love for humanity go together. We respect our own life, also the lives of others. We follow the dictates of God's laws and ethical government regulations. We stand united for freedom and human rights. We also stand united for our faith, which we will not be coerced into denying.

ACCOUNTABILITY

We overcome our sinful nature through partnership with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must not defeat ourselves by attempting to gratify the debased desires of our sinful nature. The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, covetousness, envy, drunkenness, drug abuse and the like, as well as sexual immorality (to name a few).

The chronological stage when we become accountable for our motives, thoughts, and conduct, is not a fixed age; it is relative, depending on the growth of our moral consciousness. We need time to develop a clear view of what we do not want to be like.

Although we center on God's grace and mercy in view of human character defects and inadequacies; there comes a time when each of us is fully accountable for the lives we live. It is our personal responsibility to work in partnership with God and ready ourselves for *divine encounter*.

When we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord, we are forgiven for our transgressions. We are no longer slaves to sin or enthralled by darkness; we are freed to see Light and perceive hope. Through resisting sin and attentiveness in prayer, meditation, fellowshiping, studying, and implementing the word of God; we can develop the Divine Strength that we have received to fight the presence of our sinful nature; by availing ourselves to the grace of All-mighty God and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, our accountability is matched by God's grace and forgiveness.

RACISM...

...has been, and is, a major problem throughout the world. It is the notion that one's own ethnic stock is superior. It is an unethical use of power to isolate, separate, and/or exploit others. Racism will continue to undermine humanity as long as individuals deny the fact that all humans were created in God's image; that we are all brothers and sisters.

We must learn to deal constructively with racism and realize that hatred and self-righteousness are a lie from the negative force of misconception. We must accept and embrace all races, *or* we will be separated from the grace and mercy of God.

REMEMBER THE DAY OF REST

Six days a week are for work or other activities. Working seven days a week on a regular basis is not healthy physically, mentally, or emotionally; and it is also unhealthy for our personal relationships and our relationship with God.

An excessive endeavor to achieve worldly success and/or the squandering of precious time is not what God desires for His children. The seventh day of the week is the Sabbath, a day of rest. However, it is not feasible for all businesses and services to shut down on the same day every week. However, one day a week is to worship God (go to church if possible) and strengthen bonds with our families and loved ones, and to relax and rest (to an appropriate degree).

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS

Nowhere in the bible do we find any command to celebrate or not to celebrate the birth of Christ, nor does it tell us when or how. As with almost all Christian holidays, Easter has pagan roots and it has been secularized and commercialized. Halloween can be a manifestation of satanic power if we fail to celebrate correctly.

However, instead of abolishing these and other holidays, we need to introduce ways to Christianize and celebrate them in ways that are pleasing to God. Failing to celebrate holidays would be detrimental to the body of Christ. Explain to children the: who, what, where, when, and why of holidays. Holidays are a time for deep religious reflection and whole family association. We need to keep all of our holidays hallowed and dedicate them to the Lord.

WE ARE THE TEMPLE OF GOD...

...and the Spirit of God dwells within us. God commands that we live as well as we can. We all must strive to achieve our own personal best. We should make choices that honor His plan.

We are instructed to fast regularly and to live a life of discipline. Fasting is a path to communing—if done reverently. During it, we give ourselves to prayer or other devotional exercises.

There are scores of ill-considered reasons to commit suicide. Many people commit suicide to show contempt for an enemy; to protest against injustice, as a means to get their god to reconsider an unwise or unworthy action, as a means to save others, escape pain, or get even; others commit suicide as an act of penance for a shameful conduct.

Life is a gift from God and that we do not have the right to deliberately harm ourselves, end our lives, or profanely harm others. Life has its share of hardship and heartaches. However, any seeming defeat we may suffer on earth will turn out to be a victory if we keep our integrity. Physical death is merely an extension of mortal life. Those who willfully commit suicide will wake up in another level of existence and realize that their problems have proliferated and are now insurmountable. Willfully committing suicide relinquishes our opportunity to be redeemed; it is the epitome of self-absorption with a disregard for our loved ones.

There comes a time in life of many people, when illness has set in, the body is not going to heal, and they are going to die. You are the key to ensuring death with dignity. When living is an insurmountable burden — there is no easy way out. We do not support or endorse euthanasia, suicide, or senilicide.

The word tells us that we must endure until God delivers us from the flesh. However, avoiding food and water intake and getting crucified with Christ is the only realistic option. When you feel the pain and suffering the Lord experienced, and say, "Father forgive them, they know not what they do," it will be finished -- soon!

We are not to lacerate or mutilate our bodies. We are not to pierce our bodies. If we already have these pierces, it is not a sin—but it necessary to remove the rings and studs (when appropriately possible). Piercing the ears in a conservative sense and wearing nice earrings is fine.

We are not to put tattoo marks on our bodies. If we have tattoos, it is not a sin. However, we should not get tattoos (unless it is a cover-up tattoo). Furthermore, those who pierce, tattoo, and defile others will never enter the kingdom unless they repent of their doings.

We are not to get distasteful haircuts, dye our hair unnatural colors, or wear disrespectful clothing—these things (to mention a few) are offensive to the Spirit of God that dwells within us.

We must take responsibility for what we put into our mouths. Gluttony, unhealthy eating habits, drug abuse, and the like are the result of years of ignorance and/or underlying spiritual maladies. We should not be controlled by a desire to consume anything to excess; addictions that are harmful to the body, are wrong. We cannot eat, party, or sloth ourselves to death while hiding behind the name of Jesus and expect Salvation.

We must think of our body as God's temple, a masterpiece that He does not want us to abuse and/or neglect. We must strive to live a healthy life—which doesn't necessarily mean being perfect, but that we are favoring a semi-healthy lifestyle or at least in the process of working on sloth, debased desires, and habits.

A healthy life is one in which we eat and drink responsibly, exercise, and strive to think positively. We must learn to maintain proper eating habits. If anyone has a serious disorder or problem, they might need some kind of program or support group.

We need to commit to some kind of exercise program that will meet our own personal needs, which should include stretching, yoga, sauna bath, massage, bodywork, walking, and some kind of aerobic exercise a few times a week. Some kind of exercise that will raise our metabolism, burn calories, and increase energy; something that will make us feel good about ourselves. We need to eat as well as we can, keep our pH balanced, take only "GC Approved" supplements and super foods, and drink plenty of "PristineHydro Living Water."

God is looking for men and women who hunger to know Him, who strive to live healthy lives, study His word, and be good examples of His righteousness.

Those who are in tune with God let them understand what the Spirit has revealed: to those who overcome, God will give them the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in Heaven.

God loves and forgives us, but the quality of our spiritual relationship is greater when He sees that we are obedient today. We must purify ourselves from everything that contaminates us, perfecting holiness out of love and reverence for God.

REVERENCE...

...is adoration and worship. It is a sense of fear and respect, linked with a cherished admiration and a tenderness of feeling. Our depth of comprehension begins to make us lax in worldly ways. Dropping of ineffective behavior becomes a pleasure. A complete transformation of self-will, passions, and appetites are brought into surrender. Reverence comes naturally, and we demonstrate it.

CONTENTMENT THROUGH STRUCTURE

Holy contentment is more than the mere absence of sorrow – it is a perpetual experience that passes all understanding. Many people have a wrong idea of what constitutes true contentment. Contentment is not attained through mundane sources; it is a spiritual gift that we receive when we are obedient to God commandments and laws and follow His plan for our lives. The Christian doctrine of contentment is superlative. A gracious, patient, humble, and tranquil spirit is a contented spirit. We cannot be totally committed sometimes, or change laws we did not make, *and the Laws were made for us*, not by us.

CONTENT ARE THOSE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR SPIRITUAL NEED; FOR THEY HAVE UNSEEN STRENGTH.

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO STRIVE FOR PROGRESS AND ARE DISSATISFIED WITH SELF; FOR THEY ARE ON THEIR WAY. (*False pride and compliancy warrant backsliding.*)

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO GIVE; FOR THEY UNDERSTAND THAT TO GIVE IS TO RECEIVE, TO RECEIVE IS TO GIVE.

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO FORGIVE; FORGIVENESS WILL BEGET FORGIVENESS.

CONTENT ARE THE HUMBLE; FOR BEING HONEST WITH ONESELF IS BASIC TO HAPPINESS.

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO LOVE AND COMFORT; FOR THEY WILL BE LOVED. (*Love is mercy in action. Hatred, anger, and the like cease not when met with ignorance in return.*)

CONTENT ARE THE PURE IN HEART; FOR THEY ARE AT ONE WITH GOD.

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO WORK FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM; FOR THEY KNOW THAT TO HAVE PEACE IS TO IMPART IT TO OTHERS; AND BY OFFERING FREEDOM IN JESUS' NAME, THEY WILL BE FREE.

CONTENT ARE THOSE WHO LIVE TO BE HEALTHY AND RIGHTEOUS THROUGH FAITH; FOR THEY LOOK AND SEE, LISTEN AND HEAR, READ AND COMPREHEND, SPEAK FROM LOVE, AND SHALL NEVER PERISH.

CONTENTMENT

The Laws of the universe are as the word indicates--*universal*. They are established for our protection. They are as sacred as our safety. We cannot stop the operation of them, though we can disobey them. When we (those who are born again) do disobey God's commandments, we should feel guilty and separated. Those who blatantly or continually disobey God's Laws will be condemned. Those who belittle His commandments and misguide others jeopardize their Salvation; but those who honor, sustain, and teach them will be rewarded.

All who obey God's Commandments are declaring that the Laws are holy, just, and good. On the other hand, those who continually break the Laws are indirectly sustaining Satan and his demons' claim: "that the Laws are unjust."

Do not be deceived, those who forsake their children or make them pass through life neglected or abused, or those who use divination, or practice witchcraft, or interpret omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead; furthermore, idolaters, adulterers, abusers of sexuality, perverts, thieves, robbers, drunkards, drug abusers, gluttons, revilers, and those who are greedy (to mention a few) nor those who willfully disregard one principle of the Law, shall enter the kingdom of heaven: unless they accept the Atonement and repent of their evil doings. Nothing inadequate or unclean shall enter the Kingdom. For whoever does these things and does not repent--is detestable to God.

This practice of Universal Laws will be pleasant when there is enlightened surrender of the lower will. By this, we link ourselves to the world above. This means that our God of love recognizes and blesses those who live by the *Law of love* (blessings are not necessarily material or circumstantial; our inner being is renewed daily).

This pleasant state of being reflects the purity of Father God, embedded in us. In short, we convert into a reflection and an instrument of the Holy Spirit.

As the sunbeam imparts to the rainbow its varied and delicate tints, *so does God give to the soul the beauty of His integrity.* As we turn toward Jesus, the Holy Spirit brings to our character the virtues of Father God. Rejoice that we are at one with God, the universe and every good thing in it.

PREPARE THE WAY - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

Prepare yourself to praise the glory of God's grace and mercy. Walk in all His ways. Know that all things work together for good. Instill Almighty God's commandments, laws, and judgments into your mind and heart--fear the Lord. Submit to the commandments, and all the Laws of God. Serve God and be faithful to Him--with all your mind--with all your heart, and He will bless you with eternal life. May grace, mercy, serenity, and joy pervade you.

God cares for His people. They will be in His presence forever. On the other hand the unjust shall be cut off—for eternity. To keep our relationship with God vibrant and healthy, we must discipline ourselves in the ways of the Lord. We also need to work together for good and do our best to react correctly to all of our trials.

If we covet temporal pleasures or thrills, we will not be fulfilled. We cannot entertain ourselves into a state of lasting fulfillment. There is no lasting joy or peace outside the realm of God's will. Therefore, vanity is temporal and making short-lived worldly pleasures preeminent is just that. Behold, therefore, all that are enthralled with short lived worldly pleasures or thrills as an escape from truth, (which is from themselves) give up Divine Power.

This is the condemnation: Infinite Love has been offered to the world, but most people prefer temporal desires, pleasures, and thrills over fellowship with God, because their hearts and minds are not right.

God has shown us what is good, and what we are required to do. Be thankful for His mercy. Walk humbly with God (obeying truth helps purify us). Be kindly affectionate one to another in brotherly love. In honor, we are to embrace one another (at the right time and place). As the elect of God: we need to think realistically, practice tolerance, love the brethren, and have compassion for those who are separated from the Lord. Whenever feasible we should avoid those who curse, spitefully use, abuse, and persecute us; and pray for them. We must defend piously when necessary; however, we are not to avenge, or repay evil for evil, nor bear any biased grudges.

This is the commandment: love one another as Jesus loves you. There is no greater love than His. The Lord came down from the throne on high, to a destitute and undeveloped land, at stakes beyond our knowledge, tempted and tried to the utmost; He was brutalized and laid down His life for us, and forgave.

PREPARE THE WAY

When we deny ourselves for the Lord, He lives in our hearts by faith. The life that we now live, we live by faith through Jesus. He gave Himself for us that we may be heirs of eternal life; and that the glory and truth of the Gospel will live on.

God knows our hearts and minds; when they are right, new visions, revelations, and responsibilities come to us. For the Lord blesses and empowers those who follow truth. Those who love truth--desire wisdom and knowledge; they reject evil, love the good, direct their lives by truth, and strive to live devout lives.

Having been tested by fire (trials, tribulations, hardship), sanctified through Truth, we are born again through Jesus Christ. According to the foreknowledge of Almighty God, however, we are yet sinners. For only through continual obedience to the Lord and the sprinkling of His blood may we be reconciled with Infinite Love. Remember, the road to heaven is narrow and the way is painstaking (conversely, the sides of that road are well trodden).

A TESTIMONY OF JESUS - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

Matthew 25:31-46 (NIV)

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory.

All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the Kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world: For I was hungry and you gave Me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited Me in, I needed clothes and you clothed Me, I was sick and you looked after Me, I was in prison and you came to visit Me.’

Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You something to drink? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You? When did we see You sick or in prison and go to visit You?’

The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me.’

Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me.’

They also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help You?’

He will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for Me.’

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

A GLANCE AT THE BIG PICTURE - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

He Knew Us Before We Were Formed In The Womb

Because *all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*, we will experience many trials, tribulations, and tragedies throughout our lives. Until God's appointed time, we need to endure life on life's terms, and persevere through prayer. Trials, tribulations, and tragedies are intended to help produce endurance and develop our character and they are always opportunities to demonstrate and affirm our faith. They will help make us stronger – or cause us to stumble – or fall to pieces. In point of fact, we can be sure of our endurance and the stability of our faith *only* as we endure or overcome everything that comes our way.

Whatever misfortune life may bring, nothing can destroy God's love for us. Any seeming defeat we may suffer will turn out to be a victory if we keep our integrity.

In light of justice God abandoned us to the devil's powers; but with everlasting kindness He will liberate those of us with a broken heart, those of us who repent and surrender to Jesus. He will make us strong, firm, and steadfast.

God disciplines us with justice; but He does not let us go entirely unpunished. Though He allows grief, hardship, and calamity... He demonstrates compassion. He has not treated us as we deserve or repaid us according to our iniquities. For us, the elect, He has given us a magnificent opportunity to be redeemed. His anger is short-lived for those who repent... and His favor lasts for eternity.

Consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. For though we will suffer grief in all kinds of trials, tribulations, and tragedies; as we work in partnership with God to overcome or withstand them, they are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them.

God has told us these things, so that we may have serenity and joy in spite of circumstances. In this world, we will have hardships and afflictions--but take heart! Jesus Christ has overcome the world.

Almighty God, who called us to His eternal glory in Jesus Christ, will renew and uphold those with contrite heart; the kind of spirit pleasing and acceptable to Him. Those with a contrite heart feel remorse over wrongdoing and express a genuine sorrow for their sins.

A Godly conviction leads to repentance. Worldly sorrow brings only self-pity; it just keeps us feeling sorry for ourselves. We need to learn to see a greater purpose behind our difficult circumstances.

Only the Holy Spirit can bring a godly conviction and a personal awareness of sin that leads to reformation. Though we all have character defects and shortcomings, we can rest in the assurance that God is sovereign and He can use even our failures and shortcomings to bring us to repent.

A true conviction of sin has more to do with inward motives than with outward actions. It involves the character. Its primary motive must be the desire to please God with all of one's life, rather than just because we fear the consequences of sin.

We must realize that we are responsible for our actions, and that we are the ones who must consciously decide to ask for His help and turn away from bad or foolish behavior or habits and embrace a holy lifestyle. Holiness leads to life lived as God intended. Rather than enslaving us, it frees us from our limitations. Only through Jesus Christ can true holiness be found.

We do not need to separate ourselves from society in order to be holy. Most of us must still function in the real world, and make decisions about challenges and problems. It is in these areas that personal holiness is lived out, for most of us.

Most people think holiness is unimportant. Leaders, entertainers, and athletes are often judged, valued, and even idolized for their talents or skills (it is rarely if at all ever mentioned that the way majority of them live is displeasing to God). Furthermore, many so-called Christians are proclaiming faith rather than repentance and godliness. They are antinomian. Antinomianism is the doctrine or belief that the Gospel frees Christians from required obedience to any law, whether scriptural, civil, or moral, and that salvation is attained solely through faith and the gift of divine grace. Romans 6 is one of many refutations for antinomianism.

By definition, holiness means to be separated and set apart for God. Today, the concept of holy living is often not listened to.

The Christian life stresses repentance, godliness, prayer, and evangelism. We need to obey, honor, and sustain all laws. We must be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and praiseworthy. These essential virtues are prerequisites for regeneration—that we become Christ-like. True holiness will give us credibility; lack of it will destroy us.

Our communication with the Lord is the mainstay of our relationship with Him. Living a holy life is one of many ways to communicate with God (He can see who we are and what we are truly thankful for -- by the way we act). Without holiness, our relationship with the Lord becomes one-dimensional.

GOD IS WITH US - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

God disciplines His children, as good parents properly discipline the children they delight in. As children sometime doubt their parents' judgment, we have also doubted God. We must learn to trust God without reservation; He is the infinite source of wisdom, compassion, empathy, grace, and mercy. We must always strive to understand God's lessons and accept His discipline.

When we are rebuked by God, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with those who do not repent. We must be earnest, knowing that God rebukes those He loves. We must endure hardship as discipline; and realize God is sanctifying us. Blessed are those who learn from God's corrections, for they have favor in the sight of the Lord.

If we are living devout lives, but insulted or hated because of our love for Jesus, we are having an experience similar to what the Lord went through; keep the faith for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon us.

Many Christians are being persecuted and put to death because of their testimony to Jesus. Other Christians are being slain in cold blood by ruthless predators. We must go beyond the moment and ask God for strength, so that we understand and rejoice that they are in heaven; that all of us will be rewarded when Glory is revealed. God will uphold us because of our integrity and faith, and will set us in His presence forever.

Many are the heartaches of the unjust, but God's unfailing love surrounds those who trust in Him and honorably follow His path. He has shown His steadfast love to us when we were unfulfilled, tormented, or afflicted. He has shown us signs and wonders, and restored our contrite hearts. He has established our faith, delivered us from a worthless existence, and given us new values.

The so-called joys of the godless and unjust are short-lived. God will execute judgment upon the unjust and godless. Just as God condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah: sexually transmitted diseases, infectious diseases, self-inflicted, and inflicted maladies are about to become major epidemics that will threaten global well-being.

God shall smite the earth with all plagues so we will know His fury. These plagues will generate major disasters: nations will be cut off, their strongholds demolished, cities will dilapidate, and many houses will be boarded up. Lack of employment will devastate many people. Many families will be destroyed, the middle class will disappear, and the masses will live in poverty. Ruthless predators will ravage. Few people will be unaffected. These plagues will cling to the planet and its descendants until the end of the age.

In fury God tires to get the attention the unjust and godless; but most of them do not respond to His correction, and come to repentance. He has tried to reform them, but they refuse to pay attention; they stubbornly return to their folly. He has given them time to repent of their immorality and selfishness, but they are unwilling. Some of these people picked up these character defects through rebellion, others through ignorance. Nevertheless, God is outraged at their behavior. They reap what they have sown.

God is just; He will punish those who do not walk in obedience, those who spurn His rebuke. They have hardened their hearts and will not obey His laws and commandments.

The laws of God are righteous and those who observe His laws should observe them in honor; and those who abstain from evil, should abstain in honor of the Lord. Those who are born again must always thank God the Father and Jesus Christ for the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, transforming our lives, judging us faithful, and appointing us to service.

God has revealed Himself to all the inhabitants of the world; He has shown His holiness, grace, mercy, and His fury – nonetheless, most people are so enthralled with the things of the world that they are unable to perceive and grasp the glorious reality behind this world of seeming.

As God's elect we will fear God and live devoutly. We will proclaim His works and be filled with reverence, because of what He has done, what He has allowed to happen, and how He foretold many of the things we are witnessing in the Bible thousands of years ago.

THE FEAR OF GOD - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

The wrath of God is being issued from heaven, against godless, wicked, and debased people! Do not lust after the flesh, or be deceived by its beautiful appearance, nor be allured by a seductive tongue. After all, Satan appears as a beautiful angel and he is the “father of lies.” His illuminations lead to affliction, his ways to hell.

Lust impairs the perspective by fragmenting reason; it impels people to focus on misconceptions. Lusting drives people to live indecent lives. It preys upon self-reliance. It inhibits the formation quality of relationships. Many people choose temporal lust over infinite love. Because of this, God leaves them with a void; He gives them over to their shameful lusts and desires. Furthermore, since these people do not repent and find it necessary to obtain knowledge of God and His commandments, or live honorable lives, they receive a reprobate mind and their consciences are tainted. Having lost sensitivity to the Spirit, they indulge in many forms of impurity, with a continual lust for more. A domineering libido taints the relationship between thoughtful and emotional awareness and physical sensations — resulting in a kind of amnesia for aligned thought and behavior.

Pornography is another one of Satan’s delusions. It can be addictive. It lures many of the deluded into a fantasy and it leads to dissatisfaction. It corrupts the mind with perversion and lust. Only a confused mind can enjoy watching men and women indulging in deviate behavior.

Compulsive masturbation is one of Satan’s strategic manipulations. It only temporally relieves the permanent problem it creates. It conditions us to believe: I want sex--I want it, I want it, I want it. We induce ourselves and destroy our defenses. It incites high-risk behavior. Thoughts are energy, as we think; we develop (to some degree).

Immoral sexual fantasies are lies from the negative force of misconception; they can be addictive. Entertaining fantasies and reviewing sexually explicit material can produce an amphetamine-like high. This folly (as all folly) depletes and displaces the spiritual energy that is meant to facilitate our relationship with God. It will affect our aura and disposition. These thoughts can materialize (thought often leads to actions). Giving free rein to our thoughts and fantasies is planting the seeds of our own defeat. Temptations defeated at the thought level rarely materialize. Immoral sexual fantasies are displeasing to God. Sexual intimacy is intended to give God and us pleasure. Every thought we have is conveyed to spiritual deities, and divine agencies scorn tainted thoughts of perversion and lust. When we make love with our mate, God desires us to emanate pure thought and the act of unadulterated love.

Wickedness enslaves many people; they are filled with carnal desires and many forms of greed, animosity, envy, ignorance, and self-determination. They tend to be abusers, destroyers, disrespectful, arrogant, rebellious, and ruthless. They are inclined to be irrational, belligerent, unpredictable, spontaneous, and dangerous.

There are scores of religions and beliefs that serve the wrong God. These people do not believe that Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sins. Therefore, they ignore His commandments, study false teachings, and they believe lies. This is the paradox, until we receive Jesus Christ into our hearts as Savior and Lord; faith and reason are contradictory to each other.

Other debased people claim to know God, but by their deeds they deny him. They claim to know His commandments. They say they believe that all who do evil and perverse things deserve to be cast into hell; however, it does not stop them from behaving in disrespectful ways. They are vile and disobedient and pursued by the wrath of God.

Many of these deceived people not only do detestable things, with little or no remorse; but they give approval to others who engage in their deviate behavior of choice, while condemning others.

The deluded are confused, enthralled in darkness. They are deprived of the glory of God. They are in a desperate plight; they must turn from their corrupted ways, if they are to be saved from the pit of hell.

Many of us were taught by corruption. We have spent enough time living in detestable ways. We must turn from our old ways that are corrupted by deceitful desires of our sinful nature, repent and be born again, in God's image.

Who ever lives in a way that is not pleasing to God must repent. However, it usually takes time and effort to overcome bad traits and habits; even after repentance our whole life must be guarded with great care and diligence. Our amendment cannot be secured without the grace of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, the prayers of good people, the help of the fellowship, and our own constant care.

Blessed are those who walk the straight and narrow path.

Blessed are those who set good examples (they do not sway others in the wrong direction).

Blessed are those who feel remorse when they stumble.

Blessed are those who do not condemn themselves for what they approve of.

If we do not repent, we will be consumed in darkness. We will bear the consequences of our deceitful actions. God will treat us with contempt.

We need to demonstrate God's love by being good examples in every respect, with integrity in our teaching, dignity, and sound speech. We are to slander no one, and be considerate, exercising all graciousness toward everyone.

For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, deluded, slaves to various desires and pleasures--many of us living in intentional or unintentional malice. Nevertheless, God transformed us, teaching us to reject godless ways and worldly desires, to live temperately, justly, and devoutly.

Not because of any righteous deeds we have done, but because of God's grace and mercy, He saved us through His word and the in-filling of the Holy Spirit, whom He richly poured out on us through Jesus Christ our Savior; that we might be justified and be the heirs of eternal life. One of the reasons that God saved us, is so that we can teach by example and offer the Gospel to others.

We should strive for what is real and of eternal value. This life on earth should be largely a preparation for the eternal life to come.

All who are apart from the Law will be cast into hell, and all who are under the Law will be judged. The world and its desires pass away, but those who do the will of God live gloriously in His presence forever.

THE ROAD IS NARROW - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

Seek first the eternal principles of God and the root of His commandments, and all blessings entrusted to us will be managed according to His eternal wisdom. Unregenerate people desire things of the world first; worldly desires precede spiritual knowledge. In fact, most people do not understand how to manage the things they desire or what their real value is (how they should be used for God's purposes).

Money, material possessions, physical fitness and/or physical gratification will not keep us happy. *Freedom* without proper structure is chaos. Fame drives many of its recipients into seclusion. Relationships that are not blessed by God and kept vibrant and healthy with an eternal perspective turn rancid. The quest for power has destroyed nations. The attainment of power without wisdom is destroying parts of the planet and the human race. By and large, when it comes to money, power, and fame the more we get the more difficult and trying our lives become.

For Christian couples it is preposterous to assume that what you own warrants that you need to have a prenuptial agreement. When worldly security, money, and things are paramount to love and trust, they become stepping stones to spiritual destitution and a foundation for discontentment.

True balance and harmony come only through a relationship with God's Son and surrender unto His righteousness. We must realize that money, material possessions, freedom, relationships, or personal achievements will not provide lasting joy and contentment. When our relationship with God is not paramount we will never find lasting joy or contentment. Joy, contentment, and serenity are imparted when we surrender to God and internalize that He is always here for us; that He will always love, accompany, sustain, help, protect, and uphold us (according to the dictates of His judgment). We pay tribute in service gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with His help.

Nothing can satisfy or purify like serving God; no nobler work exists on earth. A right condition of our personal life is a key to serving God; and serving God must be paramount in order to develop a quality relationship with God. We must also be cleansed from sin and emptied of self, in order to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

We must be right with God, before we can be right with others. We need to study God's Word on a regular basis. Personal regeneration is effected by a combination of human will and divine grace. Through God's grace, studying His Word, and implementing the many ingredients for successful living, we achieve an effect of which each is individually incapable. We call this synergism or the synergistic effect of regeneration.

The various gifts and blessings bestowed upon us can be subject to abuse; the right use of them demands the controlling power of the will empowered by and subject to the guidance of and the Holy Spirit.

Beware of fraudulent teachers who present themselves as friends, but are inwardly separated from the Lord. They may talk of God--but they do not enthrone Jesus. A competent teacher acknowledges Jesus before others and produces competent disciples.

We should not portray ourselves as holier-than-thou or set out to impress others with religious jargon or personal virtue.

Prayer is not a medium to bring about our own goals and desires; prayer is an opportunity for us to work in partnership with the Lord in accomplishing His purposes. Do not make a scene and pray or meditate in public as an exhibition. Do not recite empty phrases (we cannot please God with insincere words). Do not pray for personal excess, unnecessary luxuries, or things that would separate us from God's will and purpose. Pray humbly and the Holy Spirit will give to us according to His eternal wisdom. Pray for knowledge, discernment, wisdom, and the power and means to carry out God's will. Pray in solitude—pray sincerely—and blessings will be entrusted. Pray for others; as we bless and forgive others, God blesses and forgives us. Pray for all of mankind. Pray and be fulfilled—knowing that we are God's elect, that we have the promise of eternal life, and that His kingdom will be ours as well.

As the elect of God, we should not become distraught about money, provisions, or circumstances we cannot control. We are God's elect and we are precious to Him. Let us maintain our perspective. Do not flip out, panic, or become overly worried about the future; the future is in God's hands. Focus on what you can achieve today, plan for tomorrow, and realize that today's challenges and lessons are sufficient for today.

As we unite with Jesus, we find solace. Learn from the Holy Spirit; repent and every sin will be forgiven. However, continually living in flagrant sin, and hiding behind the name of Jesus while doing it is blasphemy against the Spirit, and it will not be forgiven. Furthermore, whoever blasphemes the work of the Spirit by not accepting Jesus, will not be forgiven.

The road to hell is wide, it is often paved with good intentions, many times it seduces with so-called pleasures. It leads to eternal punishment; and those who enter by it are many. Everyone who follows this path will be forsaken. Many will cry out, "Lord, Lord, did we not do many mighty works in your name?" "Then He will declare to them: I never knew you, depart from me you hypocrites." The road to Heaven is narrow, the way is painstaking, and it leads to eternal life; and those who find it are few!

CHILDREN OF THE SPIRIT - (Gleanings From Biblical Research)

WE ARE GOD'S CHILDREN.

**WE NEED TO GROW TOWARD CHRIST-LIKENESS
AND DEMONSTRATE GOD'S POWER... IN OUR LIVES.
THROUGH GOD'S LOVE AND UNITY OF THE SPIRIT,
WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS.**

We have one Master, our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the luminary of the heavenly and eternal dwelling place, the One to whom all judgment is committed, the Conqueror of the enemies of God and His people. He is seen in the position of sovereign glory and honor, which He shares equally with the Father.

His sacrifice is the basis of redemption and of divine vengeance. Through His sacrifice, comes the power that avails those who accept the salvation thereby provided. It also spurs divine wrath for the rejector, and the defier of Almighty God. Magnificent is this opportunity that God has granted the elect, that we may be redeemed and called His children.

We must strive to try to live in harmony with one another and make every effort to do what leads to peace and mutual edification. We are to be sympathetic, empathic, humble, and compassionate. We are to love as brothers and sisters and serve together as one body--in one mind and spirit.

We must work to agree with one another and aim for progress, rather than perfection, so there may be no division among us; that we may be united in heart and thought, and live in peace. How wonderful and gratifying it is when we live and work together in unity!

This is how God showed His love among us: not that we loved God, but that He loved us; and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins, that we might live through Him. Since God so loved us, we are petitioned to share that love. This is God's command: to believe in His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another. Whoever does not love, does not know God, because God is love. We must know and rely on the love God has for us.

In this life we need to try our best to be like our Lord Jesus Christ, in this way, love is made complete among us. Let us not love only with words, but also with actions and in truth. Do not be proud or conceited, but be willing to reach out to all in need.

Those who have the ability to help others, but show no compassion for those in need are empty of the love of God. Our abilities and belongings should be assets to our fellows, never displayed as claims to distinction from them. (Application of this principle would revolutionize society's practices.)

If we say, "I love God," yet neglect our fellows, we misrepresent our Creator. The Holy Spirit has given us this command: whoever loves God must also love the brethren and have compassion for those separated from the Lord.

No one has ever seen Almighty God; but if we obey His commands, He lives in us and His love makes us complete. His perfect love drives out unwholesome fears.

Whatever happens to us in this world, we must conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Then, it will be clear to those around us that we stand firm in one spirit, demonstrating His power in our lives, earnestly contending as one body for the faith of the Gospel. We must strengthen our effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace, love, and compassion.

May the Holy Spirit, who gives endurance and encouragement, provide us a spirit of unity as we follow our Lord Jesus Christ; so that with one heart and voice, we may glorify Jehovah.

A VISION FOR US

The outline for successful living as presented in this manuscript is God's truth revealed in the light and love of a new era. We must realize that we have just begun this journey to wisdom and knowledge. God will gradually disclose more to us if we are faithful and persistent in meditation and attention.

In our morning prayers, we ask what we can do to carry the Gospel effectively. *Answers will come if our own lives are in order.* We keep a conscious contact with reverence in this way – and through meditation – so that great events can come to be.

Surrender yourself to the Spirit of Truth. Articulate your goals and aspirations. Admit your character defects and shortcomings to God and your spiritual advisor; right the wrongs you need to. This will help clear away the wreckage of your past and pave the way for your future. Give freely of what you gain. We are with you in the fellowship of the Spirit. We are the *league of comprehensive awareness*; may you awaken to its power. You will surely come closer to us as you progress on the road of eternal glory. May your faith fill you with strength, perseverance, hope, and tenacity.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCES OF TRANSFORMATION

FOR WHATEVER INSPIRATION OR HOPE THEY CAN GIVE

With diligence and scrupulous attention we progress. It is not enough to be educated. Right living and right relationships go with right doctrine. We must have commitment and discipline to serve. We must be disciplined as individuals, and orderly as a group. We do not practice diligent service, discipline, and obedience because we are hoping for an earthly reward. We confess, submit, and commit ourselves to God with joy and thankfulness--in love of service.

1. WE LEARN TO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME, AND ACCEPT THE REALITY OF TODAY.
2. WE DIMINISH SELF-CENTEREDNESS AND GAIN COMPASSION.
3. OUR WHOLE ATTITUDE AND OUTLOOK WILL CHANGE.
4. WE KNOW A NEW FREEDOM AND EXPERIENCE PURE JOY.
5. WE HAVE A STRONG IDENTITY AND GROW IN SELF-APPROVAL.
6. WE SURRENDER SELF-WILL AND FIND PLEASURE IN DOING GOD'S WILL.
7. WE RESPECT PROPER AUTHORITY AND STAND UNITED FOR FREEDOM.
8. NO MATTER HOW FAR DOWN THE SCALE WE HAVE GONE, WE DO NOT DWELL ON THE PAST, NOR WISH TO SHUT THE DOOR ON IT. WE NOW SEE HOW OUR PAST CAN BENEFIT OTHERS.
9. WE READILY HANDLE SITUATIONS THAT USED TO PERPLEX US.
10. WE KNOW HOPE--INSTEAD OF DESPERATION; FAITH--INSTEAD OF DESPAIR; SERENITY--INSTEAD OF CONFUSION; AND A CLEAN PATTERN OF LIFE--INSTEAD OF A HOPELESS EXISTENCE.
11. WE DEVELOP AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE.
12. WE REALIZE THAT GOD IS NOW DOING FOR US WHAT WE COULD NOT DO FOR OURSELVES.

Are these extravagant claims of transformations? We think not. We are experiencing these changes among us, sometimes quickly, sometimes gradually. They can appear when we work for them.

FRIENDSHIPS:

SOME IDEAS FOR GETTING AND KEEPING THEM

Of course, we make a friend by being a friend. A basic step in relationships is to be willing to *take a look at me*, not at you. *Taking a look at me* means identifying and dealing with the self-defeating, learned behaviors that keep me from having more honest relationships. Another basic step is to learn good listening skills; and remember that words are powerful. It takes much time, and many thoughtful words and actions to make a friend--so remember, you can devastate a friend with one foolish word or action.

People like people who like people. Be the first to extend a hand, an open heart, and other gestures of thoughtfulness. Take interest in your friends and their achievements. Keep your promises. Deal with jealousy if it arises. Give your friends some space. Go places with them. Learn the names of new friends. Keep your friends in your prayers.

Our friends do not always need us to talk them out of their feelings. Sometimes they may simply need us to help them identify their feelings by name. For example, we could say, "What are you feeling right now?" If they are not sure, we could name something like these rejection, fear, shame, disappointment, anger, etc. Alternatively, you might ask, "do you feel like a failure?" Then you might ask, "is it one of these?" Many times, *they just need someone to talk to, more than they need our answers.*

Friendships call for loyalty: to God, to truth, and to humanity. Respect, appreciate, and admire natural qualities. Do not be vengeful or envious. Mutual respect is imperative for lasting friendship. As we get closer to ourselves, we find out how to be a better friend. We know how we feel on the inside. We have no need to compare ourselves with others.

Irrational emotions can harm or destroy friendships. Irrational emotions are an inability to properly process facts; and most of the time the degree of this irrationality varies inversely with our awareness of the facts—and in general the less we know the more distraught we get.

Not all anger is unjustified or illogical, and often it's a healthy, natural response to an injustice or an inescapable problem. However, uncontrolled anger is a sign of weakness and/or ignorance. It can destroy friendships or other relationships. It can make us bitter, negative, withdrawn, or aggressive. We do not have to be destructive when angry if we learn how it is best handled. There is healthy anger, when the respect for others stays intact, and we are trying to communicate, rather than shut out communication. But even then, righteous indignation can result in evil if we are not careful. All too often, anger defeats logic, because even when it's justified, it can quickly become irrational.

We look at ourselves first and correct any wrong attitudes. If we have a domineering, critical, or condescending attitude, the other person may feel justifiable anger, until we have corrected it. Then of course, the friendship can find its way back on course.

Strive to cultivate a spirit of appreciation rather than one of condemnation and criticism. A healthy relationship should be based on trust, with a commitment to each other, and to open, honest communication. Faith, humility, empathy, love, and trust are essential ingredients. They help set us free and give us strength to live our lives to the fullest.

How can we avoid some of the common pitfalls in friendships? Let us look at some practical ideas:

1. We must learn to meet our own needs first, and identify any emptiness within ourselves. Friends cannot fill our emptiness. They can share in our fullness.
2. Be sure you and your friend have the same values.
3. Practice the art of asking, not demanding. Always be willing to listen, to be candid; learn to be flexible and to compromise on matters of personal convenience.
4. Don't assume anything. Clarify feelings through open, honest communication; empathize.
5. We need to establish small, achievable goals; and set realistic expectations for others and ourselves. We need to share quality time together and pray together.
6. Don't get discouraged; it takes time to build friendships. Relationships are built on long-term, authentic sharing; and on properly appreciating (which includes comprehending what the other person is about).

Real friendships are a powerful defense. We all experience trial and tribulations. We all stumble and fall. When we have relationships that are open and honest these real friends will be more than happy to come to our aid and help us get back on track (or support us in our efforts to grow and do our best to live a life that is pleasing to God). Those who develop, appreciate, and nurture close friendships have priceless treasures.

With the strength that comes from the love of the entire human family through the Lord, there is no limit to our potential for friendships. May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of Almighty God. The Holy Spirit can sustain us through any hardship that life may bring to our friendships, and even allow them to grow during such times.

SOME BASIC CONCEPTS FOR FRIENDSHIPS

Friendships can be mirrors – they often reflect our truest selves. They are vital to our spiritual, mental, emotional, and physical well-being. A principal focus of a spiritual life is to increase our ability to interact successfully with our fellows. On the other hand, our relationship with God will help us develop our discernment skills. This allows us to be good judges of character -- this will help us choose the right friends. Remember, dispirited companionship – depletes and displaces spiritual energy.

It is important to see the role of full-circle health in our relationships. How we perceive things depends on our spiritual condition, which can overlap with our physical, mental, and emotional state. It is more helpful to accentuate and nurture our positive qualities rather than dwell upon our negative ones. We need to examine every situation fully, with the emphasis on valuing ourselves for who we are. Full-circle health calls – but the dejected self would have us stay.

In the past, many of us had a relationship with our afflictions... rather than developing healthy friendships. At first, we thought our efforts were successful (to some degree) or we would not have continued in them. Eventually, we were no longer fully alive; we became increasingly isolated from those around us. We may have tried to reach out to others, but our efforts were unsuccessful.

As we open our hearts and let down our defenses, we begin to understand that we are not alone. As we examine our connectedness with our comrades we begin to realize that all of them have some type of struggle going on in their lives. We must learn to depend on God and interact with others. Furthermore, we need to have faith and believe that with God's help we can change our disabling behaviors, gain confidence, and get well. We now begin to see that loving relationships are a possibility... and in fact, a necessity.

We need to emphasize accepting our imperfections (as long as we are trying to change the things we can). We must acknowledge the need to help others and accept them as they are. Through this process, we are learning who we are; we bond with ourselves and extend love to others. We are all capable of having successful relationships. We develop new visions, new pathways, and new friendships when we fellowship with other Christians.

Before we can have real and solid loving relationships with others, we must develop a solid loving relationship with God. Then our relationship with ourselves improves. This clears a path for real relationships with others.

Most of us have lots of acquaintances, but few real friends. We should not seek personal spiritual guidance from non-Christian people (*whenever possible*); or have intimate relationships with people who are not striving to be devout Christians.

As we grew up, we developed beliefs about relationships. Many of us believed that we were expected to get married and have children. If we find ourselves living in ways that do not match these beliefs, we may be filled with negative feelings. Others may have had children before they were ready and wondered how they got themselves into this situation. We must examine our beliefs, doubts, and motives in relation to God's laws and share our feelings with our friends.

Marriage or nonsexual intimate relationships are special relationships, but they should not be the only ones. We can be fruitless unless we have several close friendships. This understanding gives us the flexibility to let others interact in a healthy manner.

Jealousy is a human emotion, and a result of underlying insecurities. If we allow it to control us, we can cut off our growth and that of our partner. Many times, it comes from overworking or overloading one relationship. One antidote for jealousy is to expand our own interests. We need to make friends in several groupings. Our life must encompass multiple interests in many areas, to avoid crowding any of our loved ones.

Many of us have been living in such a way that we have given power to a variety of external sources. The Lord demands that we live our lives from the inside out, not from the outside in, as many of us have been doing.

The true source of good feelings comes through a personal relationship with the Lord. We must accept truth, and challenge our old falsehoods, if we are to experience a meaningful and joyful life.

Friendships are an essential part of life. In fact, they are a vital aspect of the significant, more deeply-loving relationship many of us are seeking. Love and friendship need to be nurtured and cultivated; among the essential ingredients are sincerity and honesty.

True love can appear to be contradictory; those who are self-contained (through surrender) and independent (through faith) are better able to love one another. Because their love is not obsessive or dependent, they are free to be interdependent—complementing each other. This spiritual love gives and receives simultaneously; it appraises realistically, it accepts limitations.

When individuals are content and free spiritual beings, their power springs from surrender. They emit self-confidence, self-love, and a willingness to give.

There is such a difference between quality time and coexisting time. True intimacy cannot exist independent of commitment. It is vital that people in loving relationships make commitments.

Many of us try to hide our shortcomings and character defects in order to leave favorable impression with the people we want to befriend. However, such a course often backfires, as others eventually find out the facts — they are repelled by such dishonesty. Therefore, we should not be afraid to allow others to know us as we truly are — even though we have shortcomings and character defects that we're striving to overcome. As we get to know people, we can let them know about our struggles and challenges. As we open up to our friends we usually find support. Many times the other person is so impressed with our humility that they will eventually reveal their challenges; ironically, both parties end up getting better — together.

Dysfunctional relationships often involve games--built upon games--egocentric behaviors playing against egocentric behaviors. The process can become a spiraling descent into distrust. Love and distrust do not coexist in a healthy manner. They are mutually exclusive. Trying to hold on to both can lead into a bottomless pit of disesteem or an anger that fuels itself.

Often the desire to fall in love sets us up to be deceived. We may see the other person as perfect, or we might ignore their faults. We can become filled with exhilaration. We usually attribute our good feelings to the presence of the other person in our life.

Most of us do not realize that most of these feelings come from within ourselves. The other person is only a stimulus. Many times this stimulation of the glands becomes a replacement for a chemical high or other disorders.

If we deceive ourselves and continue--eventually our attitude changes. We usually become intolerant. We begin to focus on our partner's imperfections, or we may spend hours trying to convince them of our views. Attempting to convert another to our views is usually the result of the denial that started the whole nightmare.

We cannot control another person's willingness to live a spiritual life or stop them from behaving in distrustful, disrespectful ways--towards themselves or others. Trying to change another person for our benefit is a sign of unhealthy dependence. Furthermore, as anyone who has ever tried to change anybody knows, it rarely works. We should only try to control ourselves, set good examples, pray for, and witness to others.

When we witness to others—we change. When we neglect the duty the Lord has enjoined to us, of trying to restore those who are in error and corruption (by witnessing) we take part in corruption. However, another way of trying to restore those who are in error and corruption without confronting the individual is to engage in intercessory prayer for them.

Intercessory prayer is a link to stability in a turbulent and unbalanced world—a link to caring for others. When we pray for others, we become partners with God in His work of salvation, healing, comfort, and justice. Positive changes of direction, as a result of prayer, contribute to a stable and consistent life.

Intercession through prayer begins through communication with God in quiet solitude. No disgraceful requests can be made if we recognize what is valuable and desire nothing else. Through studying and implementing spiritual truth, we will gradually free our minds from our materialistic and self-centered views; we begin to perceive the glorious reality behind this world of seeming. The Holy Spirit must be permitted to destroy any illusions about our misaligned values, worldly goals, and ourselves.

When we pray for others, those blessings are indirectly bestowed upon us; furthermore, as we help, influence, and/or inspire others we may wind up with the greater reward. Prayerful action continues God's redemptive work. Intercessory prayer must be backed up by action, when appropriate (and carefully considered).

When we are in a primary love relationship, it is necessary that the couple spend quality private time together, away from the television, group activities, sports, etc. These are special moments to focus on each other's feelings and needs, or to share hopes and dreams. For example during a relaxing dinner, while sitting around a fire, taking a leisurely walk, or listening to peaceful music.

A healthy relationship is distinguished by the awareness that we choose to be there, rather than believing we need to be there. We must trust God, accept ourselves, and demonstrate the many ingredients for successful living. None of us will do this perfectly all the time. We learn to be gentle with others and ourselves. We strive for progress. Every day is a new beginning, and we learn.

THE LIVING FAMILY--A GOD-CREATED INSTITUTION

A rich, full life and an easy life are not compatible, for one cannot have a good life without working at it. Most of us are required to go into a work-a-day world and be in it, but not of it. A person living successfully in community life--is faith in action.

Marriage is more than a 50-50 proposition. Each person must be prepared to give 100% of themselves to God, and 100% to each other. By wholeheartedly cooperating with God's laws, married couples enrich, strengthen, and deepen their love for each other. This enhances the welfare of humanity.

During courtship and engagement, consult with your pastor and spiritual advisor regularly on the spiritual aspects of your marriage. Check with your holistic physician about the physical aspects of marriage.

The matter of children should be met frankly during the courtship. The water has been poisoned, there is no real food, the masses are plagued by malnutrition, we are being poisoned, the masses are terminally ill, everyone has been dumb down, and the world economy is about to crash. It is not the right time to intentionally bring more children into the world, however, what ever is meant to be, is to be. These are just a few of the questions and responsibilities that must be dealt with before marriage.

Generally, one does not merely marry an individual. One marries into a family. Marriage helps to free us from parental and family ties; it relegates them to a secondary role. The spiritual, mental, and emotional satisfactions that were hopefully drawn from the family are to be found in each other. Couples generally should not try to totally part themselves from the families in which they were reared. If they do, *in-law problems* can develop. A husband and wife must work out an understanding regarding their future relationship with their families.

In the founding months of marriage, the couple must accept the heartwarming responsibility of building a home where love can grow, a place of sharing and learning. God intended the home to be a source of inspiration and strength for parents and children alike. It should be the dynamic center from which they continually bring into the mainstream of modern life the spiritual values so essential for the betterment of humanity.

One of the most effective ways to refresh the world is by creating a joyful atmosphere in the family circle that will radiate far beyond the walls of the home.

Relationships usually begin with the physical and mental attraction between two people, but a strong marriage must include both partners sharing a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. A husband and wife will find that their companionship increases as they enjoy their common devotion to a spiritual life. It is easier for a marriage to flourish when the husband and wife choose to go the same direction. Marriage must continue to grow with a common faith and common interests. Love involves more than the visible and physical. Love, balance, and harmony are spiritual--they come from God.

Normally it is the man's responsibility to assume leadership over the household while working in partnership with his wife. Remember that true authority comes through humility. Men and women--honor and cherish your spouse, as you vowed. Let each of you love each other--*as God loves*.

The Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all racial and ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings and example of Jesus Christ and the overarching principles of scripture as articulated in Galatians 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

While Bible passages are subject to various interpretations, we believe that:

- there should be no gender distinction in roles of men and women in the function or leadership of the church, to include ordination of women, or in society in general
- in marriage the wife and husband not only are created equal as female and male, but there is no biblically-prescribed hierarchy giving the husband any authority over the wife.

On occasion, married couples might abstain from intercourse in order to give themselves to prayer or other devotional exercises, however, this should be by mutual consent.

Each member of a family will profit by the righteous conduct of every other member; likewise, each member can suffer the consequences of the misconduct of every other member (to some degree).

Never dishonor marriage by infidelity. Adultery is disregard with intent to destroy. We might as well bring our family a loaded hand gun to play with. It would be more humane for us to break all of our family members limbs than to dishonor our marriages by infidelity, it is far less painstaking for a broken limb to heal, than it is a broken heart. At best, if you do (seemingly on this level) get away with one act of adultery or infidelity, it will make you a liar and a hypocrite for the rest of your life.

Divorce is usually an enemy of God's law (it is the negative force that wishes to destroy). God will allow us to arise above the circumstances that destroy the marriages of so many. God can make a way--where there seems to be no way.

Sometimes people get married under peculiar circumstances; then may realize that they are utterly and painfully mismatched. When it is clearly a unanimous decision by yourself, your family, and loved ones; and you believe it is God's will, a divorce may be appropriate. Many choices and lifestyles constitute spiritual adultery. A devout life should not be constricted by being caught in a dysfunctional marriage. However, divorce should not be taken lightly.

Do not be intimidated by the godless, nor obey violence or threats, nor side with the ungodly. Seek the advice of your mentor, pastor, and family. Examine your options in the eternal Light. Earnestly ask God's help in working out the difficulties.

PARENTHOOD - SOME DUTIES

Childbearing is meant to be the consummation of a love that grows as it creates, and creates as it grows. The human instinct to protect and care for children was never more highly developed than in our Master.

Prospective mothers and fathers need to be warned that they are severely malnourished, highly acidic, and saturated with poisons and that having children will have a major impact of their health and the health of their children. They need to balance their pH and take steps to get the proper nutrition; they must also abstain from nicotine, alcohol, drugs, and most medications in order to decrease the likelihood of birth defects. Researchers have found malnutrition, acidic pH, and many chemical agents damage sperm as well as the embryo.

Men and women need to eat as nutritiously as possible, drink plenty of PristineHydro water, and take only "GC Approved" nutritional products. Implement the GC 4 Health bodywork protocol into your daily practice.

An important aspect of being a parent is protecting our children. Nevertheless, it is equally important to give our children a sense of protection. Here are six things we can do to safeguard our children and give them a sense of protection:

1. We should pray daily for each our children by name. We should also pray with our children (daily when it is possible). Prayer will give children an increased feeling of being protected.
2. We need to keep our conversations simple. We should let children know we care even about their smallest hurts. We need to clear up their fears of the unknown.
3. We need to establish precise boundaries for our children. We need to explain the reasons behind the rules. This will eventually help them make wise decisions on their own.
4. We need to be a positive role model of what it means to depend on and obey God. We should tell our children about our lives and how we have trusted God in certain situations. We need to be honest about the times we have failed and how God has taught us to persevere.
5. We need to be aware of what is happening in our children's lives. We need to participate in their activities and hobbies; and share in their special interests, dreams, and hopes. We need to get to know their friends and involve them in family activities. It is difficult to fully protect them if we do not know what is going on in their lives.

6. We need to be available. Just being there is one of the most reassuring things we can do. This may require a sacrifice in personal interests, but it is priceless to see our children prosper and to keep them secure in our love.

Living out our faith builds a strong foundation for family relationships. Children learn less from the advice we give them than from the attitudes and actions exhibited in the informal home atmosphere. What the child sees his parents do and what he sees *in them* is what he actually learns.

Many parents teach their children “do as I say, not as I do”, either directly or indirectly, while callously living unprincipled lives. Then they have the gall to demand that their children do otherwise. Whenever children see their parents not living out their faith, they may store up hypocritical memories that could influence their outlook on life.

We must realize that ungodly, gluttonous, and slothful conduct are a *demonstration* – which is endorsing – or in a sense teaching. Those who abuse, exploit, or teach others to do wrong – will be pursued and chastened by God.

Many times parents try evading responsibility for their children’s actions by blaming other people, places, or things for their child’s actions. We need to guide, teach, and protect children from hazardous and potentially hazardous people, places, and things prior to misconduct – not subsequently. Scrutinizing our children’s behavior can teach us a lot about ourselves.

Discipline is for the purpose of instruction. Instruct out of love--not anger. Always spend quality time with your children immediately after disciplining them, never isolate them, or send them alone to their room. This will give them the assurance that it is what *they did* that we do not like, it is *not them* we do not like. Take a thorough look at your involvement in your children’s errors. Children have a lot to teach their parents, if the parent will watch and listen. Discipline children wisely. Be at ease and be comfortable with your instruction.

Recognize and establish your role as a parent. Dedicate your children to God. Promote their spiritual growth. Provide them with an intelligent faith that equips them to handle the problems and challenges they will meet in life. Set aside a time each day when the family can read Scripture and pray together. Moral education is rooted in the home – hold teaching in high regard. Give your children a Christ-centered education. Aid your children in learning. Teach them good communication skills. Help them become mature and responsible persons by example and by affection for them. Gear them for the challenging decades ahead.

Sex education begins with the parents understanding truth, and then guiding their children. Do not evade or refuse to answer a question. Do not complicate matters--keep it simple. Answers to questions about sex can be handled the same as any other subject.

We cannot be good parents no matter what—because in order to be good parents, we must be good people—first. Unethical people do not make good parents. In God’s method of order, there is no way to justify unethical behavior although at times circumstances may appear to warrant it. We should never use unethical means to manipulate matters according to the dictate of our judgments. Trials and tribulations will test our walk with God. Do not take control of circumstances in an ungodly way and forfeit your relationship with God. Trials and tribulations are merely opportunities to demonstrate our faith. We need to be the best people we can—no matter what. Learn by heart, that being a praiseworthy parent is a result of being a good Christian.

It is normal for parents to disagree and argue from time to time. However, loud, ruthless, belittling, and merciless arguments will tear a family apart at the roots. Even arguments that use silence can be upsetting for kids. If you can not control you emotions you might need to get counseling. All kids get scared, sad, or upset when they see or hear their parents argue. Go for a walk or put it off until later; do whatever it takes not to get in an argument with your spouse while your kids are around. Arguments will always do more harm that good. If you are prone to be loud and argumentative, do not be surprised when your child reaches adolescence and he or she gives you a taste of your own medicine. Remember, what a child sees their parents *do* and what they see *in them* is a big part of what they actually learn.

A few child rearing basics:

1. Listen carefully to your child. Talk with him or her about feelings as they relate to school, social events, and other kids in class or the walk or ride to and from school so you will know about problems they may be having. Encourage your child to participate in supervised after-school activities.
2. Talk to your children about sex. Be aware that, if you don’t teach your children about sex, someone else will.
3. Talk openly with your child’s teachers about any concerns you may have; attend parent/teacher conferences.
4. Watch how your children interact with other kids and with animals. It can provide warning signs of violence. Get outside help if needed and learn methods to prevent or respond to violence.

5. Teach your children that all learning must begin with reverence for God. Have discussions about hatred, ignorance, lying, cheating, and stealing.
6. Talk about violence, in the world, in our country, in your city, in your neighborhood and schools. Talk about strategies for dealing with violence on television, music, the Internet, and video games.
7. Children are often afraid or ashamed to tell anyone - including their parents - about being bullied. It is important to listen to your child's concerns and share information on issues concerning school violence.
8. Talk to your kids about gangs. Make it clear that your child should avoid gangs and gang members. Joining a gang is dangerous. Violent conflict between gangs is common, and gang members are at least 60 times more likely to be killed than the rest of the population. Avoid places where gang members hang out, stay out of alleys, and do not take dangerous shortcuts. Discuss local gang activity with your kids and discretely report gang activity to the police.
9. Set and enforce strict rules about weapons. Gun safety is a subject that every parent and child should know about, whether or not you have firearms in your own home. About 1.7 million U.S. children live in homes that have loaded and unlocked guns. Children can come into contact with guns at a neighbor's house or when playing with friends. Find out which families have guns and how they are stored.
10. If you own a gun, everyone in your household should take a gun safety course and get certified, including children. Keep in mind that gun safety education is ongoing and has to be repeated at all levels. Besides storing guns where children cannot get to them, trigger guards and cable locks can be used to make a firearm inoperable.
11. Talk to your kids about diet, nutrition, physical education, physical fitness, and sports to help make sure they do not join the 123 million American adults who are overweight. Staying in shape is a family project.
12. Have family discussions often. Be patient and listen carefully when your child is worried or upset; sense the feelings behind the words. Get away regularly as a family on special outings such as vacations to build memories together.

LIVING IN THE SOLUTION OR THE PROBLEM

Humans are stripping nature at an unprecedented rate. For more than 20 years we have exceeded the Earth's ability to support a consumptive lifestyle that is unsustainable. We are turning resources into waste faster than nature can turn waste back into resources. Humanity's ecological footprint – the demand people place on the natural world – is currently 25 percent greater than the planet's annual ability to provide everything from food to energy and recycle all human waste. At this rate, by the year 2050, the inhabitants of earth will experience the effects of mass pollution and a shortage of resources.

The Bible prophesies much of the destruction we are witnessing. Here are some of the things that we believe are going to take place. Mankind will cause extensive damage to the oceans, the atmosphere, and our natural fresh water resources. These factors will increase the severity and frequency of droughts, floods, storms, cyclones, and earthquakes; they will contribute to wake of destruction, famine, illness, disease, and death. Disharmony, lawlessness, plagues, and bloodshed are going to dramatically increase; they are going to change the world as we know it. About one third of mankind will be killed by plagues and bloodshed. False prophets, false doctrine, and a watered-down Gospel will continue to confuse multitudes. The middle class disappears. A one-world government is organized.

Who is paying attention? Not many people seem to be concerned about the overall health of the planet and its inhabitants. Obviously, these oppressed individuals will not destroy the entire planet in the next 100 years. Who cares to consider what is going to happen to our great grandchildren? Better them than us. Well, let us face it; this seems to be the attitude involved in the rape of mother earth!

Most people know more about temporal commodities than sustaining life. They know more about creation than they do about God. They know the price of many things and the spiritual value of few.

These deluded souls are so adamant about prostituting this God-given opportunity to exalt and comfort themselves that they sacrifice unsparingly to acquire exotic lures and pacifiers. Scores of people spend their youth in blind pursuit of so-called financial success all the while ignoring their health; then as they get older they spend all their time and money trying to regain their health.

We live in a world where ungodly priorities (deceptions) strive to cancel healthy concepts. Can you imagine a world of people that took care of the planet, other people, and themselves? Can you imagine a world without high-risk behavior and sexually transmitted diseases; a world without tyranny, violence, hatred, and greed?

Meanwhile, in the real world crime, violence, drug abuse, sexually transmitted diseases, and other corrosive factors are escalating exponentially. The insanity is being roused by the television, movie, and music industries who are making billions of dollars promoting unbridled orgies of murder, dismemberments, shootings, stabbings, and gigantic explosions in a never-ending series of explicit acts that imply adultery, fornication, and homosexuality are not only acceptable – but worthy goals.

Many of us mix a lot of our hopes, ambitions, and plans with the fear that we are fighting a losing battle and that we are doomed. This is a widespread attitude. It is ironic how little the human race has learned from past mistakes.

These are but a few of the things that will take place before the end of the age. Do not lose faith; God is absolutely in control and ultimately all things are working together for good. God foreknew that many people would be careless and that they would act defiantly and profanely. Trust God without reservation, His grace, mercy, and justice will prevail. Catastrophes, misfortunes, trials, tribulations, and things we do not understand can cause us to lose faith, or we can use them to develop faith and trust in God, the choice is ours, however, without faith and obedience it is impossible to please God.

The vast majority of moral problems that trouble mankind cannot be eradicated by law. Human plans for the purification and uplifting of humanity will fail more often than not. Why? Because they do not address or reach our sinful nature; the only way to a complete transformation of self-will, passions, and appetites is to be born again through a relationship with Jesus Christ. *“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.”*

We will watch this process. It is unfolding on schedule. Have faith. This is merely part of the Plan. It is a learning *process involving our making a decision about what our priorities are*. We must use every situation to grow towards Christ-likeness.

None of our fellow human beings should be suffering from poverty and neglect. All of the pain, suffering, and death must be met with compassion. The people of earth are God’s children, and we must work together. We must cherish and protect the right to life, liberty, and justice.

Compassion is not a superficial feeling; it is a spiritual awareness that motivates us to action. It may involve discomfort and inconvenience. It will change our perspective, which changes our attitude toward humanity. Developing an eternal perspective will expand our vision of a needy world.

Charity is essential to right-mindedness. It is not merely conterminous with the Christian life; it *is* that life. We are to help bring food and water, clothes, and medicine to those in need, and comfort the suffering and afflicted. We are to be compassionate and involved with Christian organizations that offer communities and individuals a chance to become self-supporting. We are to minister to the despairing, inspire hope in the hopeless, and pray for those we cannot help. Then, in us, the promise will be fulfilled. We are ambassadors of heaven; the issues of our work are for eternity.

True compassion is more than merely giving of money and aid to people; it includes spiritual guidance. Many times when we help people who are living in flagrant sin, we work against God.

Hardship are quite often stepping stones to bring people into a right relationship with Jesus. God often works through circumstances to get the attention of lost people; to get them to repent and turn to Him. Many times our good deeds will keep people from hitting their knees and asking for Jesus' help. It can take years to develop the discernment and wisdom necessary to handle precious resources. However, when in doubt *help out*, our good deeds are not only for other people; they reveal who we are. Then again, God often changes people over time by the example of our lives. Every situation is unique. As we pray for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power and the means to carry it out, He will provide the guidance we need to discover what He wants us to do or quit doing.

Give a person a meal, you feed them for a day, lead a person to Jesus Christ, and He will take care of them for eternity.

We are to dwell upon the good things we can bring fourth in life and not upon the negative circumstances that surround us. We must concentrate on making our demonstration here and now.

BE HERE NOW

As we develop our relationship with God, the philosophy of living in the moment becomes clearer. Many people claim life is *tough*. Compared to what? We learn that life is an *opportunity* to establish our innocence or confirm our guilt. Right now, take a moment to thank God for this magnificent opportunity to be redeemed.

When things are not going our way, it takes faith to believe that God is in absolute control and accept that our lives are in His hands. Sometimes we become so overwhelmed with our present circumstances that we blame God for abandoning us; other times we curse God for what we think are unjustified trials and tribulations. When we forget or deny the sovereignty of God we lay a foundation that will undermine our faith. We must maintain our perspective and learn to see the *divine purpose* behind our difficult circumstances. We need to always remember that God is a personal and loving being and there are scores of angels in our presence.

We need to realize the importance of focusing on our behavior in the moment. Quite often we spend our time and energy worrying about the future and things we do not have control over, and we ignore our current traits and habits that are not pleasing to God. When our lives are pleasing to God, He is not consumed with reprimanding us or busy undermining our plans to get us to repent; consequently, He can focus on taking care of the things we have no control over (according to the dictates of His judgment).

When we focus our thoughts on our behavior in the moment, our fear about the future fades away, and we realize that we have new opportunities to get right with God. This way the importance of our actions in the moment become real for us.

We have no need to harbor unhealthy fear if we stay in the moment and trust God. He has forgiven us for our past mistakes, and tomorrow is not here. Prayer, meditation, and a personal inventory will help us to gain guidance throughout this day. We need to take a few moments out of our daily routine to thank God for all of our blessings, and for giving us the capabilities to cope with life. We should always be grateful that God is doing for us – what we could not do for ourselves.

Being here now applies to all areas of our lives. Reality has to be dealt with moment to moment. Our relationship with God has given us a new outlook on life. We no longer need to make excuses for who we are. Perfection is no longer a goal, we can achieve adequacy. When we strive for perfection, we set ourselves up for failure.

In our new life, we find that when we are troubled, we can trust our feelings to another person or a group. In sharing with others, we discover that we are not unique – we share a common bond. We are loved *as we are* – not in spite of being *who we are*. As we develop relationships we find that receiving empathy from our friends is better than merely getting sympathy from strangers.

We have taken steps toward a spiritual way of life. We have found the inner-fulfillment we previously sought through external sources. We have learned to replace loneliness and fear with fellowship and faith, with the security of a new way of life. We never have to be alone again. Going to church, studies, meetings, working with new Christians, and talking with spiritual people are a few things we do to stay healthy. Through these activities we have met more people and made more friends than we ever believed possible.

When we focus on what we are doing in the moment and accept God's guidance, the desire to manipulate or abuse anyone or anything diminishes.

A lot happens in one day, if we do not take time to live in the moment, perhaps we will miss something that will help us to grow. The many ingredients for successful living as presented in *Principles of the Spirit* will help us in this lifestyle, when we use them. We find it necessary to do so on a here and now basis.

FROM THIS MOMENT ON...

I will live in the here and now, and not try to tackle all my problems at once. Doing things *one moment at a time*, I will handle the things that would discourage me if I felt that I had to keep them up for a lifetime. I will face life as it is and fit myself to it. I will pray for the knowledge of God's will for me, and the power and the means to manifest His plan. I will pray for courage and follow through with His plans in spite of my doubts. I will continue to counsel with spiritual advisors and keep an open mind.

I will look as well as I can, keep my chin up in spite of hardship, dress becomingly, keep my voice low, and be courteous. I will not indulge in destructive criticism or partake in gossiping. I will not vindictively find fault in others, nor try to regulate anyone but myself. I will do the best I can to bring glory to Jesus by living my life according to His example.

I will have quiet time with God, and relax. During these moments of solitude, I will get a better perspective on my life. I will tell God that I love Him and thank Him for the immeasurable grace, mercy, and kindness that He has bestowed upon me.

I will have courage to enjoy the beautiful things that God reveals to me. I believe that as I give to the world, God will give to me (according to the dictate of His judgment). As long as I trust the Lord, I will be freed of unwholesome fears. I will accept the Atonement as my pathway to Salvation. I will pay tribute in service gladly rendered, obligations squarely met, troubles well accepted or solved with His help. I will honor God and show my gratitude by being content where He has lead me, with what He has given me; moreover, I will evangelize and tell people what Jesus has done for me.

SPIRITUALITY VERSUS RELIGION

Religious formalism and fanaticism are man-made rituals or ceremonies to achieve acceptance by God through good works, pride, and honor. Many of today's religious ceremonies look like costume parties. Religion seems to be based on rewards and punishment. In other words, it tends to breed unhealthy fear and greed. It can promote meanness, falsehood, partisanship, evil speaking, boasting, and oppression. It often includes an in-depth study of history and prophecies, leaving little time for the study of us, and our relevance in the here and now. Religion seems to be an ongoing routine of rules, regulations, and formalities.

On the other hand, spirituality is based on a broken heart and a relationship with God. It comes from within, it consists rather in active love and purity, and it is perpetual. It is intended to teach patience, good works, and to right all wrongs (whenever possible). It studies and ponders truth, in depth; here-and-now truth and future truth. It tries to evaluate honestly the world around us, relating to it. We discover some very surprising spiritual forces in us (then in our lives with others) as we explore our spiritual makeup.

Spirituality is not just the presence of positive. It is a conscious recognition of negative (which is to detach from it). It is the realization and love of truth. All that hinders or diminishes that love loses attraction for us. It attunes our attention to what is wise counsel (as we start recognizing what is not). The world, the flesh, and the devil are in opposition to spirituality.

Our continuing spiritual development is based on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. With this relationship comes a wealth of practical information. We increasingly realize His presence. His Love creates such things as trust, commitment, and perpetual reverence. We learn what we need to do in order to be successful in life. Of course, spiritual life is not apart from or opposed to ordinary life. They are one, the spiritual informing the temporal.

When understood, spirituality is an inviting word and experience; it changes the foundation of our lives, leading us to Wholeness, giving us a new base for all decisions.

We need to understand that God offers us, in Jesus Christ, a full pardon and a new life. If we desire to receive the Lord into our life, then we have enough faith to enter God's family. New purpose, peace of mind, and stability comes into life.

God's kingdom would not be paradise if everyone did not acknowledge the King. There would be insurgents. The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ. No altar stands to the Father without His Son.

Right now, you can decide in the quiet of your heart. The Kingdom will be an ecstasy of indescribable beauty. Beyond our comprehension and our wildest imagination it is.

A high wall made of jasper surrounds the city. The foundations of the walls are decorated with many beautiful stones and gems. The gates are pearl, each gate is made of a single pearl. No one who is inadequate or evil will experience this glory. Only those who have overcome the sinful nature; those justified through Jesus Christ. The throne of God is in the city, and flowing from it is the river of life. There is no death or disease.

Right now, if want to accept Jesus Christ into your life, or if you want to rededicate your life to the Lord, you can recite *The Prayer of Forgiveness and Truth*:

Almighty God, it is You who created the heavens and the earth with all their order. Your glorious splendor hardly can be borne, as we are now. Immeasurable and unsearchable is Your promised grace and mercy. You are the Lord Most High, compassionate, long-suffering, and merciful. We know You grieve over the evils of mankind.

Lord it is You who has promised forgiveness. Even though our transgressions are multiplied. In Your great mercy, You have appointed Jesus as a living sacrifice so that we may be saved and redeemed. We feel unworthy to receive salvation, because of the multitude of our iniquities. We feel rejected because of our sins. We have provoked Your wrath. All of us have done what is evil and set up abominations.

And now we bend our knees, praying for Your grace and mercy. We want You to know the depth of our sorrow. We earnestly ask You to forgive us. Do not condemn us to the lake of unquenchable fire. O Lord, You are the God of those who repent. In us, You will manifest Your goodness. For, unworthy as we are, in Your great love You will deliver those who repent. We now pledge our lives to you. We will praise You continually all the days of our lives.

We believe in God the Father and in Jesus Christ His only begotten Son--our Lord. Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, was crucified and buried. Jesus then descended into hell and preached liberty to the spirits, and on the third day, He rose from the dead, during which time He appeared to many people, and after 40 days, He ascended into heaven and regained His seat at the right hand of His Father's throne. We believe in the Holy Spirit, in the union of faith and in the forgiveness of sins, and in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting--so be it.

SPIRITUAL INSIGHT

In desperation, defeat, or surrender we came to God. Wanting to change, to overcome fear, or longing for spiritual way of life. Whatever brought us to spiritual relationship—we now find true fulfillment in our Master, Jesus Christ.

ENERGY OF LIFE IS LOVE

The immensity of Almighty God's love for each of us is unfathomable to the finite mind. However, we can get an inkling of His love by the fact that He sent His only begotten Son to die for our sins (at stakes beyond our comprehension); which exemplifies that we have been redeemed by price and by power. Our salvation is received through faith; its assurance is received through the Word of God. God's Word gives us the assurance of understanding, and the promise of eternal life.

A sacred action is *true love* because it always contains that which is not love--within itself. This *love* is patient and kind; it is not proud or envious. It is filled with itself and is not capable of defeating its own purpose--it fulfills the Law. It ever and always moves to embrace the unloving. Power of *spiritual love* draws us to its safe embrace (its union, and our salvation). This *love* is not something we must search for, and then hold on too. It is that which exists--only for us to realize. We cannot *find ourselves within* only by searching--we must yield our will in faith to the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Love for one another makes us strong. Love of God makes us *whole*. The love of Jesus can save the sinner; the law of love has the power to destroy the consequence of sin. God is holy-- God is love-- however, love is not God.

JEHOVAH -- GOD THE FATHER...

...is absolutely and without qualification infinite in all His attributes. He created the heavens and the earth. He knows all, and can do all (except defeat His own purpose). He is immanent in and transcendent over the aerial heaven. His center is everywhere. His circumference is boundless, measureless, unlimited, and unending. He is sovereign over all things as the Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of *all*. His love is infinitely immeasurable and His judgments are always justified.

He is an infinite being who is supremely just; boundless in righteousness, mercy, and justice. All of His works, precepts, and judgments are done in righteousness and truth. He is merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth. He is the God of Salvation, Patience, Hope, and Glory. He is the Source of all strength. He desires the service of love, which is not achieved by brute force. Only by Love is love awakened.

Eternity is God the Father's idea, so Jesus and the Holy Spirit understand it perfectly. They regard the function of time as temporary. They use time, but are not bound by it.

JESUS CHRIST...

...is the only avenue of approach to God the Father. He is the eternal Lord and ruler of past, present, and future. He is the beginning and ending of all things.

THE HOLY SPIRIT...

...is the only means of obtaining Jesus Christ. All of Jesus' divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is the commander-in-chief in the legions of Light, Lord of our harvest, supreme in revival, evangelism, and missionary endeavor. We cannot see Him, but we can see His manifestations. Miracles (which are really only manifestations of the laws of reality) are His witness, and speak for His presence.

He comes as a messenger of mercy -- to cooperate with men and women in uplifting humanity. He increases their sense of responsibility -- desiring the service of compassion and love.

He is our guide in choosing. His permeation we perceive clearly and receive promptly when we are spiritually active. He has infinite wisdom and knowledge; He possesses all the supernal kindness and merciful affection of our Master; and He will lead those attuned, to all truth. He rejoices in truth, bears all grace, endures, and never fails.

We cannot use the Holy Spirit -- He is to use us. "The baptism of the Spirit is given to further the work of Jesus on earth." "Through His Spirit, the Lord works in His people to will and to do of His good pleasure." We must deny ourselves and permit the Holy Spirit to work in and through us.

We communicate with the Holy Spirit through prayer, and commune in meditation. How does this work? We are each unique in the sense, that as individual energy systems, we each convey unique signals. Spirits interpret these brain waves and send revelations.

Like our salvation through Jesus Christ, the indwelling guidance of the Holy Spirit is a gift of Almighty God. Both are received by yielding our wills--in faith.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

Father God has enjoined Christ to come to earth, to meet life's challenges, subject to the weaknesses of humanity, to fight the battle as every child of humanity must fight it (with stakes beyond our comprehension).

Signs including wars, famines, earthquakes, the preaching of the Gospel to all nations and a great rejection of the Gospel will precede the return of Christ. There will also be an outburst of demonic activity just before Christ's succession to power, because He will bring about the downfall of Satan and his demons' attempt to establish their kingdom on earth.

In God's time, Christ will come to earth and reign for 1000 years. During the reign of Christ, selected believers (certain saints) that are in heaven will be resurrected and incarnated on earth to assist Christ on His mission. He will bring light to the mysteries of truth and justice. He will encourage mankind, and treat humanity with compassion and understanding. He will eventually reign in authoritarian power.

The thousand-year period will not be essentially different from the present. The removal of satanic influence will not be totally eliminated during the millennium. However, it will be reduced as more saints reign with Christ, and as the spiritual influence of Christians increases.

Despite actual incarnation of Christ on earth, there will be a rebellion of wicked people against Christ, His saints, and the believers. It is likely that many nonbelievers and skeptics will falsely accuse Christ of being the Anti-Christ.

The *rapture* or *catching away* of the believers will remove God's people when the millennium has been completed. Then there will be a seven-year period of great tribulation after the rapture. The great tribulation will be the final opportunity for those who are left behind to affirm their faith. With the Christians removed from the scene, Satan is loosed for a short time. He makes one last attempt to lead his armies against God. With almost no restraints upon his powers, he will try control those who are on earth.

The Antichrist will rise to power, promising peace on earth. He will make an agreement to protect the inhabitants of the earth. He will try to eliminate Christianity. Many of those who do not cooperate with him will be persecuted. Those who withstand persecution or other trials because of their faith in Jesus, who are right with God, will eventually be set free to spend eternity in heaven.

It is obvious that we do not know what will really happen, when, or how it will happen for sure; and it is best so...

WHAT ABOUT ANGELS?

With God, they work as spirits. They are ministering messengers and never cease in creative activity. They stand by our sides and guide us, offering unseen aid. They sometimes dwell in the likeness of mortal flesh.

A basic mission of angels is to praise and serve God; they accompany God in His work of creation, they devote themselves to doing His will. They also assist in God's providential ordering of affairs; they are active in divine work.

The number of angels that exist is unknown to mankind, and it is not important to know. There seems to be some ordering in their ranks. They are of progressions unfamiliar to man. They belong to a unique dimension of creation. Belonging to the heavenly sphere, they cannot be properly conceived of in earthly terms.

Angels are superior to mortals in spiritual status, but they do not judge mankind. We are to regard and revere God's angels; however, we are not to worship them, as they are not beings of worship. After we are delivered from the flesh, those who are accounted as worthy and resurrected will be equal to the angels of God (however, many of the resurrected may have a venerated status in a sense, because of their experiential prerequisites).

We are meant to become laborers with them in presenting Jesus to the world. With eagerness, they wait for our cooperation. *Because they are channels between higher realms and us, they want us to become channels of communication between them and our fellow beings.* They are forever dedicated to the service of the Love of the Father, the mercy of Jesus, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Can you grasp that planet earth is the domain for a spiritual battle? It is also a divisional domain to cleanse and purify--to sift evil and weak from good. Angels (our celestial family) are waiting for us to return to heaven as we go through this sanctifying process.

LUCIFER...

...is the infamous opposer, or adversary of God, man, and good; the personal name of the devil or Satan. The Bible tells of an exalted angelic being, one of God's creatures, who became proud and ambitious. He was determined to take over the throne of God. In his fall from God's favor, Lucifer persuaded about one third of the angels to join him in his rebellion. The arch rebel was willing to acknowledge Jesus as his Creator-father--but not as his God and rightful ruler. He openly defied and arrogantly challenged Jesus Christ. He traded on thinking of reverence as ignorance. Self-assertion and spiritual blindness are at the core of his rebellion.

After he was dethroned, he arrogantly claimed dominion on earth. He challenged God to a battle, Jesus' soul to venture to rescue humanity from his forces. Consequently, Father God sent Jesus to redeem the lost souls. He detested Jesus even more after he was defeated on the cross.

Because of his original status and authority, he has high intelligence and immense power. His cleverness enables him to carry out his deceptive work almost at will. Yet his attributes, impressive as they may seem to be, are not limitless. His power is subject to God's restrictions.

Lucifer's influence in worldly affairs is clearly revealed. His various titles reflect his control of the world system. Some of them are the slanderer, the false accuser, the father of lies, the tempter, the wicked one, the ruler of this world, the god of this age, the prince of the power of the air, and the accuser of our brethren. The Bible declares, "The whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."

Lucifer's nature is malicious. He is an expert at falsifying. Many times he bamboozles people into believing that there is no devil or negative force. Another big falsehood that he uses so frequently is that doing corrupted, wicked, or harmful things is an acceptable way to attain goals. He blinds people so they cannot grasp the meaning of the Atonement. He leads people into sin by various means. Sometimes he does it by direct suggestion, or through his agents who disguise themselves as messengers of God. Other times he drives people by exploiting their weaknesses. If he cannot get to us through things such as materialism, lust, self-centeredness, substance abuse, gluttony, sloth, etc. — he will try to turn our virtues into vices.

Behold, God created the devil who blows the coals of fire, producing a weapon for his work. God also created the ravager who destroys — but God did not create evil, nor does He condone sin and rebellion. Conversely, sin and rebellion proved to be a manifest destiny with the ability to exercise the free will. The choice of evil constitutes sin; the rejection of truth is rebellion; the pursuit of sin and rebellion are iniquity. Contempt prior to investigation is ignorance; ignorance does not invalidate truth.

God is gracious and longsuffering, but it is necessary for Him to provide for the full development of sin and rebellion, to insure the ultimate annihilation of all such evil--through His *redemption Plan*.

WHAT ABOUT FALLEN ANGELS?

Satan is their warlord. His subordinate demons keep the negative force of misconception active. Free demons roam the heavenlies with their prince-leader Lucifer; fallen angels that are bound are incarcerated in Hades.

Watch out! These self-willed demons are deceptive, confusing, and vicious. They want us under their control, and pay a high price to get us. Spirits of darkness try to convince us that their power is greater than God's is. Darkness can masquerade itself as Light.

In general, when people are said to be possessed by devils and demons, they are merely being corrupted by a negative influence playing on their own inherent and debased tendencies, being led away by their own natural preferences. The term "demon possessed" never occurs in the Bible after Jesus was crucified. We lack theological precision as to what constitutes demon possession today. However, we do know that Christians cannot be possessed by demons. "He who is born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one touches him not." Subordinates are often given credit for power they do not have.

These demons work best through people who are unconscious of their presence, or through others who are least suspected of being under their influence. These people are polished instruments in the hands of the deceiver. Many people team up with this negative force (consciously or unconsciously) and show many intellectual and material gains, deceived by lies, inviting eternal punishment.

Satan and his demons are destined to fail in their continuing rebellion. The death of Jesus on the cross is the basis for their final defeat. The final victory will come after the Great Tribulation and Lucifer and his demons are cast into the lake of everlasting fire.

DOCTRINES OF DEVILS

Seducing spirits professes to present new and more exalted systems of religious faith. Under a religious guise, this force seeks to extend its influence over our world. New Age Movement is one name for it. It exists worldwide, consisting of many cults, many different groups, and different people. This deceptive doctrine offers just enough charity and wisdom to pacify the deluded – to keep them from seeking the Lord.

Baha'i World Faith, Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Muslim, Islam, Jainism, Judaism, Shinto, Sikhism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism, are a few of the major religions. They have one thing in common – they all lead to hell. Faith through Jesus Christ is the only way that leads to eternal life in heaven; we must believe and profess that Jesus Christ is our Savior, that He is God's only begotten son.

THE RESTRAINT OF JUSTICE...

...by mercy, demonstrates that God is Love, and that such a God of Love rules the universe and in mercy controls the fate and judgment of His creation. Mercy allows time to repent, and justice will never destroy that which mercy can save. Mercy is not contrary to justice, but rather empathic compassion. Mercy is the justice of Divine Wisdom.

Having been tried and disciplined, those who have surrendered and overcome the sinful nature and are actually *born again*, will receive solace (to some degree), because God has tested them and found them worthy. In kindness, He relaxes judgment on those who trust in the Lord. The world may inflict its hardships upon them, however, they will understand truth, and they will abide with God's love. God's grace and mercy are with His elect; He safeguards His holy ones. He is kind, patient, and rules all things justly.

However, the ungodly and wicked are assailed to the end by pitiless anger, for God knows in advance their future actions. Their punishment does not come without prior conviction--they justly suffer.

Beyond salvation and a sound mind, it is not what God can do for us. It is what we will do *with* God. All of us who have dedicated our lives to Jesus will receive according to our good deeds. Moreover, a multiple return on our investment is guaranteed.

HADES, HELL, ETERNITY, AND PARADISE

Hades is an abode for detained beings, prior to the Great Judgment. Before the ascension of Jesus, Hades had two divisions, the abodes respectively of the saved and of the lost. Since the resurrection and ascension of Jesus, we believe as many scholars have concluded that Paradise has been removed from Hades to the Third Heaven. It is further thought that there are beings in a place called "Abraham's Bosom," a different location in Heaven. Hades is now a temporary abode for unjustified and condemned beings.

Hell is a region within the confines of Hades, set apart as a lake of unquenchable fire. We suppose that no one has been cast there yet; but it is prepared for a day predetermined by God, when every unjust being of creation that has been disobedient to God, shall be adjudged to everlasting punishment.

There is one entrance into life, and a common departure. Nevertheless, at this moment we are in eternity; our decision or indifference cannot alter it. As eternal spirits, we will be delivered to Paradise or we will be cast into Hell—for eternity. However, for the justified there seems to be an intermediate state between death and resurrection.

Scriptures does not make everything clear about death and the intermediate state, we believe that there is enough information to come to these conclusions:

Concerning those who have been justified; they are alive and conscious (at rest in a state of blessedness) with God in Paradise. There they wait for the new Heavens and Earth to be formed.

Concerning those who have not been absolved or condemned; they are alive and conscious, segregated and locked down in Hades, they have knowledge of the past and the present.

Concerning those in Hades who are condemned; they are alive and conscious, prisoners, separated from God, and they have knowledge of the past, the present, and their future. They are in torment, reserved under punishment for the Day of Judgment.

PREEXISTENCE, PREDESTINATION, AND LIMITED ATONEMENT

Divine angels are in charge of Hades. They are appointed as guardians over all. Christ, exercising Almighty God's righteous judgments toward all paid the price for our sins with His triumph on the cross. He then went and preached the Gospel to those who were confined in Hades (those who formerly were disobedient).

Having paid for our sins and obtaining the title deed to planet earth, it is apparent that He prepared a just trial for selected beings in Hades; according to their transgressions, beneficial actions, and their attitude while they have been incarcerated. It is probable that incarcerated beings in Hades are placed on earth in era, nation, and circumstance according to God's foreknowledge.

Here are a number of views expressed in the Bible that suggest preexistence: the names of the righteous are "written in the book of life from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 17.8). The blood of the martyr prophets was also believed to have been "shed from the foundation of the world" (Luke 11.50). The Apostles claimed to have been, with their Master, "chosen from the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1.4; comp. John 17.24; I Peter 1.20; Heb. 4.3). "Our citizenship *is* in Heaven" (Phil 3:20). "He knew us *before* we were formed in the womb" (Jer. 1:5). "Those He *foreknew*, He also *predestined*" (Rom. 8:29). "All have *sinned* and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). "God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions" (Ephesians 2:4-5).

It is written that God loved Jacob before he was born, and that He hated Esau before he was born (before they had done anything either good or bad [in this life]). All of God's judgments are done righteousness and truth; it is obvious that God would never hate or show favor without reason.

God has made some of us for noble purposes and some for common use. He has done this to make His glory known to the children of His grace and mercy: those whom He has predestined in advance for the opportunity of glory.

There are different gifts and blessings—disabilities and tribulations. They are all ultimately the work of God, and He gives or allows them to each of us as He predetermines. The manifestations of God and the permission that He gives to Satan to try to foil us are for the common Good. However, remember that there are no temptations to great. That God will always provide the power to overcome if we sincerely ask and act earnestly.

There is even an old Jewish legend that maintains that before entering this world, all children have seen Heaven, Hades and Hell; that they have knowledge of the past, the present, and the future (where they are going)—then an angel of the Lord strikes them to waken them into this world, and all knowledge is passed from their minds.

It is speculation of course; however, it is highly probable that we preexisted. These views suggest that those who sinned against God in the previous life are us, who have been placed on earth as part of a sanctifying process. In looking at the world it is apparent that some people are elected to grace and others are elected to wrath. The concept of preexistence may bring understanding to a world that appears to be so unbalanced.

God demonstrates His fury and justice through the vessels of His wrath—those who are preordained to suffer and die before they reach the age of accountability and are offered the Gospel. It is highly probable that selected sinister beings (due to the severity of their transgressions) who are confined in Hades are placed in impossible to survive circumstances in regions on earth that are foreordained to extremely adverse conditions (famines, droughts, floods, diseases, etc.). Many of these beings never receive a chance to be redeemed—they have been destined to hell. He carries out His sentence on them with speed and finality. “Many are called (not all), few are chosen.”

Think about this, if we serve a sovereign God of love who is in absolute control of creation, how on earth could more than 24,000 people die from hunger or hunger related causes every day without prior judgment? Three-fourths of the deaths are children under the age of five. How could almost 800 million people (about 200 million of them children) be chronically malnourished? Chronic malnutrition causes impaired vision, listlessness, stunted growth, and greatly increased susceptibility to disease. Severely malnourished people are unable to function at even a basic level. Today at least 91 out of every 1,000 children born in developing nations will die before their fifth birthday.

This is balance in itself. It will bring the destruction of those of us who turn our backs on God through the neglect of our fellow human beings.

It is obvious that we do not know for sure, and it is better so. However, we do know that Matthew 25:41-46 says: "Then He will say to those on His left, Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was hungry and you gave Me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave Me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite Me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe Me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after Me."

UNITY OF THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

There are many different Christian denominations; the just live by faith through Jesus Christ. There is an age old attitude in regard to scripture that has always done more harm than good and that is, *we are right, you are wrong*. The controversy has little to do with the faith of others, but with the way they interpret and practice it. The way we interpret the Bible (which is not easy) is between God and us. God knows our hearts. Our salvation is more about our hearts and the lives we live; than how many Bible mysteries we can decipher. True redemption comes only when we believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and we are born again by the Spirit of God. Be filled with love and encourage people to read the Bible, pray, work with other Christian denominations, evangelize, and worship God and Jesus to the dictates of their judgment. However, we must be sure that our allegiance is to Almighty God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, this book, and the Bible; not to another book, an institution, or other person of any kind. Root out self-righteousness and encourage others to keep an open mind; do not become overly adamant on controversial scriptures and issues. Bear in mind, that when Christ returns everyone will all be humbled; as He will reveal to us the mysteries of the scriptures and He will expound on God's laws and commandments. If you want to argue about something try Psalms 82:6.

Our faithfulness to the word of God, our constructive efforts in Jesus' name in this minute moment we identify as time is a preparation for the next life — *in eternity*.

DEATH AND THE GREAT JUDGMENT...

Having over come the sinful nature, being in a right relationship God; in the spiritual sense — death is freedom from sin, deliverance from present evils, and a release from death — after a life of captivity. The just will be immortal resurrected in a glorious state of purity -- never to be disobedient again. The righteous will receive their inheritance of glorious riches in paradise, and they discover their future blessings. They will remember

only their victory. The unjust will be as they were in their unbelief (they will not be cleansed). They belong in the unquenchable fire of never-ceasing grief.

The great judgment will be rendered after Christ's thousand year reign and the Great Tribulation. Christ and his angels will have triumphed over evil and liberated the righteous. The righteous will be delivered to the Kingdom.

VISIONS OF WISDOM FROM A HIGHER SOURCE

WAS THERE ALWAYS SPACE AND TIME.

DID LIGHT RENDER ITSELF TO LET US PERCEIVE DARKNESS.

TO COMPREHEND THESE THINGS IS NOT NECESSARY FOR JOY AND SERENITY.

BE OF PURE AND NOBLE THOUGHTS.

HAVE FAITH IN THE SUPREME CREATOR--AFTER ALL YOU ARE HERE.

AS I WATCH MYSELF GROW,

THE STARS SEEM SO MUCH CLOSER.

NO BEGINNING TO OUR UNIVERSAL FATHER--I CANNOT UNDERSTAND.

SO HOW CAN I COMPREHEND ETERNAL LIFE--FAITH.

THE MORE WE LEARN, THE LESS WE KNOW,

BECAUSE OUR HORIZON HAS EXPANDED.

THE ULTIMATE KNOWLEDGE COMES FROM A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD.

A COMMENTARY ON THE LORD'S PRAYER

OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN, HALLOWED BE THY NAME
THY KINGDOM COME, THY WILL BE DONE
ON EARTH, AS IT IS IN HEAVEN
GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD
AND FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES
AS WE FORGIVE THOSE WHO TRESPASS AGAINST US
AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER US FROM EVIL
FOR THINE IS THE KINGDOM
AND THE POWER AND THE GLORY FOREVER
AMEN

The Lord's Prayer can be used as a guide for prayer or we can sincerely repeat its words. This prayer should be a quiet, confident expression of needs to our heavenly Father.

First, we call our Creator *Father*, a term that only His children by faith through and in Jesus may rightly use. We request that His name be *hallowed*, or honored as holy. How can we call Him *Father*, and enter His Kingdom, if we do not recognize our fellow human beings as family?

"Who art in heaven." The aerial heaven or super universe is the uncreated domain of God the Father's dwelling. He is immanent in and transcendent over the aerial heaven. God the Father is Spirit; if we perceive Him as being contained, we nullify His omnipresence. God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ created the heavens. They are the eternal dwelling place of the Triune God. From the heavens, Jesus descended to become incarnate. In His ascension, He passed through and above all the heavens and he was raised higher than the heavens. He regained His seat at the right hand of the throne of God the Father.

Next, we request that *"Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven."* This means that we acknowledge God as ruler of our lives and obey His will. Most people do not have clear discernment of what God's will is. To pray *"Thy will is to be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven,"* is a random shot unless we know the Laws of God. Evil is often set in the attractive promise of a forbidden pathway. Discernment of spirits is a cultivated talent and a deterrent to evil. God conquers evil--not us. Remember, when we pray for *God's will to be done* we are signing up for action! We must be prepared for action.

Then it says, *"Give us this day, our daily bread."* This allows us to live One Day at a Time and become aware of our daily needs. It helps us maintain our eternal perspective and to be grateful for all that God has given to us and done for us. Requests relating to our own needs include food for each day, a positive attitude, shelter, clothing, forgiveness, help in temptation, etc.

"Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." Forgiveness for our sins comes only through the death of Jesus on the cross. Our experience of that forgiveness requires us not to hold things against others, and not to deny God's forgiveness for ourselves. As we pray for forgiveness for ourselves, we must be willing to forgive others rather than judge. This does not mean that God gives and forgives on an exchange basis.

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." When we ask God not to lead us into temptation, we are asking Him to lead us in the way everlasting, that we may not be tested so severely that we become consumed in darkness. We still need to be ready for some hard times as we are being sanctified. Many times, it is under pressure that our weak spots are exposed; and until we know where we need to be mended or corrected, we are not going to seek God's help and guidance. Furthermore, it is hard to know how we will behave until we are put under heavy loads--in a variety of circumstances. As we are being sanctified, we ask God to save us from the power of Satan.

The conclusion of the Lord's Prayer attributes all power and glory to God forever, throughout all eternity. This part of the prayer should be evident in our lives each day as we seek to do God's will on earth as His disciples. If this prayer is to mean anything, we must live it. We must commune with God throughout each day. This conscious contact is the power that gives us the meaning of life's challenges.

BASICS FOR CONTINUED SPIRITUAL GROWTH

What can we do to continue our spiritual development, deepen our relationship with God, and maintain peace in an unbalanced and turbulent world?

First, we must learn to value our relationship with God, to seek solace in the knowledge, love, and service of our Savior. We must learn to hate sin and fear God--for sin is a cause of calamity and misery and God is the Infinite Upholder. We must realize we will never find lasting rest, until we are in a right relationship with God.

We must accept that by nature we are the servants of sin; *that we have been redeemed by the grace of God, through which we are petitioned to share that love.* We need to remember that we have God and the devil in our audience, and that all the angels in Heaven are looking on.

We must accept that life, in its present state, without a quality relationship with God, is unfulfilling; the wealth and pleasures of this world are not enough to keep us happy. The pursuit of possessions and pleasures brings only temporary satisfaction. Our senses become tired, yet still crave what is untried. In addition, what profit do we have after all our labors? We will end up discontent and dying inside—looking back at a life lived in vain. The end of our lives will prove to be nothing more than a shallow existence filled with self-pity and pain.

Our labors will not satisfy the wants of our soul, nor fulfill its desires; they will not atone for our sins. Furthermore, what will selfish ambition, thrills, or material gains avail us when we die, in the Great Judgment Day, or in eternity?

We must realize that we cannot hold lasting satisfaction in worldly gains. The more we seek to gain, the vainer we become! Full and lasting satisfaction comes through God's grace, mercy, and blessings; not by any merit of our own.

We cannot divide our affections and worship between God, possessions, and worldly pleasures and thrills. We must realize that material possessions and/or the pursuit of pleasure will not give us lasting joy; and that without God and brotherly love, they will certainly make us miserable. Moreover, the misery will prove that no created good can satisfy us; that lasting joy and peace are to be found in a relationship with God.

God invites us to repent and reform with promises of mercy. Our sins must be confessed and denounced. We must do our best to be faithful through all our trials. We must resist sin and exercise submission, faith, and prayer, with the hope of promised deliverance through God's love.

Our duty is to be holy, and accept God's grace offering to sanctify us and let His peace comfort our hearts. Prayer, thanksgiving, and love will come into our lives. We must not focus our hopes on the *so-called* rewards or thrills of this world, if we are to be free from the disabling bondage of self. The more we focus our gratitude in the moment, and on our reward in heaven, the freer shall we be in doing good things with our earthly possessions.

Every one of us sometimes faces compulsions, conflicts, or hardships that sometimes seem to hinder our spiritual growth. Here are five strategies for killing them off:

1. Take action! Do not be enmeshed in wishful thinking, fatuous rhetoric, or repressive fretting.
2. Tackle one problem at a time, commencing with the most severe. Many times we wear ourselves out trying to confront all of our problems simultaneously. Command one hurdle before going on to the next one. Unless they are inter-related or life threatening.
3. Use the resources that you already have. Wishing for a better situation will get us nowhere.
4. Realize that only through constant spiritual alertness, surrender, and practical action can we find victory.
5. Remember that the battle is not ours but the Lord's. He must be the source of our courage and strength.

Ultimately, when we acknowledge that personal growth is an integral part of life and that learning is the responsibility of every individual, the concept of sanctification becomes clearer. We can find the lessons buried in the difficulties we face without feeling that God has abandoned us. Though we do not always know when we are experiencing a sanctifying lesson, the wisdom we accrue will bless us with hindsight. This wisdom gives us the freedom to discover our life and to find out who we are and where we belong in the world. This perspective stands for living a life of integrity and wholeness.

WE BELIEVE

We believe in God the Father, in His Son Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Spirit. We believe in the practice of water baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and the regular taking of communion. We also believe that we should be baptized by the laying on of hands for the infilling of the Holy Spirit. We do not believe that these practices are essential for salvation, but that they serve as a confirmation and a demonstration of our living faith in Jesus Christ.

We believe in the five-fold ministry, namely that there are apostles, prophets, pastors, evangelists, and teachers. As well as the gifts of the spirit: faith, discerning of spirits, words of knowledge, words of wisdom, tongues and interpretation, prophecy, revelation, visions, healing, helps, miracles, and so forth.

We believe that God has, does, and will continue to reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.

We believe that Americans en masse are concentrating too much on themselves and on earning money; that they have turned their backs on God through the neglect and abuse of their fellow human beings. That this is another contemptible factor that will contribute to the downfall of the socio-economic system (read Revelation 18).

We believe that the New Jerusalem will be built upon the American continent; and that Christ will reign personally upon the earth for 1000 years.

We believe it is a God-given privilege to worship according to the dictates of our own conscience. We allow all people to worship how, where, or what they may as long as it does not infringe on others.

We believe that we need to obey, honor, and sustain all laws; and that we must be honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and of good report or praiseworthy.

CONDITIONAL ELECTION - LIMITED ATONEMENT

We believe that God chose the elect before the foundation of the world. Moreover, based on His foreknowledge, He has predestined them an opportunity to be redeemed. That election to grace and election to wrath is God's decision alone.

We believe that God is in absolute control of creation. That everyone has been placed in era, nation, and circumstance according to His foreknowledge; that each human being will be tried for his or her own transgressions and sins, and not for Adam's transgression. That predestination is based upon the plan and purpose of God.

We believe that God has a view of the end from the beginning. He knows the outcome of His Kingdom, but not every move that will be made in the duration of our lives. Life is not a predestined replay. Life is real, with the freedom to make choices that have an affect on many of our present and future circumstances, and our eternal destiny. Yet, we believe that there are many predestined trials and tribulations.

We believe that there are challenges, illnesses, and accidents that take place in the world. We also believe in the restraint of justice by mercy. That God is Love, and that He rules the universe and in mercy controls the fate and judgment of His creation. Mercy allows time to repent, and justice will never destroy that which mercy can save. We believe that those who are elected to grace whose lives end prematurely will receive the opportunity they deserve to affirm their innocence or their guilt.

We believe that earthquakes, droughts, floods, famines and other disasters are not necessarily God's judgment on those directly affected; inasmuch as they are a basis for judgment of those who learn about these catastrophes. There are many ways to respond to disasters. Some people lose faith in God or curse Him; while other people use disasters to mock the idea of a sovereign God that has absolute control of everything. Some people get emotionally distraught; while others speak shallow words of condolence without a tangible response. We get scores of people who are too busy to care—they respond with apathy or indifference. A basic rule of thumb in response to a disaster is to stand strong, donate time, resources, and money, pray regularly, act compassionately, and be filled with empathy.

We believe in the wrath of God. God knows mankind will not bring food, medicine, or assistance to multitudes of children and adults around the world, today; that many people will die from earthquakes, floods, famines, droughts, and other disasters before they reach the age of accountability. We believe that these are the victims of His wrath; they never received a chance to hear the Gospel and/or reach the age of accountability because they are in absolute opposition to Christ; therefore they are destined to hell.

We believe that this is balance in itself. It will bring the destruction of those of us who turn our backs on God through the neglect of our fellow human beings (Matthew 25:31-46). Sometimes we can only stand strong, care, and pray... and that is enough.

FREE WILL & OBSTRUCTABLE GRACE

We believe that God's grace is not the result of human effort or worthiness--that God has sent the Holy Spirit to importune the elect to accept Jesus Christ as savior, but since we have absolute *free will*, we are able to resist God's will for our lives.

We believe that mankind exercises their own will first, and then they may be born again through God's grace, a profession of faith, a conscious decision to turn from evil and embrace truth, and implement the word of God. We call this synergism (that individual salvation is achieved through a combination of divine grace and human will).

We believe that living in flagrant sin, and hiding behind the name of Jesus while doing it is blasphemy against the Spirit, and it will not be forgiven; and if anyone blasphemes the work of the Holy Spirit by not accepting Jesus, they will not be forgiven.

We believe that it is possible that once people are born again, that they may turn or fall from grace, and depart from the living God.

We believe that not every one that says unto God, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven. By their temperament, fruit, and the desires of their hearts He will know His Children.

PERSEVERANCE - UNOBSTRUCTABLE GRACE

We believe that nothing (but our own will) can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord--that there is no condemnation to those who are in God's will.

We believe the promise of Jesus: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand."

We believe Christians should be Christ-like. We need to seek, develop, and express those attributes that produce a Christ-like nature. We need to have right facts and a right attitude to be Christ-like, but it often takes time. We are confident that He who has begun a good work in us, will be faithful to complete it. Keep the faith.

BY WORKS FAITH IS MADE COMPLETE

We believe in *sanctification by works through faith*, which self-evident by a consistent life, a profession of the Christian faith, and grateful works on the part of the recipient: for faith with out good works is fruitless. The road to heaven is narrow and the way is painstaking (conversely, the sides of that road are well trodden).

We believe in *justification by grace through faith*. Only through faith, can we overcome our sinful nature, depraved habits, and be obedient to God's laws and ordinances. Faith, works, and right association are indispensable. Personal justification will be a fruit of God's grace and mercy, faith through Jesus Christ, and our human will.

WE BELIEVE

We believe that being saved *by* grace exemplifies God's grace and mercy, our premortal existence and a predestined opportunity. Magnificent is the opportunity that our Creator has granted us (the elect) that we *may* be redeemed and called His children. Without God's grace we would not be here--nor could we be saved. However, grace cannot suffice without total effort on the part of the recipient. It is only *through and in* God's grace that we are saved.

KEEP THE FAITH

While many of us experience misfortune, financial difficulties, physical illnesses and disabilities, or other hardships or disasters, many other people who are not currently walking with the Lord seem to prosper, enjoying worldly pleasures, wealth, and health. We must realize God's justice will win in the end.

Serving God does not always pay high dividends. Do not be discouraged in doing what is right--even when others seem to be prospering (in the worldly sense) more than you are. Do well and wait upon the Lord, and keep His ways. Salvation is from the Lord. His reward is a pure heart, a clear conscious, unblemished faith, and eternal life.

Quite often, the pursuit of money costs too much. Our culture has made the pursuit of money paramount. We are pressured by society to believe that the more money we make the smarter we are, and if we do not make large sums of money we are ignorant.

Then again, there are scores of religious followers that believe that their bank accounts reveals their spirituality. Subsequently, many of us tend to base our feelings of security on money and let those feelings displace our priorities or sway us in making improper choices. Money will not buy health, integrity, dignity, character, or eternal life.

Our mainstay in life should not be the desire to please ourselves or acquire wealth solely for personal pleasure. We need to find something godly and bigger than ourselves to contribute to--happiness will follow along in good time. If we aim directly at pleasing ourselves, it is guaranteed that we will end up miserable. There are scores of people who are merely casualties of free will and excess. In other words, being happy is about changing and improving our own character much more than its about changing the world around us according to our desires.

Most people spend too much time and energy perusing temporal aspirations; seeking worldly treasures, experiences, and thrills with misplaced motives and inadequate perception. Vain ambitions for money, pleasure, power, or prestige are merely deviations from truth and wisdom. The pursuit of pleasure in God should be our highest priority.

Love in action is quite often a harsh and dreadful thing; but by the grace of God, we are able to love and help another person or a fight for a just cause. If we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem; there is no substitute for earnest devout work.

We need to assess our lives and appraise the time and energy we spend working, pursuing money, thrills, and entertaining ourselves. We also need to list all of the service work we do. What unselfish service work are we doing? Are we praying for the knowledge of God's will for us and the power and the means to carry it out?

We need to derive legitimate self-esteem through exercising our gifts and serving others. When we compromise spiritual ethics and/or our physical health for the sake of money, we learn that money costs too much.

In fact, money, power, fame, and worldly success cannot satisfy us. The absence of money is rarely our true complaint when we are dissatisfied. It is usually a lack of faith!

Substance abuse will always compound our problems. When we come down off our high we have to face the same issues, the physical damage and loss of integrity and dignity associated with succumbing to toxic substances. Whatever sadness and/or problems we avoid--they are paid for with our dignity, integrity, character, and health. Succumbing to substance abuse impairs our relationship with God. The challenges and problems that we experience in life are intended to sanctify us. When we escape or alter reality we merely delay, impede, or negate our growth and development. In this life we are constantly under spiritual warfare, succumbing to any poison or deviate behavior is a direct hit from the enemy.

The righteous path begins with the Word of God and it leads to true fulfillment and satisfaction on earth. The ungodly path starts with man's counsel and it leads to temporal aspirations and insatiable obsessions.

A right relationship with God can bountifully flourish when we try to do our best—always. It does not matter whether we are working a nine-to-five job, involved in a ministry, or assisting others whom are fulfilling a divine purpose, or in a hospital bed, we must always strive to achieve our own personal best and follow God's plan for our lives. We must always seek to enhance relationships (with ourselves, God, and others). In addition, in our business life we must always be honorable and do the best job we can.

God we now pray that You empower us to develop absolute dependency upon You. Enable us to realize that worldly achievements and assets are only truly valuable--as they relate to divine purpose. Empower us to understand our problems and challenges—inspire us to repent. Deliver us from all unhealthy thought and behavior. Free us to become the person You want us to be...

...for it was You, who had regard for us despite our abjection and ignorance, and watched over us before we truly knew You, and guarded us, and comforted us with loving grace and mercy; allowing and empowering us to work in partnership with You to transform our lives. We want to express our gratitude for giving us reason to live, to purify our lives. We bow our knees in thankful contemplation. We will live our lives the best we can to bring You glory.

A TYPICAL PRAYER GUIDE

Of no real interest to me today are self-seeking and impurity. Love of brotherhood, charity, and cheerfulness are within me. God grant me integrity, wisdom, good judgment, and courage. I want to develop them. Perseverance in service can grow in me. This happens when I am generous in giving, encouraging in conversation, hard working, and responsible with my finances.

Faithfulness to every trust and a childlike faith in God: are in my best interests. Habits of prayer, study, work, and physical health are some ways I honor these trusts.

Drinking plenty of PristineHydro, eating as wholesome food as possible, abstaining from unwholesome food and beverages, taking only "GC Apporved" supplements, monitoring my pH, fasting periodically, getting enough sleep each night, and rising early each morning are other ways I develop myself.

Thank you God, for letting me honor you; and for your presence in every effort I make to improve myself spiritually, physically, mentally, and emotionally.

GOD'S FURY IS AT HAND

We can only try to empathize with God's fury and anger. The current state of affairs in the United States is nauseating. Most of our citizens do not have a quality relationship with God. They compromise or forsake His commandments. Many blasphemous and abominable behaviors are now deemed *acceptable lifestyle choices*. Most people have no idea about integrity or what it means to be selflessly committed to serving a world in need. No wonder so many Americans have compulsive, obsessive, and addictive disorders. An overwhelming number of people feel repressed, hemmed in, and they are prone to strange fits of temper, anxiety, and hysteria.

Our country has more than its share of dishonorable, egotistical, and power-hungry politicians. There are countless political scandals. Nowadays, mudslinging political campaigns have become mandate. Many of these politicians enact unethical laws and ordinances. They are notorious for presenting half truths, cajoling with biased views to articulate unfounded opinions. Almost every one of these politicians has ulterior motives and hidden agendas.

American churches have been plagued by sex scandals and the misappropriation of funds. Most preachers have stooped to preach a watered-down gospel. Many of these preachers are so adamant about having all the right answers that they condemn other Christian faiths because of their beliefs and their doctrine. We witness droves of these self-appointed *men of God* deem themselves as saints. Many of today's church services and telethons resemble a three ring circus. The pinnacle of service seems to be donating "*ready money*," then using that donation for a tax write-off. The corroded theology that is being taught has helped turn many Christians into bloated slobs, idolaters, infidels, and hypocrites.

Americans are the most voracious consumers in the world; disposable consumerism and over consumption are helping to destroy parts of the planet. It is bewildering when science points out how we can rectify the ecological and environmental damage that is being done; but we see few people exercising moderation and living in the solution. Most people rebel when they are asked to act in accordance with the dictates of reason.

It is pathetic that our politicians feel that it is more crucial to design and produce weapons than invest in the well-being of our planet and its inhabitants. (In the US alone \$1.8 million a minute is spent on defense, weapons, and armaments.) It is revolting that our government feels that it is more important to spend billions on space travel than to provide clean water and real food to the masses, and assist countries and individuals to become self-sufficient.

To add to the chaos, we have the money-hungry food industry creating and mass-marketing products that are not fit for human consumption. More of today's kids will die of complications from malnutrition than they will from tobacco, drugs, and alcohol. Even slim kids are at risk of a multitude of diseases from poisonous water, malnutrition, junk food, and lack of exercise. Compounding this "poison- for-profit" mentality is that sloth, gluttony, and unhealthy choices are now at epidemic levels.

Multitudes continue to abuse sexuality, drugs, and alcohol. The sex industry and organized crime continue to do what they have done so profitably for so long. Laws are being pushed to the limits and ethically gray areas are being used to circumvent moral standards that were meant to preempt various types of exploitation, extortion, and bribery.

We have droves of classless and clueless actors and musicians producing contemptible movies and songs. Most of these actors and musicians live in excess; they are oblivious to the fact that they are merely polished instruments in the hands of the devil. A lot of this so-called entertainment is merely a type of diabolic propaganda that is being used to brainwash the masses; it is a blatant effort to disintegrate biblical morality, incite violence, and promote idolatry. To a great extent much of this so-called entertainment is nothing more than pathetic gibberish designed to conceal subliminal messages that foster prejudice, blind, and unreasoning allegiance.

Extravagant spending and living has escalated beyond reason. It is foolish to live in excess of this magnitude. Some of these lost souls even have the audacity to praise God for the blessings they exploit and misappropriate. It is hypocritical for us to thank God for blessings we receive, if we in turn will not practice elemental compassion toward ourselves and our fellow human beings. Many of the people who look up to these oppressed individuals are so lost in abysmal ignorance that they tend to make off the wall excuses condoning their lifestyles. Bear in mind, blessed are those who do not condemn themselves for what they approve of. When *light* penetrates the depth of an ostentatious diamond at the perfect angle – the refraction is of *genocide through indifference*.

It is obvious that most people who could help others do not even really care about the problems of others. They do little, if anything, to alleviate the pain and suffering in the world. We see few people going the extra mile; they are enthralled with their own desires. They turn their backs on God through the neglect of their fellow human beings.

The root cause of these problems is the indifference toward spiritual principles and concepts, as a result of the materialistic models adopted as organizing principles of society, with their emphasis on selfishness, competition, and accumulation.

The masses have inadvertently declared war against God's laws, and now God is exacting a powerful retribution. They need make fundamental changes in the way they think, eat, drink, and behave, and the way most people treat each other definitely leaves a lot to be desired.

It is obvious *why* mankind is about to reap what they have sown. God is outraged, a forewarning has been written in the book Revelation: "Fear God and give Him glory, for the hour of His judgment has come."

We envision the ushering in of the next few decades will be plagued by disease, illness, pain, and poverty, grounded in the "reap what you have sown" seeds. This sickening cycle of violence, the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, poverty, greed, premature death, etc. can only be stopped through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and the teaching of others: peace through love, nurturing, and education that results in the implementation of social ethics that enable health, selflessness, and compassion.

Our country should be built upon a foundation consisting of a belief in God and educating people about healthy living, integrity, compassion, and love. We should strive to have the highest possible ethical and moral standards for ourselves and towards others. We need conscientious, dedicated, and knowledgeable individuals, who are committed to working together to help make the world a place that is pleasing to God.

Once we intuitively feel our oneness with our fellow beings, it becomes harder for us to ignore their pain and suffering. When we are enlightened, we find it impossible not to accept the greatest gift of all – which is to selflessly take care of ourselves and serve others in need.

Every one of us knows that we should have empathy and compassion for others. Yet, each day upwards of 24,000 people die from hunger, while thousands more die in war, violence, and from other preventable diseases and conditions, while billions more are forced to live in inhumane living standards. There are scores of people who seem to think that God is not going to hold them responsible for the pain and suffering inflicted upon our brothers and sisters through apathy, indifference, and selfishness; they are in for a rude awakening.

The time has come to face reality and begin holding ourselves and our government responsible for the gross misappropriation of funds. Whether the death of one person is caused by war, poverty, neglect, or abuse, it is one too many. We must all, every single one of us, do the right things.

In light of the fact that there are so many different beliefs and religions, it is crucial that we keep an open mind as we develop ways of merging social justice actions and inner transformation approaches.

It's much easier for us to arrive... when we know where we are going. Our plan is to *Fix America First*, and then the new paradigm will create a strong political voice for people in areas of stress due to malnutrition, hunger, social, economic, and/or political upheaval and to respond to their expressed needs materially and emotionally.

Find a timer, pen, and paper and get started...

- 5 minutes: Write your answers to the following: What do you think God wants you to do to make the United States a better place? Are you doing it? How can helping others make your life worth living?
- 5 minutes: Pick one small achievable goal for service work. Describe in one paragraph what will be happening if you are fully living this value six months from now.
- 2 minutes: Brainstorm any actions that will turn your description into a reality.
- ½ minute: Review what you have written down. Is there a particular reason you have decided to do this type of service work? Is there another type of service work that you would also like to do? Do you realize that sometimes helping others is the best way of helping yourself?
- ½ minute: Is there a person who shares a stake in this outcome with you. Name him/her.
- 1 minute: Explain how you are really going to get this done? Can you make a commitment to doing some kind of service work on a regular basis, for the rest of your life, one day at a time?
- 1 minute: Now that we have committed ourselves to doing God's will, we need to share our plans with our spiritual advisor or an accountability partner. When we are held accountable for our actions and inactions it will generally help us follow through with our plans.

As spiritually minded people we need to live with eternity in mind; living wisely in the present while anticipating and planning for the future. We need to live like God and all the angels in heaven are watching, study like our lives depend on it, treat our loved ones as if this could be our last day together, plan and dream like we are going to live forever, and live everyday like it could be our last.

Nobody can bring back wasted time, money, or resources. As we are near the end of our lives, we do not want to say, "If I had it to do over again, I would have done it differently;" or "I wish I would have done this or not done that."

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FOCUSING VISION

It would stand to reason that Christians would be disciplined and take care of their bodies as temples, in view of the fact that we are the temple of God and that the spirit of God dwells within us.

It also stands to reason that the Christian church would be a community of people that understands the importance of not only learning together, but also working on projects together, and staying healthy together.

Each area of involvement should demonstrate to others how they have worked in partnership with God to direct their lives through knowledge, common sense, and wisdom.

Sadly enough, most churches are merely social circles without clear-cut objectives. Church members attend church, bible studies, and other church gatherings; they are adamant about being surrounded by other Christians; however, the majority of them rarely make a significant impact in the lives of lost souls in their community or the world. The pinnacle of service seems to be donating "ready money," then using that donation for a tax write-off.

These misguided Christians consume the same unhealthy diet, the same junk foods, and the same noxious beverages that non-believers are poisoning themselves with. They are undernourished, overweight, and out of shape. *It has never registered in their conscious minds* that they should grow their own food, eat properly, exercise, and take care of their God-given bodies. They have never learned to deny themselves inappropriate action and inaction. The joy of being disciplined never registered at the spiritual level.

At this level of unawareness, the deluded minimize their condition and make erroneous excuses about life-style choices. It is apparent that in this deceived state there can be no self-reproach, no compunction, no remorse. There is no true contrition, which would encompass self-condemnation, humiliation, and repentance.

Being born again and being an addict (food, drugs, sex, etc.) are mutually exclusive. In order to be a good example and bear healthy fruit, it is essential to be disciplined or at least repenting and heading the right direction.

Poor posture and deteriorating health are deemed normal. These lost people take better care of their cars, homes, and clothes than they do of themselves. They speak of illness as if God needs to do a recall on the human body, despite all of the research pointing to the fact that the majority of illnesses could be avoided with proper life-style choices.

These dangerous concepts are being passed on to children by bad example and neglect. Many kids grow up on fast food, processed foods, soda pop, candy, etc. An astounding number of today's children are out of shape and overweight. It is very likely that almost every child in America is suffering from malnutrition and dehydration. Sloth and ignorance are contributing factors – parents have become disinclined to take the time and effort to prepare wholesome meals; there is hardly anyone in the kitchen, *and practically no one in the garden.*

Scores of people have allowed themselves to become handicapped by sloth and unhealthy habits. Their bodies, minds, and spirits have been so neglected and abused they would find it hard to respond in the case of an emergency.

It is outrageous how unhealthful many people have become from the mere excess of comfort. Furthermore, it is bizarre how irrational so many people become when their personal desires are denied and they are asked to act in accordance with the dictates of reason.

Most of these people are so lost in abysmal ignorance that after they run themselves into the full blown illness, they have the audacity to ask God for a miracle, rather than working in partnership with God and taking responsibility for their own actions. They turn their lives over to the care of their doctors, they try to follow most of the advice of their doctor (rarely, if ever, doubting, questioning, or seeking alternative treatment), then head straight to the pharmacy and start taking pills. (Approximately 90% of people over sixty take at least one prescription drug daily, while the majority take two or more.)

We are living on a battlefield, not a playground. Like the proverbial frog in the pot of heated water; the masses are like comatose patients, they have not done the research necessary to develop the capacity to understand what is really happening to them or around them; they cannot comprehend the preordained path their ignorance is leading.

One of the many contemptible factors is that most of the church leaders are as lost as the congregation; it is basically *the blind leading the blind*. In other cases when the elders, preachers, and others are trying to be healthy and fit, they fail to address and be adamant about fundamental core issues for fear of insulting the congregation, which would result in lost members (and a decreased cash flow).

Fellowshipping without proper structure and a healthy Godly vision is nothing more than an ill-informed social circle. Community leaders are only successful when they move their members toward a desired objective. One of the church's goals should be to assist families to raise healthy and fit, well-educated children to be adults of good character who will help establish Godly generations and influence the world for the glory of God.

UPHOLDING CORE VALUES

We adhere to the conviction that God has ordained that parents are primarily responsible for the education of their children. However, how on earth are future generations supposed to be disciplined and healthy when most of the adults in their lives are horrible examples?

Whenever children see their parents or other role models living unwholesome lives, they unconsciously store up hypocritical memories that influence their outlook on life. Many of these children idolize steroid-injecting athletes or anorexic models and actresses, yet are embarrassed by their parents' physique, and they are frequently ashamed of their own bodies. About a third of American Youngsters are unfit; over weight and out of shape children are often ridiculed. Being fat is not only physically unhealthy; it is also mentally and emotionally devastating.

Education is more than the mere gaining of academic knowledge; therefore, parents and teachers must be committed to creating an environment in which they can teach by example, rather than a lecture alone. Exemplifying the doctrine being taught will more effectively cultivate the qualities of physical health, character, integrity, responsibility, creativity, leadership, and excellence in every facet of life.

It is understood that non-believers are trying to fill a spiritual void with things of the world. However, an appropriate manifestation of the Christian faith is founded in reason and comity, which includes properly nourishing and caring for our bodies, educating our minds, and accepting a commitment to live a life that is pleasing to God. There is also quite often a burning desire to instill a spirit of order and self-respect in our youth.

Furthermore, most church services and Sunday school programs are not targeted for the interests of children. Most children deem them as lame and do not look forward to going to church or Sunday school. Most young people who attend church regularly agree that it is awkward to bring unsaved friends to church. In all actuality, most young people concur that going to church or attending Sunday school is more like a form of punishment rather than something to look forward to. How many kids do you know that would get up on Sunday morning and make it to church without their parents cracking the whip?

There are ways to present truth and make church fun for people of all ages. We must strive to provide an environment that is conducive to the spiritual growth of saved and unsaved children. Jesus said, "and you will do greater things than these" it is now clear that what he was saying is an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. We now realize that it would be better for the human race have millions of healthy Christian children than to see a few people cured of their maladies.

BUILDING COMMUNITY AND FOCUSING VISION

As we pray for the knowledge of God's will for the American church, we must realize that God is heartbroken that we have neglected the youth of our nation to this degree. We have undermined our future and the world's future by neglecting the youth of the United States. We need to focus on and fix America first; then in the future we will be better able to serve the world.

However, mere participation at the pastors' beck and call is not the pinnacle of service. There needs to be a group conscience regarding outreach programs, with clear objectives and job descriptions. Church leaders and members need to plan and attend health and fitness workshops and seminars. People need to be held accountable for their actions and inactions. This will help insure that church members are part of the bigger vision—God's plan for healthy, God-fearing people.

COACHING CHILDREN TO VOLUNTEER

In living out our faith, obviously we must instruct our children about compassion, empathy, volunteerism, and patriotism; however, exemplifying the attributes being taught will more effectively aid in our children's development. It is obvious that this type of parenting – living, modeling, and prioritizing compassion for others – is necessary to develop a society that thrives on benevolence.

We need to teach children the truth about self-absorption and combat the materialistic and self-centered messages our kids receive on a daily basis from their peers, movies, television, magazines, etc. Personifying the principles being taught will help children to develop a strong sense of values; it will help them act with integrity.

We need to supervise television and movies as much as possible; limit how much TV your child watches alone. Install a V-chip or a similar device on every television in the house to screen program content – V-chip technology exists to protect youth from viewing objectionable television programs that contain acts of violence, depictions of graphic sex, etc. Educate neighbors, friends, and other parents about V-chip technology.

Help create a safer online world for your kids by making rules about use of the Internet and computer games. Know the content of the games your children play. Consider keeping computers and televisions in the family room rather than in a child's bedroom. Monitor online activity with a program that sends you an e-mail report card with your child's web surfing, e-mail and instant message history.

Pay attention to the music that your children buy and listen to and the music videos that they watch. Help your children avoid music that has lyrics that encourage drinking, drugs, violence, sex, etc. Talk with your child about why you think they should not listen to certain music or watch certain music videos.

Choose reading material and television programs that give positive messages and that help your children to make wise choices. Keep a watchful eye on the magazines and other publications your children are reading. Subscribe to a few good magazines, get your child a library card, and be sure to keep high-quality books in the house so your children will have good reading material to bring with them when they have an appointment, traveling in the car, etc.

When we teach children Christ-like attributes by volunteering with them, and donating time and resources, we usually find an exponential return of our spiritual needs. Paradoxically, a benevolent gift is one of the best, most long-lasting gifts that you can give to your kids as well as to yourself.

Providing discipline, structure, involvement, and limit-setting is basic to produce well-developed children. However, without a solid spiritual base these procedures will not provide the perceptive awareness needed to overcome their sinful nature. Furthermore, involving children in an altruistic lifestyle will produce a moral conviction that will help set a threshold for children to develop an eternal perspective.

Most children are born with the ability to develop empathy and compassion for others; however, that ability can be lost if not nurtured by their parents.

Empathy is not just a feeling for others – it is often a way to feel good about ourselves. When we help others, we feel better; empathy and compassion will actually nudge out self-absorption and self-centeredness. Self-enhancement and peace of mind go hand-in-hand with altruistic behavior.

There are lots of ways to get involved; here are a few ideas for acts that can foster empathy and compassion:

1. Call a homeless shelter, a nursing home, a hospital, or a recovery home and ask them if there is anything you can do to help, or if there is anything that you could bring to help someone in need. Start a co-opt farm!
2. If your children are into sports become a referee or an umpire, or just show up with a few gallons of PristineHydro water and some cups, and other healthy snacks. Take photographs of the game and the kids and give them to the families.
3. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, YMCA, YWCA, and other kids groups are great training grounds for children, and parents can become involved as leaders or assistants. Church youth groups also encourage volunteerism and compassion, as well as providing companionship and fun for the kids.
4. Let kids know that you are proud of their efforts. Bring your kids with you whenever possible. Let them participate, if appropriate, and let them see you giving back to the community.
5. Bring up what you and other family members are grateful for. People tend to take things for granted, and a few minutes spent pointing them out can go a long way in raising your child's perception of what is really important. Teach your children about apology – how it makes life easier for all parties involved.
6. Teach your children how to be good listeners and give them advice on how to be non-judgmental and non-critical.

7. Encourage emotions and sensitivity; discuss with your children what they feel when they witness or experience disasters. Discuss how they feel after they have helped others. Examine the time you have spent with your child making the world a better place.
9. Thank God for the opportunity to help produce children who are part of the movement dedicated to produce a society that holds health, compassion, empathy, volunteerism, and patriotism in high regard.
9. Giving money is especially good for children to do. Supporting a full-time missionary or sponsoring a needy child or family is something every person or family should do.

The world would be a better place if everyone sponsored at least one needy child or family. No matter whom you are, or how much service work you do, or how much you donate to church, everyone who can afford to should donate directly to a noteworthy organization that serves impoverished communities. You can sponsor and correspond with an underprivileged child for as little as .87 cents a day.

ABOUT WORDS

Words are fascinating and a basis for understanding. However, it is difficult to present what we see as truth in our endeavor to enhance spiritual perception, when we are restricted to the language of this realm of existence.

In this book, obviously I have put words together... making efforts to use words not too easily distorted. Of course, it is always possible to twist words around if anyone wishes to do so. What I am trying to convey is now that we have expanded our awareness and invalidated the denial and illusions to some degree; we must implement the many ingredients for successful living into our lives. Focus on truth: if it is not loving--do not be thinking it, saying it, or doing it. Do everything with the best intent for all.

All of our challenges, problems, character defects, and inadequacies can be met head-on and concluded according to God's loving wisdom if we keep our attention focused on trying to be like Jesus Christ our Lord. We let go of the negative.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR MEETINGS

(*SECRETARY READS*) Welcome. We are not allied with any sect or denomination. This is a spiritual program. Everyone is welcome, no matter what his or her affiliation.

We open with the Serenity Prayer: God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

1. **(LEADER)** Welcome to the (meeting name). At this meeting, you identify yourself by saying your name and I want to live a life that is pleasing to God.
2. **(LEADER)** This is a league of men and women who wish to expand their awareness through faith and knowledge. It helps us gain insight into successful living.

We are not allied with any political organizations or institutions. We do not wish to engage in any controversy. We do not endorse outside issues.

3. **(LEADER)** Identify members:

(Small Meetings) We will now go around the room with first names.

(Larger Meetings) If you are new to this meeting or if you are a visitor from outside the area -would you please introduce yourselves so we might get to know you better.

5. **(LEADER)** This is a book study meeting.
 - A. Read from the book in sequence at each meeting. Find an appropriately qualified reader for each meeting and have him/her read as the group follows along. (This saves time and adds clarity.)
 - B. Tonight we are reading (i.e., Surrender on page 43). Please do not interrupt the reader. We have a question and answer discussion after the break. During the discussion period members may talk about anything they choose.
 - C. Introduce your reader.
6. **(LEADER, AFTER READING)** If anyone has any questions regarding what was read please write your questions down during the break and give them to the Leader. There are pencils and paper available.
7. **(LEADER)** We are going to have a 15 minute break.

GUIDELINES FOR MEETINGS

8. **(SECRETARY)** During the break write the questions on a chalkboard or a dry erase board. (After the break, read the questions aloud and get the meeting underway.)
9. **(LEADER)** Call the meeting to order. (Depending on the meeting size : We request that you limit your sharing to three minutes so others have a chance to share).
10. **(LEADER)** Five minutes before the meeting is to end, turn the meeting over to the secretary.
11. **(SECRETARY)** We are passing around a basket for contributions, as we are self-supporting through voluntary contributions. The money goes for rent, refreshments and literature. It is kept within our meeting for the group benefit.
 - A. Thank (names) for setting up the meeting and bringing the refreshments.
 - B. We have refreshments at (someone's house) and ask you to get together with us for the meeting after the meeting. Ask (name) for directions.
 - C. We ask that everyone clean up his or her area. We need three or four volunteers to help with clean-up. Would you please raise your hands and meet with me after the meeting.
12. **(SECRETARY)** Could we please have a moment of silent meditation for those who suffer, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

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Footnotes are purposely omitted.

Any omission of rightful credit is unintentional. If you note such and supply the publisher with documentation, it will be corrected in revised editions.

Any reference in this book to other publications is for information purposes only and does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by the publisher.

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