

HEALING FROM DISEASE, DEPRESSION,
AND DAMAGED RELATIONSHIPS



THE LAW OF *Life*

REVISED
EDITION



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THE LAW OF LIFE

INTRODUCTION

Do you desire to be healthy? Do you desire to have beneficial and lasting relationships? Do you long to be free from the baggage of your past and the resentment, guilt, and shame that it brings? Do you wish to break free from the negative thoughts that have plagued you for so long? Do you desire to have power in your life to unshackle yourself from those habits that have held you in chains?

If this is your desire, this book is for you. In this book, we are going to explore together The Law of Life. The Law of Life, applied in your life and functioning in your heart, can bring you a power and freedom that you always searched for but never found. It is liberating in concept but challenging in application. It calls for everything you have but offers what you don't. It is comprehensive—simple but profound.

This book was not written in the typical style of a book, because it is, in reality, a transcript of a lecture series. As I developed this lecture series and it began to grow, audiences asked me for notes so that they could study further into the topics that I was presenting. At first, the notes were only a few pages long. But within a year, they filled 25 pages of letter-sized paper, wide margin, single-spaced.

It was at that point that I decided it would be better to turn the notes into a small booklet to accompany the lectures. Over the last few years, the booklet has continued to grow but has remained in the transcript format. The illustrations are taken directly from my PowerPoint slides so that you can have a visual reference as you read about a topic.

If you would like to view the actual lecture series, there are several iterations of The Law of Life series on New Paradigm Ministries' YouTube channel. These can be accessed at the following link: www.youtube.com/@NewParadigmMinistries

I recommend reading the book through at least 6-10 times. Each time you read it, you will catch new information that you missed

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previously, and principles and concepts will come together in your mind in new ways.

May you find the freedom and power that you are looking for as you diligently read, study, and apply the principles of The Law of Life in your own life.

CHAPTER ONE

Understanding the Cause of Disease

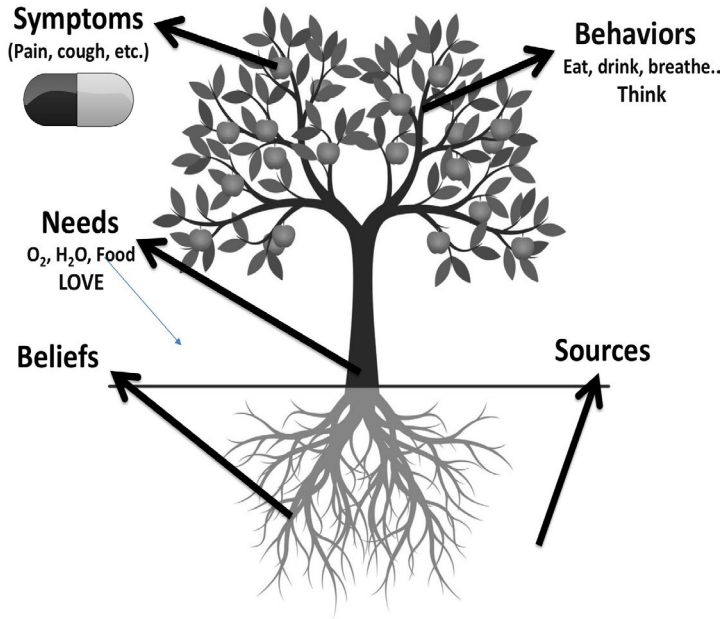
Treating the Cause

In this series, we want to talk about treating the cause of disease, not just its symptoms. But in order to treat the cause, we must know what the cause is. What is the cause of disease? What is the cause of cancer? What is the cause of diabetes? What is the cause of coronary artery disease? What is the cause of autoimmune diseases?

Don't feel bad if you don't have an answer to these questions. If you were to go to your doctor and ask them, "What is the cause of my disease?" they will give you a list of risk factors that are known to be associated with your disease condition. But if you keep asking them what the foundational cause of your disease is—that thing that would allow you to recover if it were removed—they would not be able to tell you. They don't know. I don't blame them. I wasn't taught it either.

But if you don't know the cause, how can you successfully treat and remove it? This is why I am interested in causes.

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Of Trees and Men

There are many similarities between people and plants. And when it comes to health, we can better understand ourselves and how we gain and maintain health by comparing ourselves with trees.

Imagine that you have a fruit tree, and it is fruit season. What are some of the first things that you notice about the tree? The fruit and the leaves and the shape of the tree? In this analogy, the fruit and the leaves represent our symptoms. These are the obvious things we notice and complain about, like pain, coughing, itching, etc.

If you have a tree that has some bad fruit and bad leaves, does it solve the problem to pluck off the bad fruit and leaves? No. Plucking off the bad fruit and bad leaves only removes the evidence of the problem, but it doesn't solve the problem. If you have pain in your back and you go to your doctor and your doctor gives you a pill to decrease the pain, you feel better. But the pain

is still there. So, you go to doctor number 2 and 3 and get more pills. Eventually, you don't have any more pain. Your problem is solved, right? No. You have only removed the manifestation of the problem, but not the problem itself.

Let us assume that you go to a fourth doctor, and this doctor does an examination and finds that you have a knife stuck in your back! Did the pain pills remove the cause? No. They only masked its manifestation. This is like having your house on fire and solving the problem by turning off the fire alarm. Treating the symptoms will not fix the problem, it will only limit its manifestation.

I don't want you to think that symptom care is never appropriate. If I break a bone or cut off a finger, please give me something to deal with the pain! But don't just treat the pain. Fix the problem as well.

Why does it not fix the problem to pluck off the bad fruit and bad leaves? It is because the fruit and leaves do not support themselves. They are supported by the branches, and the branches represent our behaviors or actions. These actions or behaviors are simple things like breathing, eating, drinking, exposing, sleeping, etc.

If the tree has healthy branches, they will support healthy leaves and fruit. But if the tree has unhealthy branches, they will promote diseased fruit and leaves. Similarly, if your behaviors are good, they will support good symptoms, but if your behaviors are bad, they will promote bad symptoms.

If the tree has unhealthy branches, will it help the problem to prune the branches? Yes, it will. It can decrease the disease burden. But it doesn't solve the problem, because the problem is ultimately not in the branches, because the branches don't support themselves. They are supported by the trunk, and the trunk represents our needs. You need what you need because you are what you are. We, as human beings, need oxygen, water, food, sunlight, warmth, rest, etc. You and I can't change what we

need, because those needs are determined by what we are. Trees have different needs than reptiles, which have different needs than birds, which have different need than humans. And what we need and how much of it we need is determined by what we are.

What you need is internal—it is determined by what you are. But the source of what you need is external—it lies outside of you and must be brought in from the outside and incorporated into yourself. You need oxygen, but the oxygen you need is outside of yourself and must be brought in for you to live. You need water, but the water you need is outside of yourself and must be brought in for you to live. You need food, but the food you need is outside of yourself and must be brought in for you to live.

Everything you need, which is determined by what you are, must be actively brought in to you from the outside. And your behaviors (breathing, drinking, eating, etc.) are the actions that bring in to you what you need from outside.

If your behaviors match your needs, you will promote good symptoms, just as branches that correctly transport the sap from the trunk promote healthy leaves and fruit. But if your behaviors do not match your needs, then you will promote bad symptoms, just as branches that do not correctly transport the sap from the trunk will promote diseased leaves and fruit.

For example, you need a certain amount of water daily to remain properly hydrated. If you drink enough water to remain properly hydrated, that will promote good symptoms. But if you don't drink enough water, if your actions do not match your needs, you will end up with symptoms of headache, fatigue, dry lips, constipation, etc.

If you have diseased fruit and leaves on your tree, I don't know of anything that you can do to the trunk of the tree to fix the problem. You can cut it off, but otherwise, there is little that you can do with the trunk. To really get to the problem, you need to go

underground. Why? Because the trunk doesn't support itself. It is supported by the roots, and the roots represent our beliefs.

So far, we have been dealing with aspects that are obvious (above the ground). Symptoms are obvious. Behaviors are obvious. Needs are fairly obvious. But beliefs? To know what someone believes you need to dig a bit. But, although you need to dig a bit, be sure that the roots affect the health of the branches. You do what you do because you believe what you believe.

If your beliefs about what you need match with your actual needs, then your behaviors will match your needs as well, and this will promote healthy fruit and leaves. But if your beliefs about what you need do not match with your actual needs, this will promote diseased fruit and leaves.

For example, let us imagine that you believe you *need* Coca Cola. If you believe you need Coca Cola, you will drink Coca Cola. But do you actually need Coca Cola? No! If you supply something that you don't need, or if you don't supply what you do need, this will promote diseased fruit and leaves—bad symptoms. It is only as you believe correctly about what you need so that you behave correctly in supplying what you need that you can expect healthy fruit and leaves, or good symptoms.

But yet, there is something missing. You see, when the tree has bad fruit and bad leaves, it is rarely the tree that is the problem. There is not a lot of surgery that an arborist does to the roots of the tree if the tree is struggling. Sure, if it is root-bound, the roots can be separated and spread out. But there isn't a lot to do with the roots. What does the arborist fix if the tree has a problem? They fix the soil! You see, the problem is not so much in the tree as it is in the soil. And the soil represents our sources.

If you believe that you need water and you drink water, but the water you drink is polluted, that will still promote diseased fruit and leaves. But, if you believe that you need water and you drink enough

pure water, that will promote healthy leaves and fruit—good symptoms.

So, healthy fruit and leaves are the product of good sources, beliefs that match with one's needs, and behaviors that correctly supply those needs. When all of these are working together, one can expect health and good symptoms.

In a human, however, there is at least one more aspect that we must consider. In a tree, the roots cannot choose what source to take from. It simply takes from that which is around it. However, a functional adult human, can choose its source. And the choices of what sources we take from are also rooted upon our beliefs. So, not only do the beliefs determine the behaviors, but the beliefs determine the sources we take from. This will become clearer as we continue through this series. But for now, just remember: if you see bad fruit on your tree, don't just pluck off the fruit. Dig in the ground to find out what is going on with the roots and the soil. That is where you will find the cause of your disease.

I have a question for you. Do you need love? Is there anyone here that does not need love? I have asked this question to thousands of people around the world, and I have not found a single person that does not need love. We all need love, just like we all need oxygen, water, food, etc.

Our need of love is determined by what we are—human beings. And the source of the love that we need is outside of ourselves, just as the source of the oxygen, water, and food that we need is outside of ourselves. And like the oxygen, water, and food, there must be an action that brings the love in to us so that we can live. And what is that action? It is thinking. Thinking is the action that brings in the love that we need to survive.

Is it possible that love is just like the other needs; that there can be a polluted or a good source; that there can be correct or false beliefs about love; and that there can be appropriate actions (thinking) that fulfill that need, or inappropriate actions that do

not fulfill that need? And if the source, beliefs, or actions (thoughts) are not right, there can be diseased fruit and leaves, but if the source, beliefs, or actions are right, there can be healthy fruit and leaves? Yes, this is the case. But we will dive into this topic later in this book.

Pain & Disease

How many of you like pain? And how many like disease? I have a question for you. Is the function of pain and disease a good function or a bad function? Let us take leprosy for an example.

In leprosy, individuals are infected with a type of bacteria that begins affecting areas of the body which are cool, like the fingers, toes, and nose. The infection damages the nerves and eventually a person is not able to feel. Then, when something harmful happens to their hands or feet, they can't feel it, so they eventually start losing their fingers and toes because of injuries, burns, cuts, and other problems which they can't feel. If you and I put our hand on a hot burner, we will pull it off right away because we feel pain. They don't pull their hand off the burner until they smell the flesh burning, because they can't feel.

So, is the function of pain good? Is it good to have the capacity to feel pain? Yes! Similarly, is the function of disease good? Is it good to have the capacity to have disease? Yes. Both pain and disease let us know that something is wrong. If we didn't have that capacity, we would injure ourselves beyond repair in a very short period of time.

But as we look a little closer at disease, we need to ask ourselves a question. Does disease just come out of thin air, or is there a cause for disease? If disease has a cause, what is it? To help us come to an understanding of the cause of disease, we must begin reasoning from cause to effect, or from an effect back to the cause.

The Law of Cause and Effect (Hypertension Example)

Let us take hypertension, or high blood pressure, for our example. What is the cause of high blood pressure? We know that when the blood vessels clamp down on the blood that is within them, the pressure of the blood (blood pressure) increases. So, vasoconstriction is the cause of high blood pressure. We've solved the problem, right? We've found the cause of high blood pressure, right?

A colleague of mine has this to say: "Causes have causes." Just because we find one cause to a problem doesn't mean we have found THE cause. Each cause we find is caused by something else, until we get to the root cause.

So, in the case of vasoconstriction, we find that it is the result of increased activity of the sympathetic nervous system, which is your fight or flight response system. It causes the heart rate to increase, the blood vessels to clamp down, and a large release of adrenaline, which all increases your blood pressure.

But what is the cause of increased sympathetic nervous system stimulation? One of the causes is increased leptin. Leptin is a hormone that is released from the fat cells in the body (predominantly the fat that is around the organs in the abdomen), and this hormone travels in the blood to a part of the brain called the hypothalamus, which has receptors in it for leptin. When there is more leptin coming to the hypothalamus, it triggers the sympathetic nervous system to increase its output.

But what is the cause of increased leptin? It is increased fat in the body, especially central fat around the organs. The fat cells primarily grow in size as one gains weight, and as the cells get bigger and bigger, it is harder for nutrients and gasses to dissolve to the center part of the cell. In defense, the cells release leptin, and the leptin causes you to feel full earlier, causes your metabolic rate to increase, and stimulates your sympathetic nervous system. Unfortunately, the early fullness signal and the increased

metabolic rate die off, and what you are left with is the sympathetic stimulation.

But what is the cause of increased fat? It is a positive calorie balance. That means that you eat more calories in your food than you burn in exercise and daily life.

But what is the cause of increased calories? It is an increase in calorie- dense food. Some foods have more calories in them than others. For instance, if you want 200 calories of butter, you only get one tablespoon. But if you want 200 calories of celery, you have to eat over 3 pounds of it! So, if you eat more foods that are high in fat or sugar, you will have high calorie-dense food that will give you more calories before you feel full.

But what is the cause of an increase in calorie-dense foods in your diet? It is your taste.

But, what is the cause of your taste? It is developed over time by repetitive choices. In other words, it is developed by habit.

But what is the cause of your habits? It has to do with your appetites.

But what is the cause of your appetite? It is the result of your human nature.

But what is the cause of your human nature? It is sin. Ultimately, if we take any disease and go through this same process of asking ourselves the question, “what is the cause of this, and what is the cause of that?” and so on, we will always come to the same conclusion: sin. If it were not for sin, there would be no disease. What I don’t want you to think is that I believe that it is always your sin that causes your disease. We know with Job that he was a righteous man, and yet the enemy was permitted to torment him with a terrible disease. It was still the result of sin, though. It was the enemy’s sin that caused Job’s disease.

Sin & Disease

What is sin? Sin is breaking the law. John tells us, "...for sin is the transgression of the law."¹ What law is this talking about? It is God's law, also known as the 10 commandments. But what is the foundation of God's law? The foundation of God's law is His character, which is founded on love.

Matthew tells us, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."²

You see, the foundation of His law is love. And we read that "The law given upon Sinai was the enunciation of the principle of love, a revelation to earth of the law of heaven."³ We find, then, that disease, in many cases, is the result of a love problem.

"There is a divinely appointed connection between sin and disease. No physician can practice for a month without seeing this illustrated...If he will be observing and honest, he cannot help acknowledging that sin and disease bear to each other the relationship of cause and effect."⁴

This is so true. As a practicing physician, I cannot help but see that there is a connection between people's disease and sin. It isn't so easy helping them see the relationship, however. But it helps to be able to reason from cause to effect.

The Law of Cause & Effect

We can reason from cause to effect because there is a law of cause and effect that governs the association between causes and their effects. The law of cause and effect can be simply understood.

¹ 1 John 3:4 KJV

² Matthew 22:37-40

³ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 46). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

⁴ White, E. G. (1923) *Counsels on Health*. (p 325). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Every effect must have a cause, and every cause must produce an effect. The cause always comes before or at the time the effect is produced, and the effect always comes after or at the time of the cause. If the effect is present, the cause or its secondary causes must also be present, because if the cause, or its secondary causes, is removed, the effect must cease.

“The will of God establishes the connection between cause and its effects. Fearful consequences are attached to the least violation of God’s law. All will seek to avoid the result, but will not labor to avoid the cause which produced the effect. The cause is wrong, the effect right....”⁵

You see, the effect is never wrong. It is a natural consequence of law. It is the cause which is wrong, and which must be sought out, identified, and removed. It is pointless to deal with the effect only because the effect is not the problem, the cause is. Treating symptoms, in the long run, does no one any lasting good. We must search for the cause and remove it, then the effect will cease. The cause is wrong, the effect right.

When we consider the law of cause and effect, we find a reason why it functions the way it does. That explanation comes from one of the laws of thermodynamics. That law states that “All energy necessary for a system to function must come from outside of that system.” Because of this, you cannot produce a perpetual motion machine. There is no machine that you can put in motion that will run indefinitely, generating all the power that it needs to continue to function. This is because it is always dependent upon energy from outside of itself to continue to function.

Since all energy necessary for a system to function (and all energy necessary for a system to dysfunction) must come from outside of itself, the effect cannot create itself. Because of that, the

⁵ White, E. G. (1864) *An Appeal to Mothers*. (p 26). Battle Creek, MI: Seventh-day Adventist Publishing Association.

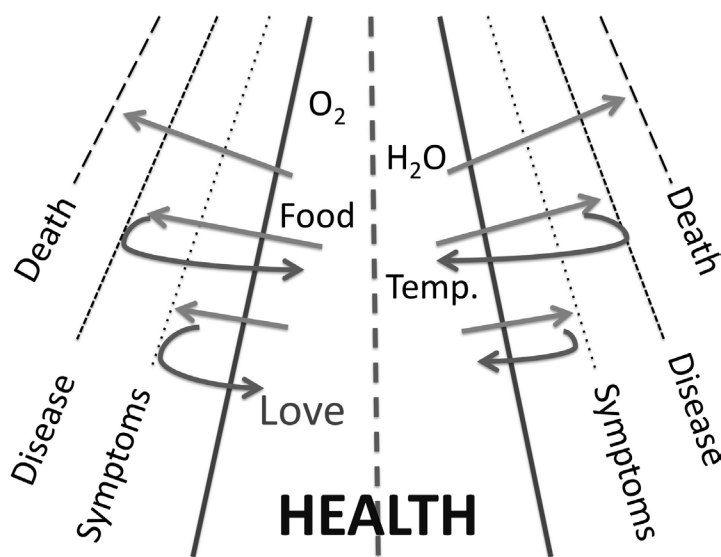
cause must be sought for from outside of the system in question. So, if someone has cancer in the left breast, one shouldn't go to the cancer in the left breast to find the cause. The energy necessary to cause the dysfunction had to come from outside of there.

Laws of Function

Now, there is a law of function as well. And that law says that everything that functions is governed by unchangeable laws. For instance, human beings have a healthy blood salt or sodium level of 135-145 mEq/dL. It doesn't matter if you are from Australia, Africa, Antarctica, or America, all human beings have a blood sodium that ranges near 135-145 if you are healthy. But if it goes too low or too high, you cannot remain healthy.

Also, blood pH for human beings is 7.35-7.45 no matter where you are on the planet. So, if you think you would be better off with an alkaline blood pH of 8.5 and you achieve your goal, you will be dead, because the law that governs the function of the blood pH level in human beings determines that health is maintained between a pH of 7.35 and 7.45. If you like it or not, if you know about it or not, it doesn't matter. The law is what the law is, and you can't change it just because you like it or don't like it.

Similarly, body temperature (oral temperature) is somewhere around 98.6°F/37°C. There is a slight variation amongst people, but no one can live with a body temperature of 50°F, and no one can live with a body temperature of 150°F. It doesn't matter if you are tall or short, skinny or fat, black or white or blue. The law is what the law is, and you can't change it. Functional laws do not change. If we move to the arctic, we can't just choose to live by a freezing body temperature. And if we eat lots of salt, we can't just decide to live by a higher sodium level. We function how we function because of laws that govern our function, and those laws are not subject to change.



The Highway of Health

We are talking about The Law of Life, and to begin illustrating this law, let us consider the highway of health. Imagine with me for a moment that we have a road with two ditches on either side of the road. Health is maintained if you stay on the road, but if you veer off into either ditch, you will have problems. To begin with, we must define some of the things we need to maintain health. What are some of those health needs that we have?

One is oxygen. What else? Water too. What else? Nutrients, or food, is needed as well. But what else? We also need a certain amount of warmth to be healthy.

What happens if your temperature goes up? You have a fever. And how do you feel when you have a fever? Do you feel comfortable or uncomfortable? You feel uncomfortable. You develop symptoms. Those symptoms help you to know that you are outside of the confines of the law of body temperature, and your response to these symptoms, like sweating, being flushed, moving to the shade, turning on a fan, etc. help your body to

return to a lower temperature so that you can be back in the confines of the law that governs the function of your body temperature.

But what about the opposite direction? What if your temperature goes down? You get symptoms there too. Symptoms like goose bumps and shivering. Are these symptoms comfortable, or uncomfortable? Uncomfortable. Why? To let you know that you have deviated from the law.

You see, you and I don't really care about the law. We care about how we feel. If we stay on the road, it promotes comfort, which we enjoy. If we get off the road, it is associated with discomfort, to let us know that something is wrong and that we need to do something about it. These uncomfortable symptoms are part of your attempt to return your body temperature to normal so that you can be healthy again. It is returning you to the law by which you function so that you can function properly and feel better.

What would happen if you felt the same way when your temperature went up and when it went down? For example, if your temperature goes up, you feel hot. But if your temperature goes down, you feel hot also. That would be dangerous, because you wouldn't know what to do to get back into conformity with the law of your body temperature. If your temperature was going down and you felt hot, you would do everything to make your temperature go down faster, and you would quickly die. It is a good thing that it "hurts" differently when you deviate from the law one way than it does when you deviate from the law the other way. Because of this, you know what to do to get your temperature back to normal.

But what if you deviate further from the law than just symptoms? Let's say that your temperature goes up a lot. Instead of you just having symptoms, you develop disease (dysfunction), like heat exhaustion or heat stroke.

Now you feel really bad. Why? Because you are really in trouble. You are farther away from the law that governs the function of your body temperature. But the disease, even though it is more severe, is itself an effort to get your attention so that you can get your temperature down and back into line with the law that governs your body temperature.

The same is true in the opposite direction. If you get really cold, you may develop disease, like frost bite, or chilblains, or hypothermia. This too, although more severe, is an effort to get you back into line with the laws by which you function so that you can experience health and comfort again.

If you don't stop at symptoms or disease (dysfunction), but you continue to deviate farther and farther from the laws by which you operate, you will eventually go from dysfunction to no function (death). The body can only handle so much before it must give up.

As we stay on the pathway, it is usually comfortable. As we deviate from the pathway, it becomes more and more uncomfortable, to let us know something is wrong so that we can do something about it and come back into the confines of the law that governs your function.

As you deviate away from the law toward death, you eventually cross a boundary called the point of no return. You are still alive, but you aren't going to get back to normal. Hopefully, before crossing this boundary, you cross the "pride line." The pride line is the line where your symptoms are bad enough that you will accept or ask for help in recovering from your discomfort and dysfunction.

From my medical experience, I have observed that women reach the pride line sooner than men. This is why women will typically seek medical attention sooner than men will. Sometimes, a man's pride line is so close to death that he will reach the point of no return before he ever seeks for help. This is unfortunate, to say the least.

Another factor that we can consider is this. If all the other things that you need (oxygen, water, and nutrients) are all within the confines of the laws that govern their function, then when you deviate from the law of body temperature, you can go further from the pathway before you develop dysfunction and death. You can handle more of a deviation in one area if all the other areas are okay. But, if you are dehydrated, you have low oxygen levels, and your electrolytes are all messed up, your body temperature can't go up or down much before dysfunction and death.

Let us, for a moment, consider medication or other forms of symptom management in relation to this Highway of Health. If the manifestation of pain and discomfort (negative symptoms) are for the purpose of letting you know something is wrong and for motivating you to do something about it to return to the confines of the law that governs your function and which protects your comfort and proper function, what is the danger of pain medication or other forms of symptom care that do not address the underlying problem?

Let us say that you deviate from the law, and you develop pain as a consequence. If you take pain medication, it decreases the intensity of the pain, therefore decreasing your motivation to do something about your problem. If you take increasingly stronger medication to mask your increasing pain, you blunt your motivation to do something about your situation and continue to drift closer and closer to death without the proper motivation to earnestly do something about removing the cause.

This is not to say that pain medication in an acute situation (trauma, surgery, etc.) is inappropriate. But symptom care in the long term counteracts the very motivations that have been put in place to help us comply with the laws that govern our being and make us more apathetic about remaining in a state of dysfunction and discomfort.

Now, I would like to ask you a question. How many of you need love? Of thousands of people that I have asked this question of, I have yet to find one person who does not need love.

We all need love, just like we need oxygen, water, nutrients, and warmth. Is it possible that there is a law that governs the function of love, and that if we deviate from that law, in either direction, that we will develop uncomfortable symptoms, then disease (dysfunction), and then eventually death? I propose to you that this is indeed the case. And as we discussed earlier, the law that governs the function of love is God's law—the ten commandments. We will see later how that law governs the function of love.

So, in this law of life, we find that health is proper function because the laws that govern our function are followed. Conversely, disease is dysfunction because we have in one way or another broken the laws which govern our function.

Cellular Factories

How many cells in your body need oxygen? How many need water? How many need food? And how many need warmth? All of them do. And how many of your cells need the effects of love? Every cell in your body needs the effects of love. But how do we get to the cells that which they need?

Before we answer this, let us look at the cells and their function. The cells are the smallest units of life. It is as simple as you can get and still have all the functions of life in one package. Your body is composed of 50-100 trillion cells, and the function of your body as a whole is dependent upon the proper function of each cell. If enough cells dysfunction, you begin to notice the dysfunction. And the fewer the number of cells there are for a particular function, the fewer of them can dysfunction before you feel the effects.

It is stated that one can lose up to half of the existing cells responsible for a particular function before one has noticeable symptoms related to the loss of that function. For example, if you

had 2 billion beta islet cells, which are responsible for producing insulin, you would need to lose about 1 billion of them before you started developing diabetic symptoms.

This is an important concept to understand when considering the law of cause and effect. If there is an effect (diabetes), there has to be a cause in place. The cause came before the effect was produced. Once the cause is present, it starts producing its effect. But the effect might not be large enough to be noticed for quite a while. For example, if you have a cause that begins destroying beta islet cells one by one, you won't notice until you have lost about half of your cells. It is estimated that diabetes has been in the process of developing for at least 10 years before one begins to manifest diabetes. So, the cause can be in place for a long time before the effect is large enough to be noticeable.

The cells in your body are like factories—chemical factories. They produce chemical products. Their products may be hormones, like the leptin or insulin we talked about earlier. They may produce proteins, cell signaling molecules, and any number of other chemical products.

But for a factory to be able to produce a product, what must it have? It must have raw materials. What are the raw materials that a cell uses? It uses oxygen, water, and nutrients (which are all chemicals). So, the cell takes raw materials, which are chemicals, and converts them into products, which are chemicals. And how do you get all of these raw materials to all of the cells of the body? You get it to the cells through the blood.

This means that the circulation of blood is vitally important to your health. If there is anything that impedes the flow of blood to a cell, tissue, organ, or organ system, there will be dysfunction in that cell, tissue, organ, or organ system to the degree that the circulation is deficient in supplying the needed raw materials.

But if you have a factory with a blueprint, workers, and raw materials, you still can't make a product. What else do you need?

You need to have energy, or power, in order to function. You have to plug the factory in! Remember, all energy necessary for a system to function must come from outside of that system. In the cells, what form of energy do the cells ultimately function by? It is electricity.

The cells maintain a difference in charges across the cell membrane, with the inside of the cell being more negatively charged and the outside of the cell being more positively charged. Positively and negatively charged particles separated by an impermeable or selectively permeable membrane form a battery. So, your cells are like little batteries. And the difference in charge is called voltage. If the charged particles then flow from one side of the cell membrane to the other, that is called current. It is this electrical activity at the cell membrane that drives the functions in the cell, even driving the breakdown of glucose and other molecules and releasing chemical or heat energy.

But where do the cells of the body get the electrical stimulation from in order to function and be coordinated with other cells in their function? It comes from the nervous system. Every function in the body is regulated through the central nervous system. All mechanisms that maintain a balance of function in the body (called homeostasis) are regulated through the central nervous system.

The brain generates electrical impulses that are transmitted down the nerves to the various parts of the body to stimulate the cells to function properly and to coordinate their function by increasing and decreasing their activity.

“The influence of the mind on the body, as well as of the body on the mind, should be emphasized. The electric power of the brain, promoted by mental activity, vitalizes the whole system, and is thus an invaluable aid in resisting disease.”⁶

⁶ White, E.G. (1991) *Counsels for the Church* (p. 209). Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

How does the energy from the nervous system get to all the cells of the body in order to control their function? It is transmitted down the nerves to the different parts of the body.

“The mind controls the whole man...Yet many spend all their lives without becoming intelligent in regard to the casket that contains this treasure. All the physical organs are the servants of the mind, and the nerves are the messengers that transmit its orders to every part of the body, guiding the motions of the living machinery.”⁷

But where does the brain get the electricity that it sends down the nerves to the rest of the body? Remember, all energy necessary for a system to function must come from outside that system. The energy that powers the brain comes from spiritual information.

The word of God is spiritual information. Jesus said, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”⁸ Jesus also said, “the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”⁹ The word of God is real. It has power. It imparts life. It is spiritual. And it is the basis of all right thoughts.

Thoughts, which begin in the spiritual realm, generate electrical activity in the cortex of the brain which is then transmitted down the nerves to the rest of the body.

Science claims that it is the electrical activity that causes the thinking, but it is actually the initial spiritual components of thinking that causes the electrical activity. Science believes that the electrical activity within the context of the neural networks of the brain produces thought. In other words, science believes that the physical is the cause, and the spiritual is the effect. But we learn in the Bible that God (who is Spirit) created all that is. We find that it is the spiritual that is the cause, and the physical is the

⁷ White, E.G. (1897) *Special Testimonies on Education* (p. 33). Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

⁸ Matthew 4:4

⁹ John 6:63

effect, not the other way around. It is not the electrical activity within the context of the neural network of the brain that creates thought. It is the initial spiritual components of thought, applied to the neural network of the brain, that generates the electricity.

The law of the conservation of energy states that energy is not lost, it is simply converted from one form to another. For example, the potential energy of a ball at the top of a hill is converted to kinetic energy when it begins to roll down the hill. The power of moving water, through a turbine, is converted to electricity. Nuclear power is converted to heat energy which is converted to electricity. The chemical energy of glucose is converted to cellular function and muscular movement in an animal. And the power of spiritual information, when it impacts the physical structure of the brain, is converted to electrical energy that is then used to power and control the entire organism.

While thought, in humans and animals, has physical components, it always begins in the spiritual realm. In order for you to bring to the body something that is spiritual, you need a part of you that is able to receive the spiritual information and apply it to the body. And that part of you which is spiritual, which, combined with the physical structure of the brain, generates electrical activity, is your spirit.

So, your spirit uses spiritual information which is converted at the cortex of the brain into electrical impulses. These electrical impulses are conducted down the nerves to each of the cells of the body so that their function can be controlled.

Remember, you and I need love. But do each of the cells of your body need love itself? No. They need the results (power, control, coordination) of love. The part of you that needs love is your spirit.

And if your spirit has the love (love is a type of spiritual information) that it needs, it will produce the thoughts that are necessary to provide the energy and coordination necessary for

the cells to function as they are supposed to. But if the spirit does not have the love that it needs, the energy and coordination will be messed up, and the body will malfunction.

We were created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), which means that we were created to think like God thinks. “God is love,”¹⁰ and God’s thoughts are thoughts of love. “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”¹¹ As we think like God thinks, it will promote the proper energy and coordination of the body’s functions. But as our thinking deviates from God’s thinking, it will eventually result in dysfunction in the body.

So, in order for your cells to produce a good product, they need a proper blueprint for that product in the DNA, they need a proper environment in which to work, they need proper raw materials, and they need proper energy or control.

Causes of Dysfunction

So, what are some causes of dysfunction in the cells and therefore in the body?

One cause is inheritance. Inherited diseases are diseases that manifest in the individual as the result of changes in the genetic code of one’s parents, grandparents, etc. and which manifest regardless of environmental or lifestyle factors in the individual. These include conditions like Huntington’s chorea and cystic fibrosis—conditions which lead to disease and early death despite all attempts to cure it. Inherited causes of dysfunction are problematic. You can’t remove the cause because the cause is in a prior generation. You can’t remove the secondary cause (which is the change in the DNA sequence) because the secondary cause is in every cell of your body, and we don’t have a way of fixing the DNA in all of your cells. You can try to help with the

¹⁰ 1 John 4:8

¹¹ Jeremiah 29:11

manifestations of the disease, but you cannot remove the disease, because you can't get to the cause. This, however, doesn't mean that God can't remove the cause. He is not limited by time or genetics. He can recreate the DNA.

This definition of inheritance is different than saying that a condition is genetic. Many diseases in one way or another are genetic, because in order for you to manifest that disease, you must dysregulate or mutate proper genes, or you must express improper genes.

Another cause of dysfunction is environment. The cells function within the context of certain environmental parameters. You can cause dysfunction because of too much or too little pressure. You can be hit by a car, shot by a gun, stabbed by a knife, or have dysfunction because of a SCUBA diving accident. All of these involve too much pressure that causes damage to the cells. You can also have damage because of too little pressure (vacuum injuries, high-altitude illness, etc.). You need a certain amount of environmental pressure in order for your cells to function, and when the pressure is too low, dysfunction is the result. Also, if the temperature surrounding the cell is too hot or too cold, it cannot function properly, even though it has the proper raw materials and energy. You can burn your fingers or freeze your toes and cause dysfunction.

Finally, we are surrounded by electromagnetic waves in various forms, and the intensity and frequency of those waves can cause damage. To get a severe sunburn from ultraviolet waves, or to have significant radiation exposure from x-ray devices or nuclear spills or nuclear bombs can damage many cells in the body. So, pressure, temperature and electromagnetic radiation are environmental issues that can impact function or dysfunction.

Another potential cause of dysfunction is raw materials. You may have harmful raw materials, things like toxins,

poisons, envenomations, etc. You may simply have the wrong materials—soft drinks instead of water, fried foods instead of fruits, and nitrogen instead of oxygen. You may have an imbalance of the proper raw materials. You may have too much salt, too little carbohydrates, too much fat, and so on.

If the cause of the dysfunction is because of raw materials, the effect will eventually be generalized. Certain cells or tissues may require certain raw materials more than other cells do, so the manifestation of the dysfunction may begin locally (for example, hypothyroidism caused by low iodine levels, death of the brain before death of the toes in drowning, etc.), but as the cause continues or worsens, all the cells will eventually be involved as a cascade of metabolic consequences spread throughout the other cells of the body.

But dysfunction may be caused by energy as well. Unlike raw materials issues, energy issues typically cause local dysfunction initially. Remember, the cells function by electrical energy, and that electrical energy is stimulated and coordinated by the nervous system, and the brain generates that electrical energy by thinking. The nervous system is very specific. One area of the brain controls or receives information from one place in the body, and another spot on the brain does the same for another place in the body. If you have a particular electrical problem in one part of the brain, it can be transmitted down the nerves to particular parts of the body to affect that specific location. So, if you have a local problem, it can't be caused by just raw materials.

For instance, some people have problems with gout. Gout is a painful inflammation of a joint (sometimes several joints) because a substance called uric acid forms crystals in the joint and causes irritation, pain, redness, swelling, and heat. Most individuals with gout have elevated levels of uric acid in their blood, and when you draw their blood from their arm, the uric acid levels are high. So, we assume that the cause of the problem is the uric acid, and

we give medication to lower the uric acid level and the gout goes away. But is gout caused by uric acid only?

Where did you get the blood from that showed the elevated uric acid levels? The arm or the hand. Because of the law of diffusion, we know that dissolved substances in water distribute themselves evenly throughout the water so that the concentration is the same throughout. So, we know that when we measure uric acid levels in the arm, the uric acid level in the blood in the toe is nearly the same. The uric acid is elevated throughout the body, so why does it cause a problem just in the one joint? If it is just caused by the uric acid, it can't. There must be something else. The uric acid must only be a cofactor.

I suspect that it is an energy issue from the nervous system that is the primary problem. The uric acid is only a cofactor that is necessary in order for the problem to manifest itself. It is the same thing with cholesterol and arterial plaques/blockages. How is that the case, you ask?

The concentration of cholesterol in the blood just before a cholesterol plaque is essentially the same as at the plaque and after the plaque. So, what caused the cholesterol to accumulate in one spot here and another spot there and create a 90% blockage here and a 75% blockage there? It couldn't just be the concentration of the cholesterol. There had to be something else to cause the accumulation of the cholesterol.

We know that inflammation is essential to the process of plaque formation, but what causes the inflammation? Science assumes that it is local trauma caused by abnormal blood flow at the area of the artery where the plaque develops, but I suspect that it is the signals sent to that particular area of the artery by a specific nerve which originated as a thought in a specific part of the cortex of the brain.

What do we know about the connection between the thoughts and the function or dysfunction of the body? One series of

experiments were conducted between 2000 and 2013. The investigators were studying a chemical to see if it could be used as an anti-inflammatory medication. As part of the process of testing the chemical for human use, they needed to run many animals through various tests first.

One of the tests was injecting the chemical into the fluid space that surrounds the brain (called an intrathecal injection). This is to discover what would happen if the substance was able to get across the blood-brain barrier. What the investigators found out was that when they performed the injection, the mice stopped producing tumor necrosis factor alpha (TNF α), a prominent inflammatory chemical in the immune response.

The confusing aspect of this response was that TNF α is not produced in any significant degree in the brain. After a number of years, the investigators discovered that when the chemical was injected around the brain, it changed the signal that was being sent down the vagus nerve to the spleen. In the spleen, that signal was received by the T-helper cells (part of the immune system), and the T-helper cells communicated with the natural killer cells (other cells in the immune system which are predominantly responsible for producing TNF α), and the natural killer cells turned off their production of TNF α .

The investigators wanted to know if they could cause the same result without the chemical, and they eventually were able to stimulate the vagus nerve with an electrical nerve stimulator and produce the same result! This opened up many possibilities of treating various problems in the body by manipulating the signals received through the nerves.

Recent research also shows that there is a strong connection between the nervous system and cancer. Studies have shown that the nervous system can influence every step in cancer development, growth, and spread, promoting or limiting the metastasis of cancer. And how do you and I control this every day

of our lives? By our thoughts and attitudes! Perhaps this is why we see so many people who develop cancer within months to several years of a major stressor or loss in their life. Perhaps this is why we see so many individuals who eat a plant-based diet and exercise regularly, but who still develop and die from cancer.

Finally, dysfunctions can be caused by the Enemy. We see this in the life history of Job. He was a righteous man, faithful in all he did, but the enemy came to God and made a complaint of God being unfair—that Job would not serve God like he did if God stopped protecting him. So, God gave the enemy permission to cause dysfunction or disease in Job. It wasn't an inheritance issue, it wasn't an environment issue, it wasn't a raw materials issue, nor an energy issue. It was a direct attack of the enemy. The same can be true today as well. Unlike Job, however, many times the Enemy has access to us because we give him that access by participating with him in sin.

CHAPTER TWO

Learning from My Needs

Basic Needs

Let us look at our basic needs again, but from a slightly different angle.

There are basic needs that the cells have in order to function, including raw materials and energy. The raw materials include oxygen, water, nutrients, and warmth, as we have already pointed out. But it also includes sunshine and sleep.

And in order for these basic needs to get to the cells of the body, they first need to get into the body through an organ or organ system. We have to have a way of getting the basic need from where it is to where it needs to go—we need a delivery pathway.

So, what organ or organ system is responsible for bringing into the body the oxygen that you and I need in order to live? The lungs.

And what organ or organ system is necessary for us to bring into the body the water that we need in order to live? The stomach.

And what organ or organ system is necessary for us to bring into the body the nutrients that we need in order to live? The stomach as well.

And what organ or organ system is necessary for us to bring into the body the warmth that we need in order to live? The skin.

And what organ or organ system is necessary for us to bring into the body the sunshine that we need in order to live? The eyes and the skin.

And what organ or organ system is necessary for us to bring into the body the sleep that we need in order to live? The brain.

As we have noted earlier, once these raw materials are brought into the body by their respective organs or organ systems, they then need to be delivered to all of the cells of the body so that the cells can live.

And what is responsible for distributing the raw materials to the cells? The blood.

And what is responsible for distributing the power or electricity to the cells so that they can live? The nerves.

Now, we must consider the fact that not only do we require certain basic needs, and not only do we need a delivery pathway to get those needs to the cells, but there is also an action that is required to bring those basic needs into the body.

What do you need to do to bring oxygen into your body so that you can live? You must breathe.

What do you need to do to bring water into your body so that you can live? You must drink.

What do you need to do to bring food into your body so that you can live? You must eat.

What do you need to do to regulate the warmth of your body so that you can live? You must expose or cover your skin.

What do you need to do to bring sunlight into your body so that you can live? You must open your eyes and expose your skin to the sun.

And what action do need to do to rest so you can live? You must close your eyes, lie down, etc.

For every basic need an action must be performed in order for the needed substance to be brought into the body, and then it must be distributed throughout the body to each of the cells. But there is something else that we all need, which we have discussed previously.

We all need love. But what action is necessary to bring the love that we need into the body? That action is thinking. It is by

thinking that love is converted to proper energy and brought into the body, transmitted down the nerves, and carried to the cells of the body.

Let us consider love a little closer. How much does love weigh? How many protons, neutrons, and electrons is it made of? That's ridiculous, you say! Love is not physical, is it? So, in order to bring love, which is not physical, into the body, we must have an organ that is itself not physical. So, what is that organ? It is the spirit. The spirit, which is not physical, is the organ that brings love into the body through the action of thinking, which is then transmitted by the nervous system, through the nerves, to every part of the body.

Now, we must ask ourselves a very important question. Can you create the oxygen that your lungs need to breathe in order for you to live? No. You can use chemicals or machines and extract the oxygen from other molecules and concentrate oxygen into a container, but you cannot create oxygen from nothing.

Similarly, can you create the water your stomach needs to drink in order for you to live? No.

And can you create the nutrients that your stomach needs to eat in order for you to live? No. You can participate in the growing process by planting, watering, weeding, etc., but you cannot give the seed life and make it grow and produce.

Can you create the warmth that your skin needs to cover or expose itself from/to in order for you to live? No.

And can you create the sunshine that your eyes need to open to, or your skin needs to expose itself to in order to live? No.

Can you create the sleep that your brain needs to prepare for in order to live? Anyone who has experienced insomnia will tell you, "No!"

And can you create the love that your spirit needs to think by in order for you to live? No. You cannot.

Action vs. Basic Need

Can we have health if we have the wrong substance, even though we have the right action? For example, when we breathe air with oxygen in it, we will maintain health. But if we breathe carbon monoxide, what will happen? It will kill us. The same action (breathing) with the wrong source (carbon monoxide) will bring death.

If we drink the water that our bodies need, we will maintain health. But if we drink antifreeze, it will kill us. The same action (drinking) with the wrong source (antifreeze) will bring death.

If we eat foods with proper nutrients, we will maintain health. But if we eat rat poison, it will kill us. The same action (eating) with the wrong source (rat poison) will bring death.

If we think good thoughts, which are based upon love, we will maintain health. But if we think bad thoughts, it will kill us. The same action (thinking) with the wrong source (thoughts not consistent with love) will bring death.

Only if we have the right action (breathing, drinking, eating, thinking) with the right source (oxygen, water, good food, love) can we expect health. If we have the right source (proper nutrients, oxygen etc.) but the wrong action, (overeating, hyperventilating, not eating, not breathing, etc.), that will lead to disease and death. If we have the right action (breathing, drinking, or eating), but the wrong source (poisons, toxins, etc.), that will lead to disease and death. And if we have the wrong action (overeating) and the wrong source (poison), it will lead to disease and death.

What My Needs Tell Me

When we seriously think about the various needs that we have, we learn something about ourselves. Can you create that which you need? No. If you could, it wouldn't be a need of yours. The body cannot create that which it needs. And the spirit cannot create that which it needs.

Do you need love? Yes! Absolutely! Then, can we create or produce love? No! If we could, it wouldn't be a need of ours. Now, is this an individual problem? It is just you and I that cannot produce love, or is this true of all humanity? It is a human problem, not just our problem. No human being can create or produce love. We need to remember this because this is foundational to many of our problems.

Can someone else breathe for me? No. I must breathe for myself. Only the oxygen that I breathe will benefit my body. Can someone else drink for me? No. Can someone else eat for me? No. Only my actions—not the actions of another—affect my health. Another human being cannot be the source of that which I, as a human being, need, because they need that very thing as well. So, let me ask this question. Can another person be my source of love? No! Because they are in need of it themselves.

Basis of Relationship Issues

Suppose that you have a neighbor that comes over all the time to borrow something from you. Then one day, she comes over and tells you that her daughter has a rare, lethal health condition that can only be treated in a special center in Russia, and it will cost \$5,000,000 for treatment. Because it is Russia, payment is required in full before beginning treatment. She asks you for all of the \$5,000,000 so they can get treatment. You politely tell her that you don't have the money, but you give her a donation toward their goal.

But each day she comes back and keeps asking for the rest of the \$5,000,000. Eventually, what do you do when she comes to your house and knocks on your door? You don't answer the door!

You are frustrated because you don't have what she needs, and she is frustrated because she isn't getting what she needs. This is how it is in relationships. We get frustrated when others don't give us the love we need, and they get frustrated because they can't

give it to us. We expect from others what is impossible for them to produce. The problem is that we are going to the wrong source!

Whose Responsibility?

Whose responsibility is it for me to be filled with oxygen? It's my responsibility. And whose responsibility is it for me to be filled with water? It's mine. And whose responsibility is it for me to be filled with proper nutrients? It's mine.

Have you ever, for any period of time, felt less than 100% full when it comes to love? I have a question for you. Whose responsibility is it for me to be filled with love? Is it God's responsibility or is it mine? It is my responsibility! You see, if it were God's responsibility, we are told that "He does all things well."¹² How well does He do all things? Perfectly well. And how often does He do all things well? All the time. So, if you have ever, even once, felt less than 100% full of love, that, in and of itself, is evidence that it is not God's responsibility to fill you with love. It is your responsibility to take the love you need. It is His responsibility to make sure that love is available.

The Buffet

Imagine that you have been fasting for several days, and it is time to break your fast. You go to a buffet restaurant in town that is known for having tasty, but healthy, options. You grab your tray, plate, bowl, spoon, fork, knife, and napkin and wander through the restaurant looking at the various options to see what you are going to eat this time and what you are going to skip. But you do something curious. You leave your tray, plate, bowl, spoon, fork, knife, and napkin behind and leave the restaurant. And you are still hungry.

Whose fault is it that you are still hungry? It is your own fault. It isn't the restaurant's responsibility to feed you. It is their responsibility to make sure the food is available and that it meets

¹² Mark 7:37

certain standards, but it isn't their responsibility to feed you. It is your responsibility to take the food you want and eat it.

God has a buffet. His buffet involves things like grace, security, belonging, truth, mercy, acceptance, justice, and freedom. These are all different aspects of love. As I go through the restaurant, I have the opportunity of filling my plate with, and subsequently eating, each of the options available, but I don't have to. I could walk through the restaurant, smell the wonderful smells, and see the beautiful sights, and never take a single item. It is God's responsibility to provide the buffet of love, but it is my responsibility to take from it and make it mine.

But there are some aspects of God's buffet of love that are different from a regular restaurant. God's buffet of love is always stocked. It is never empty. It is always open. It is never closed. It is always what I need. It is never unhealthy. And God has paid for it all so that it's free.

God tells us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."¹³ "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you."¹⁴ "Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price."¹⁵ We can never be where God's buffet of love is not available to us, so we can never be in a situation where we don't have access to the correct source for our healthy thinking.

But God's buffet is not the only buffet available. Everyone else has a buffet that they offer to you as well. But since others are in the same situation of selfishness as we are, they offer buffets of selfishness. These buffets offer dishes like power, pleasure, popularity, and possessions. But they also offer dishes like betrayal, abuse, deceit, and control.

¹³ Hebrews 13:5

¹⁴ Jeremiah 31:3

¹⁵ Isaiah 55:1

It is said, “You are what you eat.” When you eat an apple, the components of the apple are broken down and assimilated so that they become a part of your body. Similarly, when we eat from the buffet of others, we assimilate what they have, and it becomes a part of our mind.

Have you ever noticed that when someone close to you gets upset, you get upset? Or when they are happy you get happy? Or if they are depressed, you get depressed? It is because we are eating from their buffet, and we become like them. But we don’t have to eat from their buffet.

You see, others may provide a hurtful buffet for you, but just because they do so, it doesn’t mean that God’s buffet of love all of a sudden disappeared. His buffet of love is always available, no matter who or what is around you and what kind of buffet they are offering.

It is your choice whether you will take from God’s buffet of love, or whether you will take from their buffet of selfishness. And what buffet you choose to take from determines your outcome.

But before you start beating yourself up, remember, human nature naturally takes from the buffets of selfishness. We naturally feed there. And many people do not realize that there is a buffet of God’s love and that it is available to them all the time. We have by default take from others’ buffets.

But now that you know, you can begin to take from the right buffet. What is it that allows you to take from the one buffet or the other? It is faith/belief/trust. The one you believe or trust in, you will take from. The one you do not believe or do not trust in; you will not take from. So, taking from God’s buffet of love necessitates trusting and believing Him. We will cover this more fully later in this book.

The Body & The Spirit

Now, let us take a different look at how we are made and how we function. This is a simple drawing of your brain. The cortex is

on the surface of the brain and the limbic system is deeper down in the brain. The cortex is where thinking, reasoning, and other higher brain functions occur. It directs the “work” of the nervous system. It produces electricity that is then transmitted down the wires (the nerves) to the various parts of the lower brain and body.

We can see this electrical activity when we do an EEG. The different leads that are placed on the scalp pick up the electrical activity that is generated and transmitted below it in the cortex, and we can study the pattern of electrical impulses to determine if there are particular problems going on in the brain.

The limbic system, which resides deeper in the brain, below the cortex, is primarily involved in emotions, the control of the fight or flight response, and assisting with memory. The cortex and the limbic system then connect with the rest of the body through the “wires”—the axons, or the nerves.

The brain and the rest of our physical being that it is connected to is the body. But are we only physical? When man was created in the first place, there were a few components that were put together to make him. We read in Genesis 2:7, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” So, God took dust, and added to it his breath, and the combination of the two became a living being. The dust corresponds to the body. The breath corresponds to the spirit. And the living being corresponds to the soul. It’s like God married the body and the spirit together at creation.

In Genesis we read, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”¹⁶

Synergism

When a man marries a woman, the combination of the two is not numeric. It is synergistic. Numeric is one plus one equals two.

¹⁶ Genesis 2:24

Synergistic is one plus one equals eight. You see, as individuals, a man and a woman cannot reproduce. But as a couple, they can. In our family, we have 6 children, so in our case, $1 + 1 = 8$. The total is greater than the sum of the parts. This is synergism.

Similarly, the breath and the dust are synergistic, forming a soul that is more than the sum of the body and the spirit. But the soul still involves both the body and the spirit.

Conflict

How many of you like conflict? What is conflict anyway? Conflict is defined as a “Strong disagreement between people, groups, etc., that results often in angry argument.” Can you have conflict in just one thing? No! Have you ever had a conflict with yourself? How can you have a conflict if you are just one? Don’t you need at least two to have a conflict? Are you just one? No. We are physical AND we are spiritual.

Our body includes the brain and the rest of the body. It is the part that senses and interacts with the physical world around and within us. The spirit is different. It is the part of us that communicates life to our physical being, or imparts spiritual power, which is necessary for the physical being to function. The soul, however, is not a third entity. It is the synergistic union of the physical and the spiritual. You do not have a soul. You are a soul, which is the combination of your physical and spiritual components. The combination of your central nervous system and your spirit is your mind. The mind is conscious and aware. It is what thinks and reasons, interprets, and understands. The mind is where the spiritual power unites with the physical body, enabling us to be living, thinking beings. In us, the mind is located in the brain.

You can cut off your finger, and you are still you. You can cut off your arm, and you are still you. You can cut off your leg and you are still you. You can even cut out your heart and replace it with someone else’s heart, and you are still you. But you cannot

cut off your head and still be you. That is where the mind is located.

Different Needs

Are your physical needs and your spiritual needs the same? Your physical needs include oxygen, water, nutrients, warmth, sleep, and sunshine. But your spiritual needs include grace, harmony, security, belonging, acceptance, liberty, righteousness, truth, and understanding. All of these spiritual needs are different components of love.

So, which needs are greater, your spirit's needs, or your body's needs? To answer this question, we simply need to look at one example—fasting.

When you are fasting, what is your body “saying”? It is saying, “Give me food.” And what is your spirit saying back? “No!” Your physical needs include food, but your spiritual needs include freedom (from disease, pain, suffering, social oppression, etc.), or a deeper relationship with God (by fasting, which helps the mind to become clearer and better able to listen to the Holy Spirit).

When the body sends a signal up to the cortex, is it a command or a request? Does the spirit have to comply with the information sent to it by the body? No. The spirit has the choice. But when the spirit sends a signal to the body, is it a request or a command? It is a command. The body cannot decide to not do what the spirit tells it to do.

As we see in the example of fasting, your spiritual needs—the need of love—are greater than your physical needs. The spirit is in charge.

CHAPTER THREE

Deceptions of Love

The Gift

Think about the person in the world that you love the most. Imagine that there is a special event coming up (birthday, anniversary, etc.), and you want to surprise them with something that they will really like. You put thought and time into finding just the right gift. You spend your hard-earned money on the gift, and you wrap it so nicely for them. When the time comes, you bring the gift to their house, knock on the door, and they open the door, take the gift, throw it on the ground, stomp on it, and walk back inside, slamming the door shut. How do you feel? Why do you feel that way?

Let's look at another scenario. This time, you need some extra money, so you get a job with UPS. You get your route and stop at one of the locations for a delivery. You grab the package, take it to the house, knock on the door. The person comes to the door, signs for the package, takes the package, throws it on the floor, stomps on it, and goes back inside and slams the door shut. How do you feel? Why do you feel that way? What is the difference between scenario one and scenario two?

In the first scenario, the reason that I am hurt is because I think, "It's mine." It's my present that I gave. It was my money that the present was purchased with. It represents my love. And that was my loved one (spouse/friend/parent/child/etc.). Whereas, in the second scenario, it's not mine. It's not my present. It's not my money. It doesn't represent my love. And it's not my loved one.

If I think it's mine, I am personally hurt (hurt for myself) when it is rejected. If I don't think it's mine, I'm not personally hurt if it is rejected. But beyond that, when I give, I have expectations. I, as a human being, give in order to receive back again. And in the first scenario, I am hurt because I didn't receive back what I expected.

You see, human love gives to receive. It is an investment. An investment is putting something of value in something with the expectation of gaining a greater return. You have heard the phrase, "No strings attached", right? In humanity, there's no such thing. There are always strings attached. As human beings, we give with expectations of return. And our expectations determine how much return is necessary in order for us to be satisfied with our investment.

The Heart - Human

The heart that we will be talking about is not your blood-pumping muscle. The heart is a part of the mind where information is evaluated unconsciously. The heart evaluates all information based upon two criteria. One criterion that the heart evaluates is gain, and the other criterion is loss. You and I are created in such a way that our heart always responds with "yes" to gain, and it always responds with "no" to loss.

It is a little more complicated than that. You see, we choose between various losses and gains. We will choose a greater gain above a lesser gain. And we will choose a smaller loss above a greater loss. And the weight of what is considered a gain and loss and how great that gain or loss is considered is based upon our value system, or treasures.

The Bible tells us, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."¹⁷ God designed us to always win, to always gain, to

¹⁷ Matthew 6:21

always grow in positive experiences. Heaven will be a continual gaining, learning, growing, improving. Throughout eternity we will gain more and more.

Because we are created to always choose yes to gain and no to loss, the enemy cannot tempt us to lose. It is no temptation at all to us. If I have a cup that has something that looks like water, but is actually full of mercury, strychnine, arsenic, and other poisons that will surely kill you; if you know it is poisonous and will kill you, are you tempted to take it and drink it? No, it is no temptation at all. The enemy couldn't come to Eve with the forbidden fruit and say, "Here, eat this; you'll die." That would be no temptation at all. What he had to do was trick her into believing that loss was gain and gain was loss.

You see, in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam and Eve, if you eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you will lose (you will die). But if you don't eat it, you will gain (you will live).

Genesis chapter 3 tells us the story, "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.'"¹⁸

The enemy told Eve the exact opposite of what God had told her. He probably added that he had been eating from the tree for quite some time and that he hadn't died. In fact, he had even gained the ability to talk. "Nothing bad will happen to you, Eve. In

¹⁸ Genesis 3:1-5

fact, you will be better off than you now are if you eat the fruit, because you will be like God.”

God said, if you eat it, you lose. The enemy said, if you eat it, you gain. God said, if you don't eat it, you gain. The enemy said, if you don't eat it, you lose. And what did Eve do?

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.”¹⁹ Eve was deceived. She believed the lie of the enemy, and once she was convicted that to eat was gain, she ate it. Why? Because she was created to always say yes to gain.

The enemy promised Eve that if she ate of the forbidden fruit, she would be like God. Could it be that you and I believe the same lie today?

In the human heart, we harbor certain expectations, and these expectations are intricately tied to the love by which we function.

Love, in a sinful, fallen, human context, gives to receive. We give to others with an expectation of return. This love is an investment. We put something of value into someone else so that we can get something of greater value back. We may give roses, or teddy bears, or poems, but we are looking for acceptance, belonging, and harmony.

And if I give in order to receive, then my gain is in what I receive. But how much do I need to receive in order to be satisfied, in order to be in gain? I will consider myself to be in great gain if I receive in greater quantity something similar to that which I gave (two hugs in return for one given), or if I receive something different than that which I gave, but which is of greater value to me than that which was given (acceptance or belonging in exchange for a rose). But I am also in gain if I receive at least what I expect in return from my investment.

¹⁹ Genesis 3:6

If I receive, but I receive less than I expected to receive, I perceive that I am in loss. And if I don't receive anything at all in return for my investment, I am in even greater loss. Also, if my treasure is taken away (my house burns down, my car is stolen, my spouse leaves me for someone else, my child dies, etc.), I am at loss as well.

If I have high expectations, I will be at loss more often. But if I lower my expectations, I won't lose so much because it is easier for others to meet my expectations. In human love, I have to lower my expectations in order to limit my losses.

Let us consider a young couple. One day the young man passes the young woman, and there is an attraction. He sees her, interacts with her, and begins to think, "She is a gain." But he's not sure, because gain is receiving, so he gives her something to see if he'll get something back. He gives her a smile, time, and conversation, and she returns the favor. Gain! He was giving (investing), and she was receiving, so that was a gain to her. So, he invests a little more and a little more, and she does the same in return. Both are happy because both are gaining, because both are receiving. Both continue to raise each other's expectations by sharing letters, flowers, teddy bears, time, interest, companionship, etc.

Eventually, the young man is sure that she is a permanent gain, but he's not sure if she thinks he is a permanent gain. Finally, he "pops the question," and asks her to marry him. She, having received so much from him, believes he is a permanent gain as well, and says yes. Life continues this way until one day...they get married!

Then, he has to go to work. He remembers that he had hobbies before he met her, like sports, fishing, etc., and he remembers that he has other friends as well. So, letters and flowers and teddy bears come less and less often. She now has only one way to mitigate her losses—she must lower her expectations.

If she doesn't lower her expectations, she will be at loss, and the heart always says "no" to loss.

So, over time, he gives less and less and less, and she has to lower her expectations more and more and more in order to remain in gain. But eventually she says, "Enough is enough," and she doesn't lower her expectations any more. If he continues to perform below her expectations, she will continue to be at loss, and the heart always says no to loss, so she will eventually either look for another gain, or "cut her losses" and separate or divorce.

This is how the human heart functions, and this is why we see so many marriages end in divorce. It all has to do with gain and loss.

The problem with human love, the reason that we feel personally hurt, is that we think it's mine. And "it's mine" has several components to it. I have—meaning it is my possession. It belongs to me. I can—meaning I produced it. It came from me. And I am—meaning I am my own individual being, answerable to myself, responsible for the production and the use of the thing in question.

From a love standpoint, I believe that I possess love, because I produced the love, because I am my own self, capable of creating love from myself so that I can give it away. But let me ask you this, how much of what you possess is actually yours? We are told, "'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts."²⁰ Does that include the gold and silver in your bank account? Yes, it does. It is all His. How much did you create? Nothing. So, can you lay claim to anything as your own? No. He is the Creator; therefore, everything is His. Everything we have is the Lord's. He is the One who possesses. We are only the stewards.

But when I think things are mine, when I think they came from me, and when I think that I am my own, I take it personally

²⁰ Haggai 2:8

when my gift is rejected. I am hurt when I am not recognized and not appreciated, and when the gift is rejected. Why? Because it's about me—it's mine.

If you have two children playing in a playground and there is a toy dump truck that they are playing with that belongs to the one boy, and the other boy takes the truck and starts playing with it as if it belongs to him, not sharing with the boy who owns it, we say that the boy who took the toy is selfish. To treat things (including love) as if it is your possession, when in reality it belongs to God, is selfishness. 1 Corinthians 4:7 tells us, "And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?" Don't treat God's possessions as if they are your own. They are His, not yours.

What character quality underlies the thought that I can produce/create/make anything on my own and that I am my own person to do whatever I want to with myself? It is pride. So, we find in the core of our human heart that we are selfish and proud. In fact, selfishness and pride are the only motivations that the sinful, fallen human heart can come up with for everything that it does. Human love—giving to receive—is always motivated by selfishness and pride, and it always has expectations relative to self. I have expectations for myself and what I will receive in return for what I invested.

Don't be mistaken. Selfishness can give. Pride can sacrifice. But it does so with the objective of receiving greater rewards in return. The love that I have for my loved ones (spouse, children, parents, friends, pets, etc.) is a selfish love. You and I cannot, from ourselves, come up with anything different. At the core of who we are, we find selfishness and pride.

God tells us the truth about ourselves in the Bible when He says, "But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our

iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.”²¹ We have nothing good in ourselves. Our righteousness is like menstrual cloths. That is all we have to offer. So, when we offer God the gift of our heart, we aren’t offering anything of great value. We are offering trash. But God is happy when we offer Him our hearts because He can then come in and recreate us in His image and instill within us that which is of value.

I want to be painfully clear about something right now. This is the human heart, and this is how it functions in every sinful human being that has ever lived since the fall. The best that you and I have; the best we can do; the love we have for our children, parents, spouses, friends, or others; the motivation behind all of the good that we do; the gifts that we give; or the sacrifices that we make; all are motivated by selfishness and pride. That is it. There is nothing else. There is nothing better than selfishness and pride as motivations in the sinful, human heart.

But that is not all. It gets worse! Can you give what you do not have? No. You must take something from someone or somewhere else first in order to have something to give. Who, in all the universe, can give first without first taking? Only God. So, when I give first in order to receive back, I put myself in the place of God. I think I am God, thinking that I possess or produced “it” in the first place so that I can give it away in order to get something back again. I am living by the lie that the enemy told Eve in the garden, “you will be like God.”

So, when you and I give to receive, what we are revealing is that we believe that “I am God.” I have the capacity of God to create the love, which I then give away, in order that I may receive more love in return. This heart is motivated by selfishness and pride and puts me in the place of God. And this heart is always

²¹ Isaiah 64:6

breaking the first commandment. “You shall have no other gods before Me.”²²

What is the most common God we have before God, that thing which causes us to break the first commandment on a daily basis? It is self. I am number one in my life. My wants, my desires, my wishes, my needs come first. God comes somewhere down the line.

And this heart—which believes it is God, which is motivated by selfishness and pride, whose gain is receiving, and loss is not receiving, not receiving enough, or having my treasure taken away— this heart is a slave to others. You see, my gain or loss is dependent upon whether others give or not and how much they give. And I can’t control them. I can’t make them give, but I am dependent upon what they give in order to be in gain. And I can’t control whether they reject me, leave me, or die.

I am a slave to others, because I am dependent upon them and what they give me in order to be in gain. And because you must control a source that you do not trust, and because no human is completely trustworthy, you and I always attempt to control others so that we can control our gains and losses.

We may try to control them with the good (praise, thanks, gifts, etc.), in order to receive similar things in return, or we may try to control with the bad (coercion, guilt trips, shame, accusation, abuse, etc.) in order to force them to remain as our source and to continue to give to us. But whether it is with the good or with the bad, we try to control others because they are our source, and we can’t trust them. We are slaves to others.

The Heart - Deceived

We’ve been talking about the heart and how it functions from a human love standpoint. But I want to know how do I

²² Exodus 20:3

know if Christ is in my heart? Let's read. "How am I to know that Christ is in my heart? If, when you are criticized or corrected in your way, and things do not go just as you think they ought to go,—if then you let your passion arise instead of bearing the correction and being patient and kind, Christ is not abiding in the heart."²³

Ouch! Is it possible that this is true? Then what about you and me? Where do we stand? How can we be in such a miserable position when we thought we were at least somewhat okay? It is because... "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?"²⁴

What does it mean that the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked? It means that the human heart is crazy. It is crazier than anything else out there.

I don't know if you have ever met someone who is crazy. In my medical school rotations, I did inpatient and outpatient psychiatric rotations, where I met individuals who had very interesting alternate realities. I met many more when I was studying and practicing as an emergency physician.

Some patients believed that a microchip was implanted in their brain, and the military was sending them signals through that microchip and causing them to do things. Others had voices that spoke to them and demanded that they do certain things. Others believed that they had super powers and could walk through walls. Others believed that the news anchor was speaking to them directly through the TV and giving them secret messages that only they understood.

After taking care of many individuals who had significant alternate realities, I came to understand one thing. I couldn't talk anyone out of their alternate reality. They were as convinced that their alternate reality was real as I was convinced that my

²³ White, E. G. Union with God. *Review & Herald*, July 12, 1887, paragraph 9.

²⁴ Jeremiah 17:9

reality was real. The only thing that would wake them up to see a different reality was a strong medication.

Could it be the same for you and me? What if we were all crazy? What if all of us had the same delusional state and believed the same alternate reality? How would we know we were sane or crazy? If everyone we checked with believed essentially the same thing that we did, and we were all wrong, how would we know?

What God is trying to tell us is that we are crazy. The core of who we are—our heart—is crazy! And it is crazy in a particular direction. It is crazy for evil while it thinks the evil is good. It is like having a ball on the side of a smooth hill. When you let the ball go, it will always roll downhill. It will never roll uphill. No matter how many times you try, it will always roll downhill. Downhill is evil. Uphill is good.

Not only does the human heart always go downhill toward evil, if unrestrained, it will always go to the deep end of the evil pool. Why is that? Imagine that you are born into a world that is upside down. It has always been upside down, and since it has always been upside down, it appears to you to be right side up. God has created you with a desire to gain, achieve, grow, learn, improve, etc. You see a mountain in the distance, and you want to climb to the top of it, so you do. But what happens if you are upside down? The higher you climb, the lower you go, thinking that you are pursuing greatness, you climb to the lowest depths that you can go. This is the craziness/deception of the human heart and why it always goes to the deep end of the evil pool.

What does it mean to be desperately wicked? It means to be desperate for wickedness. Imagine being in a desert. You have been there for a couple days without any water, and you are dying. Your lips are cracked and bleeding. Your tongue is dry and sticking to the roof of your mouth. You have a pounding headache, and you feel fatigued and dizzy. Then off in the distance you see a table,

and on the table is a glass pitcher of water, glistening in the sunshine, revealing the ice cubes inside.

Now, imagine that between you and the water is a cactus patch. Would you brave the cactus patch in order to get the water? Yes, you would. Why? Because you are desperate for the water. That is how the human heart relates to wickedness or evil. It is desperate for it! But it is only desperate for it by believing it is good, not evil.

You and I have an amazing capacity to be deceived. We don't know what is in our hearts. We don't understand ourselves. We can see fairly clearly what is wrong with others, but as far as we are concerned, we are blind.

We see this clearly pointed out by Jesus in the sermon on the mount. He says, "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."²⁵

We can see a speck of a problem in our neighbor, but we can have a 2x4 sticking out of our head and not have a clue about what is going on. How can this be? Let me illustrate with an example.

When I first purchased glasses, they were very awkward. They sat on my nose, hurt the tops of my ears, and made everything look a bit distorted. I didn't like them, but I needed to see, so I put up with them. One day, I couldn't find my glasses. I was looking all over the place for them and couldn't find them in any of the usual locations. Eventually, I asked my wife to help me find my glasses. She looked straight at me and said, "Honey, you're wearing them!" How embarrassing! Here I was, looking all over the place for my

²⁵ Matthew 7:3-5

glasses, and the whole time they were right there on my face. I had become so accustomed to them that my mind ignored all of the signs of their presence.

In fact, just the other day our family was having evening worship together, and one of the girls was missing. I was looking around the room to see where she was. The others noticed that I was puzzled, so they asked what I was looking for. I told them, and they all started laughing! The missing child was sitting on my lap!

You and I have lived with ourselves for so long, that there is a lot about us that we don't notice. When was the last time that you noticed your eyelashes in your vision? They are always there, always in the way of your peripheral (and sometime central) vision. But do you notice them? No. Why? Because they have been a part of you for so long, you ignore their presence (until they fall out and get in your eye!).

We have serious character flaws, but we just don't see them. If we were born with a 2X4 hanging out of our head, we would become so familiar with it, that we would stop noticing it (until we hit something with it).

Is it possible that our ability to be deceived is so great that even God could look us in the eye, tell us what is wrong with us, and we wouldn't believe Him? If you said no, are you sure? Are you better than Jesus' disciples?

In Mark 8:29, Peter and the disciples claim that Jesus is the Christ—the Messiah—and just two weeks later, that same Jesus looks at Peter and the disciples and says, “All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered....” [Did they believe Him?] Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.’ Jesus [the same Jesus who they had just affirmed was God] said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three

times.’ [God is looking Peter and the disciples in the eyes and telling them what is wrong with them, and do they believe Him?] But he [Peter] spoke more vehemently, ‘If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ And they all said likewise.”²⁶

Even if God looked you in the eye and told you what was wrong with you, you probably wouldn’t believe Him. You see, we are crazy, and you can’t convince someone that they are crazy just by telling them that they are crazy. You need powerful medication to wake them up to see that they are crazy. In life, that medication is called demonstration.

We are deceived. So, what is the solution? We need God to show us what is going on by demonstration. You and I don’t know our hearts. But someone does. Jeremiah 17:10 says, “I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings.” God knows what is in our hearts, and we must come to Him to reveal to us (demonstrate) what is there.

David, the man after God’s own heart, may have faintly understood that there was something in his heart when he prayed this prayer in Psalm 139:23 & 24, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.” If God would have looked at David in the eye and told him that he was a lust-driven murderer, David probably would have argued with God.

“Surely not Lord. I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is within my heart.”²⁷ I will set nothing wicked before my eyes; I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me.”²⁸ But David, in Psalm 139, asks the lord to “try me.” It is in the trial that we discover what is in the heart.

²⁶ Mark 14:27-31

²⁷ Psalm 40:8

²⁸ Psalm 101:3

One day, David was walking around his palace, when he saw a lovely woman bathing on her roof. Maybe he said, “Whoa” quickly and thought about walking away. But he looked again. Then he asked someone what her name was. Then he invited her over. And one thing led to another, and one year later David had committed adultery with Bathsheba, had murdered her husband, had a baby with her, and was fast heading to complete ruin.

Then enters the prophet Nathan with a story of a rich man who has many sheep and a poor man who only has one sheep and loves it and even shares his home with it. A stranger comes to the rich man, and the rich man, sparing his own flock, takes the poor man’s sheep and slaughters it to feed the stranger. David, in his anger, calls down curses upon the rich man in the story, and then Nathan points at David and tells him, “You are the man!”²⁹ At that point, because of the trial and the prophet’s words, David’s eyes are opened, and he sees what is in his heart. It isn’t good at all! He now knows that he needs something.

Now, we find David praying another prayer about the heart, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”³⁰ David now knows, without a doubt, that he needs a new heart.

When God allows the trial to come to us, and in the trial, what is inside of us spills out and reveals to us what is in our heart, we then realize that we desperately need a new heart. And when we, like David, knowing that we need a new heart, come to God, and plead for that new heart, God answers us.

“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart

²⁹ 2 Samuel 12:7

³⁰ Psalm 51:10-12

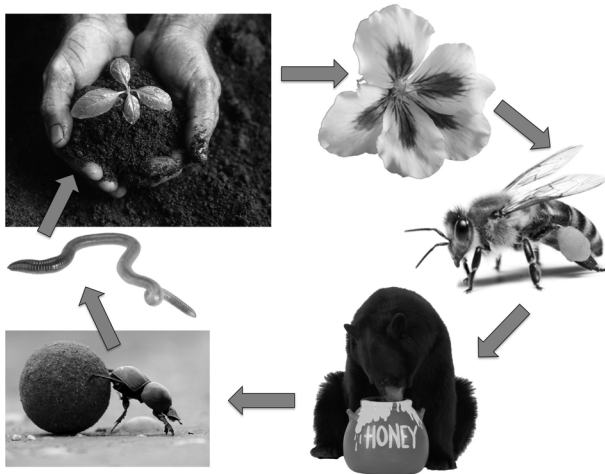
of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.”³¹ God knows what the human heart looks like. He knows how horrible it is. He knows all about the selfishness and pride and putting ourselves in the place of God. He knows! And He knows that we need a new heart, so He died so that He could give us a new heart—His heart. Do you want that heart today?

“Lord, I see how bad my heart is. I see that everything is motivated by selfishness and pride. I have nothing, absolutely nothing, to offer you. But I need a new heart—your heart. Would you give me that new heart, and put Your Spirit within me? Thank you, Jesus, for doing that for me; not because I deserve it, but because You love me. Amen.”

³¹ Ezekiel 36:26,27

CHAPTER FOUR

The Law of Life: Take to Give



Give or Take?

Now, when it comes to love, can I give first, or do I have to take first? Can you give what you don't have? No. We must take first in order to have something to give. Otherwise, we are God, producing and possessing that which we give. This is true throughout all creation.

Does a seed that is planted in the ground first give to the ground, that it may grow, or does it first take from the ground that it may grow? It takes first. It takes of the moisture and temperature and nutrients, and as it grows and breaks through the ground, it takes of the sunshine. It takes and grows and takes and grows.

Suppose that the seed in question produced an orange tree. For whom does the tree produce the fruit? For itself? No. It has no

personal gain from the fruit which it produces. Can other orange trees benefit from what it produces (other than other trees growing from the seeds)? No. It takes from what is in the ground so that it can give to other species. Even the oranges that land on the ground do not immediately benefit the tree. Those oranges must first “give” to bacteria or fungus or other creatures, which eventually give to the ground, which can then give to the tree.

The seed takes from the ground so that it can produce a flower so that it can give the pollen to the bee. The bee takes of the pollen so that it can give honey to the bear. The bear takes of the honey so that it can give to the dung beetle. The dung beetle takes of the dung so that it can give to the worm. And the worm takes of what was provided so that it can give back to the soil.

We see this Law of Life—this circuit of beneficence—exemplified in the life of Christ. “Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. ‘I do nothing of Myself...’ ‘I seek not Mine own glory, but the glory of Him that sent Me’...In these words is set forth the great principle which is the law of life for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but He took to give. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father’s life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, the law of life.”³²

Just like the circuit of life, the circuit of beneficence, taking to give, is the law of life.

The Heart – Divine

God wants to give us a new heart. He didn’t design for us to have the old heart of human love. He intended for us to operate by

³² White, E. G. (1898). *The Desire of Ages*. (p 21). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

divine love. And divine love does not give to receive. Divine love operates according to the Law of Life—taking to give. Instead of investing in others, looking for a return from what I give, divine love gives without an expectation (for myself) of return. I still have expectations, but my expectations are for your benefit, not for mine.

I expect my wife to love me, because I know that if she does, that means that she is connected to God. He is in control of her life. And that connection brings her life, love, joy, and peace. So, for her sake, I expect her to love me. But I don't have that expectation for myself. I don't need her to love me for my own sake, because she is not my source. God is my source, and I take all I need from Him, and then I give it away to my wife and others.

I will never run out of love because I am connected to the source which does not run out, and as I take that love and am filled by it, I have all that I need to give away to others without ever going empty.

And if I take in order to give, then my gain is to give. And if my gain is to give, then my loss is to keep it to myself.

This follows a divine law outlined in John 12:25, "He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life." What Jesus is showing us here is that in reality, if you want to keep something, you have to give it away, because the moment you hold on to it and try to keep it to yourself, you lose it.

So, if you need acceptance, go to God, and take it from Him. He has all the acceptance you need, for He is the source of it. But if you want acceptance to remain yours, you must give it away to others—you must accept them. If you need belonging, go to God, and take belonging from Him. He has all the belonging you need, for He is the source of it. But if you want belonging to remain yours, you must give it away to others—you must let them belong. If you need forgiveness, go to God, and take of His forgiveness. He

has all the forgiveness you need, for He is the source of it. But if you want forgiveness to remain your own, you must give it away to others—you must forgive them.

So, what about God? Can He keep His love to Himself? Or must He give it away? He must give it away! It is His very nature to give. If He kept it to Himself, He would lose, and God doesn't lose. He always wins, so He always gives. We are told, "He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."³³ His giving is not about you, it is about Him and His character, for it is a reflection of His heart.

And the same is true for you and me when Christ lives in our hearts by faith. Our reward is secured by giving. "...the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So, in human life, to give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world will keep it unto life eternal."³⁴

This heart of divine love remembers, "It's not mine." I don't have, or possess, it. It simply doesn't belong to me. It belongs to God. I can't produce anything. I'm not a creator. Only God is. So, whatever I have comes from Him—even my creativity.

And I am not my own to do whatever I want with myself. I am not my own, because I was bought at a price.³⁵ I belong to God, and I am responsible to Him. And just like the UPS delivery guy, if the gift is rejected or destroyed or not appreciated, it doesn't affect me personally, because it's not mine and it doesn't represent me. I'm not personally hurt (meaning I am not hurt for myself) by someone's response to my love, because I am not dependent upon them—I am dependent upon God—and what they do with the gift

³³ Matthew 5:45

³⁴ White, EG. (1898). *The Desire of Ages*. (p 623). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

³⁵ 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

is their problem (a reflection of their own heart), not mine. And besides, it wasn't my gift anyway. It came from God.

But this doesn't mean that I am never hurt. I am hurt. I am hurt for the one who rejects the gift. The degree that I love them is the degree that I hurt for them when they are not doing well. I also hurt for God, who is the source of the good I give away. In the error, I hurt for myself. In the truth, I hurt for others.

The Example - Jesus

Let us take Jesus as our example. Did he believe that He possessed anything of His own? No. He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."³⁶ He recognized that everything that He had was from His father. He didn't possess anything.

Did Jesus believe that He could do a whole lot on His own? No. He said, "I can of Myself do nothing."³⁷ He recognized that all of His power and capabilities came from His Father.

Did Jesus believe that He was His own person, that He had the right to do whatever He wanted with Himself? No. He recognized, just like Paul did, that we are not our own. "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."³⁸

So, Jesus didn't possess, didn't produce, and wasn't His own. Jesus was the ultimate UPS delivery guy. Was He selfish? Did He think about Himself, or was He focused on others? We are told, "Not for Himself, but for others, He lived and thought and prayed."³⁹

³⁶ Matthew 8:20

³⁷ John 5:30

³⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

³⁹ White, E. G. (1900). *Christ's Object Lessons*. (p 139). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

If Jesus was convicted that He was just the delivery guy, if He was convicted that nothing was His, that all that He could do was from His Father, and that He was not even His own, then what could hurt him personally? Nothing! To be personally hurt is to think about self—to focus on what they did and what it means to me or its effect on me. Jesus didn't think of Himself. His concern was for others.

In John chapter 6, when Jesus was talking about Himself being the bread of life, and many of His followers left, and never followed Him again, was He hurt for Himself, or did He hurt for them? He hurt for them and what their decision meant to them. When Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss, did He hurt for Himself because He was being betrayed by His friend? No. He hurt for Judas and what that betrayal meant to Judas. And when Peter denied Him with cursing to the servant girl, did Jesus hurt for Himself, or for Peter and what Peter's denial meant to him? Jesus hurt for Peter, not for himself.

Don't misunderstand me. Jesus did hurt. He was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But His hurt was not for Himself, it was for others. His hurt for us was in proportion to His love for us, and since He loved infinitely more than we can love, he hurt infinitely more than we can hurt.

In His childhood, "Jesus did not contend for His rights. Often His work was made unnecessarily severe because He was willing and uncomplaining. Yet He did not fail nor become discouraged. He lived above these difficulties, as if in the light of God's countenance. He did not retaliate when roughly used, but bore insult patiently."⁴⁰

As He grew into an adult and entered into the scenes of His ministry, we find that, "In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment.

⁴⁰ White, E. G. (1900) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 89). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

Amid the greatest opposition and the most cruel treatment, He was still of good courage.”⁴¹

“The Saviour’s life on earth, though lived in the midst of conflict, was a life of peace. While angry enemies were constantly pursuing Him, He said, ‘He that sent Me is with Me: the Father hath not left Me alone; for I do always those things that please Him.’ John 8:29. No storm of human or satanic wrath could disturb the calm of that perfect communion with God.”⁴²

And as He came to the end of His earthly mission, and He was becoming sin for us, His concern was not for himself. “He was now in the shadow of the cross, and the pain was torturing His heart. He knew that He would be deserted in the hour of His betrayal. He knew that by the most humiliating process to which criminals were subjected He would be put to death. He knew the ingratitude and cruelty of those He had come to save. He knew how great the sacrifice that He must make, and for how many it would be in vain. Knowing all that was before Him, He might naturally have been overwhelmed with the thought of His own humiliation and suffering. But He looked upon the twelve, who had been with Him as His own, and who, after His shame and sorrow and painful usage were over, would be left to struggle in the world. His thoughts of what He Himself must suffer were ever connected with His disciples. He did not think of Himself. His care for them was uppermost in His mind.”⁴³

How did He always respond to problems? “Christ never murmured, never uttered discontent, displeasure, or resentment. He was never disheartened, discouraged, ruffled, or fretted. He was patient, calm, and self-possessed under the most exciting and trying circumstances. All His works were performed with a quiet dignity and

⁴¹ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 330). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁴² White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 15). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

⁴³ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 643). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

ease, whatever commotion was around Him. Applause did not elate Him. He feared not the threats of His enemies. He moved amid the world of excitement, of violence and crime, as the sun moves above the clouds. Human passions and commotions and trials were beneath Him. He sailed like the sun above them all. Yet He was not indifferent to the woes of men. His heart was ever touched with the sufferings and necessities of His brethren, as though He Himself was the one afflicted. He had a calm inward joy, a peace which was serene. His will was ever swallowed up in the will of His Father. Not My will but Thine be done, was heard from His pale and quivering lips.”⁴⁴

Even in His trial, He maintained His calm trust in His father. “One of his officers, filled with wrath as he saw Annas silenced, struck Jesus on the face, saying, ‘Answerest Thou the high priest so?’ Christ calmly replied, ‘If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou Me?’ He spoke no burning words of retaliation. His calm answer came from a heart sinless, patient, and gentle, that would not be provoked.”⁴⁵

And when Peter denied Him with cursing, for whom was Jesus hurt? “While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter’s lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter’s eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there. The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow.”⁴⁶

And what was His response when He was under the most intense physical suffering? “While the soldiers were doing their

⁴⁴ White, E. G. (1990) *Manuscript Releases Volume Three*. (p 427). Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate, Inc.

⁴⁵ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 700). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁴⁶ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 712-713). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’ His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness,—‘for they know not what they do.’”⁴⁷

What amazing love for those who hated Him! He never had a negative thought or emotion toward them!

The depth of His love is not just amazing to us. It was amazing to the angels. “With amazement the angels beheld the infinite love of Jesus, who, suffering the most intense agony of mind and body, thought only of others, and encouraged the penitent soul to believe.”⁴⁸ “Though calumny and persecution were heaped upon Him from the cradle to the grave, they called forth from Him only the expression of forgiving love.”⁴⁹ This is what the new heart, operating with divine love, looks like.

Did He Suffer?

Did Jesus escape life without any suffering? No! He did suffer. “For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.”⁵⁰ Jesus was perfected through suffering. But who did He suffer for? “That those whom He had undertaken to save, those whom He loved so

⁴⁷ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 744). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁴⁸ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 752). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁴⁹ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 71). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

⁵⁰ Hebrews 2:10

much, should unite in the plots of Satan, this pierced His soul.”⁵¹ He hurt for them, not for Himself.

Jesus, like us, shared humanity, and humanity longs for belonging, understanding, and companionship. Jesus shared that longing with us. “The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering. This longing Christ felt to the very depths of His being.”⁵²

“...a keener anguish rent the heart of Jesus; the blow that inflicted the deepest pain no enemy’s hand could have dealt. While He was undergoing the mockery of an examination before Caiaphas, Christ had been denied by one of His own disciples.”⁵³

It is true that Jesus did not have a thought for Himself, and He did not hurt for Himself. But like us, Jesus hurt more for those who were closer to Him than those who were not. His ability to suffer was greater than our ability to suffer to the same degree that His ability to love was greater than our ability to love. His love for His children was so much greater than ours, that His suffering FOR them was so much greater than ours. And to the extent that we learn to love as He does, will be the extent to which we will be able to suffer as He did.

You see, “He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows....”⁵⁴

He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but it wasn’t for Himself; it was for others!

What about Me?

This is Jesus. He was perfect. But what about you and me? How are we supposed to react in similar circumstances? “Christ

⁵¹ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 687). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁵² White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 687). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁵³ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 710). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁵⁴ Isaiah 53:3,4

did not fail, neither was He discouraged, and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature....They are to despair of nothing, and to hope for everything.”⁵⁵

“If the works of the ambassadors of Christ are wrought in God, they will not be elated by praise from human lips; neither will they be depressed because they think they are not appreciated.”⁵⁶

“If you had the Spirit of Christ, you would not notice slights and make much of fancied injuries.”⁵⁷

“It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult.”⁵⁸

“A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. Like Moses, he endures as ‘seeing Him who is invisible’ (Hebrews 11:27); looking ‘not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen’ (2 Corinthians 4:18). Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels.”⁵⁹

⁵⁵ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 679). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁵⁶ White, E. G. (1888) In Demonstration of the Spirit. *The Review & Herald*. September 4, 1888, paragraph 3.

⁵⁷ White, E. G. Be Gentle unto All Men. *The Review & Herald*. May 14, 1895, paragraph 4.

⁵⁸ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 16). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

⁵⁹ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 32). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

When God's love lives in us, the life of Christ lives out through us.

The Heart - Divine

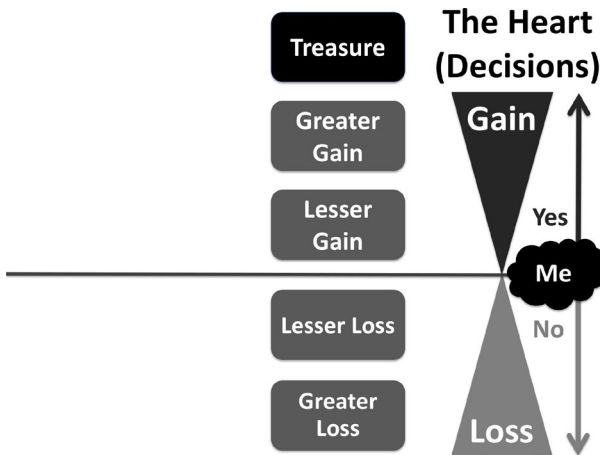
This divine love, taking to give, gives us the key to entering into the life of Christ. Just like Jesus, I recognize that I am only a steward of God's resources. I must come and take from God first in order for me to have any love with which to love others. And the love that I give to others is a gift, not an investment. It comes without strings attached. It doesn't hurt me personally if they stomp on the gift and walk away. I don't hurt for myself because I'm not thinking about myself. I hurt for them and am concerned about them.

And this heart, which understands that it is a creature and not God, is free! I am no longer dependent upon others. I no longer am dependent upon what others do and say in order to be in gain. My gain comes simply from giving, and I am the one who decides whether I give or not, so my gains and losses are under my control. I don't need to control others because they are not my source. God is my source, and I don't need to control Him because I can trust Him. He is a faithful Source!

The other gains and losses of the fallen heart—receiving, not receiving, not receiving enough, or having it taken away—don't even enter into the equation of divine love in the new heart. My joy, my gain, my winning, is simply giving. This is divine love, and this love is impossible for you and me to produce. It, itself, is the gift of God, and we are dependent upon Him for it. We must come to God and take of His love—of the buffet of love that He has provided for each of us—so that it may be ours. To the degree that I am filled with this love is the degree to which I can share that love with others.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Decisive Treasure



The Treasure

Jesus tells us, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”⁶⁰ What was He talking about? What is your treasure, and what does it have to do with your heart?

Your treasure is the system by which you and I determine how valuable something is, and whether that thing is a gain or a loss to us. And this valuation system is a function of the heart. Now that we have a good understanding of the heart and how it functions, let us focus in a little more on the treasure and the decision-making process.

⁶⁰ Matthew 6:21

If I give you the option to either receive \$1,000 or to pay \$1,000, which would you choose? You would choose to receive \$1,000, of course. Why? It is because we always choose a gain over a loss.

Now, let us change the scenario a little. This time, you can either receive \$1,000, or you can receive \$10. Which would you choose? You would choose to receive \$1,000. But why? It is because we always choose a greater gain over a smaller gain.

Let us try a third scenario. This time, you can choose whether you will pay me \$1,000, or whether you will pay me \$10. Which will you choose? You would choose to pay me \$10. Why? It is because we always choose a smaller loss over a greater loss.

So, you see that we have a system by which we evaluate the relative value of something—whether it is a gain or a loss, and how valuable it is to us compared to other things. The magnitude of the gain is directly proportional to the value of the treasure being gained, while the magnitude of the loss is directly proportional to the value of the treasure being lost.

But in our hearts, value is not absolute. I assess the value of something based upon multiple criteria. There are several components that help to determine the relative value of the thing in question, and all of those factors come together to determine whether something is considered a gain, or whether it is considered a loss.

Let us take the decision to go on a vacation or not as an example. We might want to discover new sights and experiences. But it costs money to go, and I might miss out on income while gone. I would like to get away and relax a bit. But I only have a certain amount of time to finish the project that I am working on, and it is an important project.

If discovery and relaxation are greater gains to me than the loss of money and time, then I will choose to take a vacation. But if they aren't, I will choose to continue working.

If I have enough money in savings, if I have vacation time available so that I won't go without an income, and if I just received a bonus at work, that might change how I decide relative to the vacation. And if the project deadline gets put off, or someone else is added to the project so that it is not so dependent upon me, or I decide that my time is better spent on vacation than on the project, that also will influence whether I choose to go on vacation or continue working.

Our valuation system is not absolute. It is subjective. It is based upon our beliefs about the various variables involved in the decision-making process. But value *is* absolute. Value *is* objective. And true value is based upon God and His Word.

My perception of something's value can change by changing what I *believe* relative to that thing. And my perception of whether something is a gain or a loss can change by changing what I believe. And when the value or the status (gain vs. loss) of something changes, the decisions that are based upon that thing change accordingly.

For example, if you are living in a relationship with a spouse who is not giving you enough love, attention, respect, etc., you would naturally be in loss. Let us say that the concept of divorce enters your mind, and you believe that living in your current situation of not receiving enough love is a greater loss than divorce is. What will you do? Even though you consider divorce to be a loss, you will seek for a divorce. Why? Because you always choose a lesser loss over a greater loss, and you see divorce as a lesser loss.

But let us add another factor to the equation. Let us imagine that you read Malachi 2:16, "For the Lord God of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence...." And, because you respect God and what He thinks, because God's approval of you is a great gain to you, divorce is now the greater loss, because it represents the loss of God's approval. If, because of this new information about God's hatred of divorce, you now

view divorce as the greater loss, and your current situation of not being loved enough by your spouse as a lesser loss, what will you do? You will remain in the relationship of not receiving enough from your spouse, because by doing so you are avoiding the greater loss of divorce.

Remember, I can remain in a perceived loss only if by doing so I am avoiding a greater loss. And I can only do something that is perceived as a loss if I believe that by doing that thing, I avoid a greater loss.

Let us take another look at this decision-making process. This time, you are living in a relationship where your spouse is not giving you enough love, and you are in loss. But instead of considering divorce, you are now contemplating going out and finding another gain—another person to give you the love you are looking for. Divorce is a loss, but infidelity, in many ways, is a gain. It offers pleasure, attention, excitement, and so on. So, if you see your current relationship as a loss and you see infidelity as a gain, what will you do? You will choose infidelity over faithfulness to your spouse. You may “know” that it is wrong, but as long as you believe it is a gain (in your heart), you will choose it over a loss (staying faithful to your spouse who is not loving you enough).

Now, let's consider this from a different perspective. Imagine that you are reading Revelation 2:22, “Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds,” and you discover that God hates adultery. Because you love and respect God, you understand that, rather than being a gain, infidelity is a loss. And you believe that it is a greater loss than remaining faithful to the spouse who is not loving you enough. What will you do? You will choose to remain faithful to your spouse rather than be unfaithful.

So, when God is the greatest treasure of our life, when maintaining a connection with Him and retaining His favor is the

top of our gain list, things change. Infidelity, which we once considered a gain, now, because we see that He hates adultery, it is no longer a gain. It becomes a loss.

Because God is the greatest treasure in our life, we no longer consider infidelity a gain, so it no longer is an option that our heart will choose. But what about divorce, which is a loss? When we have God as our greatest treasure and we understand that God hates divorce, it is no longer a greater gain than living with our spouse who isn't loving us enough, because participating in divorce would mean the loss of our greatest treasure—the favor of God.

So, because God is the greatest treasure of our heart, divorce and infidelity are losses to us. But not only that, since living with our spouse (who is not loving us enough) means that we are allowed to keep our greatest treasure (God's favor), then living with that spouse becomes a gain, because by doing so we can keep our greatest treasure. So, instead of believing that we are living in loss, we believe that we are in gain, because we retain our greatest treasure.

To stop doing something that we had perceived as a gain, we must: 1) adopt a greater gain in its place, or 2) believe it to be a loss by attaching it to a greater loss. This is where consequences come into the equation.

Let us imagine for a moment that self is on the throne of my heart, and I am self-oriented. I do what I want to do because I want to do it. And let's say that I like driving my car fast, regardless of the speed limit. As long as I speed and get away with it, I see speeding as a gain.

But when I get caught, and I have to pay a fine, go to driving school, and pay a higher insurance premium—when I receive negative consequences to my decision—that consequence is a loss.

That one time of being caught and fined—of receiving negative consequences to my decision—may be enough for me to

consider speeding a loss. But it may not. I may have to be caught several times and fined several times before I finally believe speeding to be a loss, but I only consider it to be a loss when I think I may be caught. I still enjoy speeding when I don't think anyone will catch me, so I drive with a radar detector, slow down when I see a police officer, etc. Or I fear that I will be caught any time, and I drive under the speed limit for fear of ever being caught. But if I ever come to a place or time when I think I won't be caught, I speed, because it is still considered a gain.

But when I become God-oriented, when God is my greatest treasure, and when I learn the truth in Romans 13:1, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God," and when I understand that God is always aware of what I am doing, then I believe speeding is a loss, because it would be rebellion against God and the authorities that He has placed over me. It is not a temporary loss, dependent upon whether I will be caught or not. It is a permanent loss, because it is related to God, and God doesn't change.

Now, what if I were back at the beginning, living with a spouse who doesn't love me enough, and thinking that divorce is a lesser loss and infidelity is a gain compared to it. And there is some guy named Bob that I come into contact with. I don't know who Bob is, and he doesn't have any influence in my life. But Bob says that he hates adultery, and he hates divorce. Does that change my treasure so that I make decisions any differently? No, it doesn't. I couldn't care less what Bob thinks. His thinking makes no impact upon my decisions because he is not a treasure to me, and thus his opinion has no influence to change my treasure and thus my decisions.

No one, in our fallen condition, likes to deny themselves. We all naturally like to indulge ourselves. It is a gain to us. So, since we always choose a gain over a loss, we will always choose

indulgence over self-denial. But, if we learn (and believe) that to indulge self is to ultimately die, then self-indulgence becomes a loss.

How much of a loss does it become? It becomes a loss in proportion to the loss that we consider ultimate death to be. But what is the loss of ultimate death? It represents the loss of eternal life, of heaven, of God's approval, the loss of an eternal relationship with God, angels, and friends, etc. So, the degree to which we treasure the things which we lose by gaining ultimate death, is the degree to which ultimate death is a loss to us.

Since the loss of ultimate death is a greater loss than denying self, we will choose self-denial over self-indulgence in order to maintain our greater gains (eternal life, heaven, eternal relationship with God, God's approval, etc.) and avoid the loss of those treasures (ultimate death). And by associating the loss of self-denial with the greater gain of God's favor, self-denial becomes a gain, and no longer a loss.

To do something that was perceived as a loss, you must: 1) adopt a greater loss as its alternative, or 2) believe it to be a gain by attaching it to a greater gain.

If, however, my greatest treasure is pleasure (sinful), then complete self-denial would be considered a loss. But lust would be considered a gain, for there is much pleasure associated with lust. And because lust was believed to be a gain (because it is associated with my treasure of pleasure), and complete self-denial was considered a loss, the heart would automatically choose lust over complete self-denial, because the heart always chooses a gain over a loss.

With pleasure (sinful) as my greatest treasure, I would believe complete self-denial to be a loss. And I would also consider partial self-denial as a loss. But to my sinful heart, partial self-denial is not as great of a loss as complete self-denial. So, in my sin-oriented heart, I could still choose partial self-denial, even though

it is a loss to me. But I can only do so to avoid complete self-denial, which is a greater loss to me. So, with pleasure or sin as my treasure, I will choose lust or partial self-denial over complete self-denial.

But if pleasure and sin as a treasure are replaced by God and His favor, sin now becomes a loss, because it represents to me a loss of God's favor—my greatest treasure. To think, say, and do what is right becomes a gain to me, because it maintains my greatest treasure—God's favor. And so, by having God as my treasure, I will choose to think, say, and do that which is right, and I will avoid sin, because the heart always chooses a gain over a loss.

Now let us look at another aspect. No one likes to suffer. God never designed man to suffer, and suffering is the result of sin, but in the context of a sinful world, it is possible to suffer for God's sake—to standing for the right to gain or maintain the treasure of God. And if I believe suffering for God is a lesser loss than sin, I will choose suffering for God rather than sin, because we always choose a lesser loss over a greater one. But when I associate suffering for God with the retention of my greatest treasure—God's favor—then suffering becomes a gain.

We see this in the life of Paul. "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ."⁶¹

Previously in Paul's life, he considered many things to be gain (riches, man's approval, pleasure, self-righteousness, etc.). But when Christ became the greatest treasure of his life, those things which had been considered gain, but were actually contrary to Christ, were now considered loss, because they would cause the loss of his greatest treasure, which was Christ. Paul lost those

⁶¹ Philippians 3:8

things which at one time he had considered a gain, but now that Christ had become his greatest treasure, the loss of those things was no longer a loss, because he was losing losses (not treasures), and he was gaining his treasure (Christ).

So, with God as my greatest treasure, my will becomes aligned with God's will, and I automatically choose what God would choose, because I treasure God. His valuation system becomes my valuation system, and I choose to think, say, and do what is right; I suffer for God, and I avoid sin, because He is my treasure.

With self as my greatest treasure, self-indulgence becomes my greatest gain. I do what I want to do, when I want to do it, and how I want it done for my own selfish reasons. Pride and selfishness are the underlying motivations of my life, and I see others as sources of what I need, so I orient myself to others in order to get what I want or need. What others think and how they respond is important to me, because I believe I need what they have, and I find myself a slave to others, trying to get what I need from them but never really being able to control them. Hurt, frustration, anger, manipulation, fighting, etc. are the result.

I can even put God into the same category, trying to manipulate Him to get from Him what I think I want or need. But the motivation of my heart is still for self. I see God as a source of what I need, and so my selfishness seeks from Him the blessings. But I still do not value self-denial, and self is still the god on the throne of my heart. My service for God is not because He is on the throne, but because I see Him as a means to get what I want and need. My service to Him is a form of manipulation—a bartering tool if you please—whereby I try to do the right things so that I can get the blessings. I see and treat God like a genie in a genie lamp, trying to rub the genie lamp just the right way so that I can get my wishes.

And if self is my greatest treasure, then self-denial, whether partial or complete, is not desirable. It is a loss. To be told that I can't eat the cake I want to indulge in, to not be allowed to take

the car for a spin around the neighborhood with my friends when I want to, to let someone else get the promotion I have been waiting for, all of this is undesirable. All of this I avoid if possible. A self-oriented heart is the condition of sinful humanity.

But when God becomes the greatest treasure of my life, everything changes. Instead of being self-oriented, I become God-oriented. I am first and foremost concerned about what God wants, so I do what He wants, when He wants it, how He wants it, and I do it out of the motivation of love. The love of God is my motivation, and I see that self is in conflict with God, so I deny self to gain the greater treasure of God, and I see self-denial as a gain, because it is associated with the greater treasure.

I am no longer a slave to people because I recognize that they are not my source, and they do not possess what I need. God is my Source. He has all that I need. Others are there for me to give away what I took from God. I am not oriented toward them in that I try to control or manipulate them to get what I need from them, but I am oriented toward them in that I enjoy helping them by giving to them that which I have taken from God. I love them because God loves them, and I love God. They are valuable to me because they are valuable to God. What they do with the gift is not my problem and doesn't personally affect me. I don't give to them to receive anything back. I do it because I have taken what I need from God and love to give it away. The result is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—the fruit of the Spirit.

And my service for God is not a means to manipulate Him to get what I want or need. It is a grateful response to Him for the love and blessings He has already given to me. Love for God, not selfishness, becomes my motivation when God is my greatest treasure.

I want to highlight one last point here. When God is the greatest treasure of my life, anything that pertains to God,

anything that is aligned with His will, anything that involves His kingdom is considered a gain. And anything that is against God, anything that is opposed to His will, anything that detracts from His kingdom is considered a loss.

John puts it this way, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”⁶² You cannot love the world (which is controlled by and in harmony with the Enemy) and the things of the world (the world’s entertainment, fashions, possessions, pleasures, popularity, power, positions, and principles) when God is the greatest treasure of your heart—when God is your God. All of these things will be considered losses to the heart where God reigns.

But when sin and self is the greatest treasure of my life, anything that pertains to self and sin, anything that is aligned with the Enemy’s will, anything that involves the world and the things of the world is considered a gain. And anything that is against self and sin (righteousness, judgment, consequences, etc.), anything that is opposed to my will (humility, self-sacrifice, selfless love, etc.), and anything that denies me the world and the things of this world is considered a loss. You cannot love God and the things that pertain to His kingdom when self and sin is the greatest treasure of your heart—when self is your god. All of these things will be considered losses to the heart where self reigns. It is absolutely true that anyone who loves the world, “the love of the Father is not in him.” And this is a problem of the heart—a problem of the treasure. And the only solution to it is a new heart.

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified,

⁶² 1 John 2:15

will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”⁶³

A change in one’s beliefs leads to a change in one’s valuation system, which leads to a change in one’s choices, which leads to a change in one’s behaviors or actions. But this change is only temporary. It is dependent upon what I believe, and what I believe can change. If I want a permanent change, I need another component.

A conviction leads to a change in one’s valuation system, which leads to a change in one’s choices, which leads to a change in one’s behaviors or actions. And this change is permanent. It will not change regardless of threat or inducement. You can’t get someone to change their mind from a conviction, for it is a permanent setting of the treasure in the heart, which results in a permanent setting of the decisions which are made based upon that treasure.

Revelation chapter 7 introduces us to the 144,000, who will be faithful to God in the end of time—those who are represented in Revelation 14:12 as “those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.” Revelation 7, verses 3 and 4 tell us that those who become the 144,000 are those who are sealed in their foreheads. What is this seal?

This seal is conviction based upon truth, so that we cannot be persuaded to change our minds or decisions regardless of the pressure we face. “Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads,—it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they

⁶³ White, E.G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 668). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

cannot be moved,—just as soon as God’s people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming.”⁶⁴

That conviction, that seal, is so firm, that not even the threat of death will shake our decision or convince us to sin. “Those who would rather die than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful.”⁶⁵ This is the condition of the 144,000 who will be ready for the Lord’s return, and this is a condition of the heart, of the treasure, based upon conviction. This is the condition that I want to be settling into now, don’t you?

So, being convicted that God is the greatest treasure of my life permanently aligns my will with the will of God, and I will not sin, because I permanently see sin as the greatest loss (although it still offers pleasure, power, position, prestige, etc.) because it represents the loss of my greatest treasure. That conviction is so strong, that even the threat of death will not move me to sin. I am settled into the truth. God is my treasure. And nothing will change that.

So, how do I make God my treasure? First of all, I can read God’s word with the purpose to know Him and to love Him. Don’t read just for the accumulation of information. Read for the purpose of understanding who God is, what He is like, how His character is revealed, and what a relationship with Him is like.

Second, I can spend frequent, earnest time in prayer. Just like any relationship, it takes time. Make it your habit to begin the day with prayer before any other thoughts or distractions occupy your mind. Go out in nature and earnestly, passionately, seek to know Him. Speak to Him of your difficulties and troubles. Ask Him to

⁶⁴ White, E.G. (1981) *Manuscript Releases Volume One*. (p 249). Silver Spring, MD: Ellen G. White Estate.

⁶⁵ White, E.G. (1889) *Testimonies for the Church, Volume 5*. (p 53). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

answer your prayers. Keep a journal of your discussions with God, requests made of Him, and answers to those requests. Give Him thanks for the blessings in your life. Simply speak to Him as you would speak with a friend.

Third, contemplate the life of Christ, especially the closing scenes of His life. Think about what it was like to be with Him in each of the stories you read. Think about what each of the characters in the story might have been thinking or feeling. Think about the love that Jesus was manifesting at the time. And especially try to understand how much love went into His sacrifice from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. There, you will see most clearly the amazing love of God. And seeing and knowing that love will create within you a love for God.

Fourth, contemplate the blessings of God. Contemplate what it means to be forgiven of all of your sins and made perfect before God because of His sacrifice for you. Contemplate what heaven will be like and the eternal joys and discoveries of the universe. Contemplate what it will be like to be with Jesus throughout all eternity, growing in relationship with Him and others. Contemplate what a blessing His sacrificial life has been and will continue to be in your life.

Fifth, recount, test, and believe His promises. Search the Bible for promises that address the issues you are facing and read them frequently, write them down, memorize them, test them out in different circumstances, and bend every effort of your mind to believe them.

And sixth, ask the Holy Spirit to make God your treasure, and then cooperate with His working in your heart, allowing Him full access to accomplish it in you.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and

sells all that he has and buys that field.”⁶⁶ “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking beautiful pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had and bought it.”⁶⁷ “It is the Holy Spirit that reveals to men the preciousness of the goodly pearl. The time of the Holy Spirit’s power is the time when in a special sense the heavenly gift is sought and found.”⁶⁸

A Treasured Experience

For those who are seeking for the hidden treasure and the Pearl of great price,⁶⁹ I want to encourage you with my testimony.

I have sought this treasure my whole life, sometimes with greater passion and sometimes with less. I sought it through church. I sought it through prayer. I sought it through Bible study. I sought it through acts of service. I sought it in many places and at varied times throughout my life, but until recently, I have not seen the treasure for what it really is.

The Lord has been so good to me throughout the years. He has revealed Himself to me in prayer. He has revealed Himself to me in His word. And He has revealed Himself to me through others. He has pursued me all of my life.⁷⁰ He is an awesome God who loves me so much.⁷¹ But for most of my life, I was not willing to surrender to Him completely. I always reserved something for myself.

About 10 years ago, the Lord allowed me to come to a very dark and desperate time in my life—a time when I finally gave up. I was destroying myself and the ones that I loved, and I could see that I had no power to break free from that which held me in

⁶⁶ Matthew 13:44

⁶⁷ Matthew 13:45,46

⁶⁸ White, E. G. (1900) *Christ’s Object Lessons*. (p. 118). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

⁶⁹ Matthew 13:44-46

⁷⁰ Luke 15

⁷¹ John 3:16

bondage.⁷² In my desperation God asked me to turn my entire life over to Him, to let Him be in control.⁷³ That was a scary prospect to me because I had always been in control. I didn't know if I could trust God or not. But finally, with no hope in myself, with no ability to get myself out of the mess I was in, I decided to give everything over to Him.

“Lord, I will do anything that you ask me to do, no matter how embarrassing or painful. I will go wherever you want me to go, no matter how reluctant I feel. I will give up whatever you ask for, no matter how precious it seems to me. If following you means I lose my family, I will follow. If it means being embarrassed, I will follow. If it means the loss of my career, reputation, or even the loss of my abilities, I will follow. Whatever you ask for, I will do it. Just get me out of this mess.”

God presented to me a picture of a tightrope drawn across a canyon, and Jesus, as the expert tightrope artist, was standing there with a wheelbarrow balanced on the line, the handles firmly held in His hands. And He called me to get into the wheelbarrow.⁷⁴ On my own, all I could do was fall over the edge of the canyon to certain death below.⁷⁵ But in His wheelbarrow (which to my mind represented faith and complete surrender), there was a chance that He could get me safely across the canyon.⁷⁶

As He called to me to get into the wheelbarrow, I struggled, seeing that if at any time I started to take over control again, the wheelbarrow would tip, and I would fall out.⁷⁷ I saw that once I got in, I would either stay in or fall to my death. I saw that I would have to give up control of my life for good.⁷⁸ And I wasn't sure if I could trust Jesus with that kind of control. He

⁷² Romans 7:15-24

⁷³ Matthew 11:28-30, Luke 9:23

⁷⁴ Matthew 19:21

⁷⁵ Romans 3:23; 6:23

⁷⁶ John 6:39

⁷⁷ Matthew 14:30

⁷⁸ Romans 6:16

reminded me that I would certainly destroy myself if I remained in control of my life,⁷⁹ and He again, gently invited me into His wheelbarrow. I finally got into the wheelbarrow, and life has never been the same!

I found that He has a thousand ways to free me from that which I couldn't find a single way of escape from.⁸⁰ I found that all the things I had forced myself to do before to come to Jesus (prayer, Bible study, service, obedience) were the very things that I now did naturally, willingly, and with joy.⁸¹ Life was new, different, exciting, liberating, and victorious.

As time progressed, I became more and more consistent with prayer and study of His word. My habits and preferences changed. My diet, entertainment, dress, recreation, friends, desires, and thoughts changed. God was making me into a new creation in Christ Jesus.⁸²

Over the last few years, the Lord has brought me to a place of consistency in prayer. Regardless of how I feel or how much I want to just "become one" with my bed, I get up in the early mornings to spend time with the Lord in prayer. He has been revealing much to me regarding His love over the last several years, and the ideas of His love and mercy have grown in my mind.⁸³ I have had the privilege to teach thousands of people about this love, and each time I teach it, I learn more and more about it.

Each Wednesday I pray and fast with a few individuals, where we take our lunch period and spend it together praying, rather than eating. It has been an encouragement to me to be involved in this with others, seeking our Lord together and bringing our petitions and challenges before Him.⁸⁴ The episode that I will

⁷⁹ Jeremiah 17:9

⁸⁰ Hebrews 7:25

⁸¹ Romans 8:26,27

⁸² 2 Corinthians 5:17

⁸³ Ephesians 3:17-19

⁸⁴ Matthew 18:19,20

mention next happened on a Thursday morning after the Wednesday prayer and fast. I believe there is a connection.

One Thursday morning, as is my custom, I woke up early, got dressed, and went outside to walk and pray (I find that I can't fall asleep while I am walking, and when I am very tired it is very easy for me to fall asleep during prayer). As I walked out of the house and looked up into the sky, I saw thousands of stars shining down upon me.

The day before had not been a very good day, and the first thing on my agenda for prayer time that morning, after praising God for life and another day with the opportunities that it provided,⁸⁵ was to ask for forgiveness for my attitude and responses the previous day.⁸⁶ Yet again, I had misrepresented the Lord and taken things into my own hands. During the couple weeks before this time, I had been convicted that I needed to get back into the wheelbarrow,⁸⁷ and the Lord was showing me more clearly how to get back in. For about a week, also, I felt convicted that I didn't have any belief of my own and that I needed God to give me belief so that I could believe.⁸⁸ Also, I had been studying about the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price, and I started thinking about that treasure—that pearl—which is Jesus.⁸⁹

As I was outside in the dark of the morning with the stars shining down upon me, I prayed earnestly to the Lord to give me the gift of belief so that I could believe that Jesus was really worth to me as much as He is worth.

Under those stars, I began to think about how large they were and how much distance was between them. I thought about how long it would take to travel to the nearest star and then across our

⁸⁵ Psalm 9:1

⁸⁶ 1 John 1:9

⁸⁷ Proverbs 24:16

⁸⁸ Mark 9:24

⁸⁹ Matthew 13:44-46

Milky Way Galaxy. I thought about how vast the universe that we can see is, realizing that there is infinity beyond what we can see. I thought about the fact that God is larger, not smaller, than His creation, and that a God infinitely big is also a God that is infinitely powerful.⁹⁰ I thought about that God loving such a small and insignificant creature like me.

I thought about that infinite God loving me so much that He chose to come to this unimaginably small planet to rescue me. I thought about that infinite God packaging Himself inside a single cell in Mary's womb, becoming the smallest and most vulnerable form of life. And for what? For me!⁹¹

The Holy Spirit was working upon my heart, giving me the gift of belief as I continued to think about how precious Jesus is. I thought about the fact that it is the character of God to give;⁹² and that His joy is found in giving. And yet, when it came to the ransom of a rebel world, it took three meetings between Jesus and the Father before the Father consented to give His Son as the ransom for our race. If God's nature is to give, but He wavered at giving the gift of Jesus, then how great is that gift!

With a realizing sense of the greatness of that gift given on my behalf, with a realizing sense of how precious Jesus is and how infinitely valuable He is, I was overwhelmed by the thought and just began to weep and fell to my knees in the dirt. All I could think of and pray/cry at the time was, "Who am I that You would give such a Gift for me? Who am I that you would give Jesus for me? Who am I?"

Lost in the wonder of that overwhelming thought, the only appropriate response that I could think of was, "Thank You! Thank You! Thank You!" After a couple minutes, I picked myself off the ground, dusted off my clothes, and continued to walk and

⁹⁰ Psalm 89:8

⁹¹ John 3:16

⁹² Matthew 5:45

just revel in the thought of the infinite love of God for me. As I walked in the dark of the early morning, it was as if I was walking just outside of the gates of Heaven. It was a most singular and wonderful experience. I had never experienced anything like that before.

I began to think about Moses and his experience with God. He desired to see God, so God put him in the cleft of the rock, held His hand over him, and passed by him with His back toward Moses.⁹³ He revealed to Moses all of the glory that Moses could handle. I felt that the Lord was revealing His glory to me to the degree that I could handle. It was beautiful, just beautiful!

I knew that this was a gift from God, that He had given me the gift of belief so that I could believe that Jesus was as precious as He really was. And when I believed, everything changed. I walked over to my car, and laid down on the trunk, staring up at the stars in the sky and thinking about how great and wonderful God is and how infinite His love is to me. Again, I began to cry at the thought that such a love existed, and that it was exercised for me.

I thought of the sacrifice of Jesus. I thought of how He was misunderstood, taken advantage of, rejected, scorned, derided, beaten, nailed to a cross, separated from His father, and apparently forsaken—all for me! I thought of how much He loved those whom He came to save,⁹⁴ and how many walked away from the eternal gift He came to give.⁹⁵ I thought of how much it must have hurt the heart of God for His infinite love to be rejected like that. I thought of how much Jesus loved each of the ones He came to save, and how much it must have tortured His heart when His children rejected His Father's love (not that He hurt for Himself, because He didn't, but that He hurt for them and what that rejection meant to them).

⁹³ Exodus 33:18-23; 34:5-8

⁹⁴ Romans 5:8

⁹⁵ John 6:66

Then I thought about all of the times that I had rejected His love for me and chose to do my own thing. I began to cry again at the thought of the pain I had caused the Lord through my disobedience and love of sin. How hateful sin became to me in that moment! It defied the God who loved me so much. It separated me from Him so that He couldn't accomplish in my life that which He desired to accomplish. It harmed and killed the children He loved so much that He left all of heaven to rescue them. How could I possibly love sin in the face of such love—in the face of the infinite preciousness of Jesus?

I got up from the car and began to walk again, and as I walked; I thought about what sin had to offer. Sin offered power, positions, possessions, pleasure, and popularity. But next to Jesus, none of those things mattered at all. It was as if each of those things were worth between \$1,000 and \$10,000, and depending upon my personality and desires, the value of each of those things varied accordingly. I might desire pleasure over popularity, position over possessions, etc. And to me, pleasure might be sin's greatest gain, which was symbolically worth \$10,000. But Jesus was worth \$1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 in comparison. I had always known this intellectually, but now that God gave me the gift of belief, I actually believed it.

I realized that sin had nothing to offer me, and in that moment—believing that Jesus was worth how much He is worth—sin had no attraction to me. Thinking about anything that had been a temptation to me before, none of it had any appeal or attraction to me now. I saw that in the full realization of who Jesus is and how precious He is, sin loses its power to attract and tempt.⁹⁶ In that moment, sin had no power over me, no attraction to me, was no temptation to me.⁹⁷ Why? Because the infinite value of Jesus was presented to me in unmistakable clarity, and I

⁹⁶ Philippians 3:7,8

⁹⁷ Psalm 17:3

believed it. And in the realization of that infinite value of Jesus, I died to sin,⁹⁸ for it only offered to me a loss of Jesus, which was a loss of all things.⁹⁹

Thinking of how infinitely precious Jesus was, my heart was changed. I no longer desired sin. I no longer found difficulty in obeying God. I delighted in His law and following His will.¹⁰⁰ I had no attraction to sin and this world but was intensely attracted to Jesus and heaven.¹⁰¹ “When the sinner has a view of the matchless charms of Jesus, sin no longer looks attractive to him; for he beholds the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. He realizes by a personal experience the power of the gospel, whose vastness of design is equaled only by its preciousness of purpose.”¹⁰²

Again, it felt as if I was walking just outside the gates of heaven, and I couldn’t help but think again, “Lord, who am I that you would reveal such beautiful truth to me? Who am I that you would give me such an experience? Who am I?” Several times I just stopped walking, caught up in the wonder of the thought of the infinite worth of Christ and what it meant in relation to everything else in life.

I then began to think about the bad things in life. What if I lost LeEtta (my wife)? What if I lost my children (I have six)? What if there was a fire and the house burned, and we lost all we had? What if I lost my job and could never work in my career again (I am a missionary physician)? What if I was injured or sick and was paralyzed and could do nothing, needing others to take care of me? What if I was taken captive and tortured because of my faith? All of these scenarios ran through my mind, but to each scenario, my response was the same—it wouldn’t matter. It

⁹⁸ Romans 6:10

⁹⁹ Philippians 3:8

¹⁰⁰ Psalm 40:8

¹⁰¹ Romans 6:16

¹⁰² White, E. G. (1892) Accepted in Christ. *The Signs of the Times*. July 4, 1892, paragraph 5.

simply wouldn't matter. I would still have Jesus, and He was infinitely valuable.

The loss of anything and everything that I had was nothing in comparison to having Jesus. If I lost it all, but still had Jesus, I would be completely okay. In contemplating each of these potential challenges, I had perfect peace and a joy that was beyond description.¹⁰³ I realized that I could face the loss of all things and undergo physical torture and still have perfect peace and abundant joy. I didn't just know it intellectually; I truly experienced it that morning. God gave me a glimpse into what could be by giving me the gift of belief to believe that Jesus was all to me that He actually is.

In that state of mind—in the midst of that experience—I again realized that sin had absolutely no attraction to me and that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, that could disturb the peace that I felt at the time, because Jesus was my infinite treasure. I realized that this was the experience of Jesus as He lived in human flesh. He was never attracted to sin. It was always repulsive to Him, because it meant the loss of all things—the loss of His Father. Nothing could disturb His peace, because nothing could separate Him from His father (until He became sin for us before the cross – 2 Corinthians 5:21). So, His life was one of peace, joy, and complete victory over sin.

And for a few moments, God permitted me to enter into that experience too. It was a gift—a gift of God's grace to a sinful child of His who has been seeking to know and love God. As the moments rolled on, I could feel the experience fading. I just kept telling God, "I love this experience. Thank you so much for revealing this to me. I want more! I want this to not be the only experience of this nature and magnitude."

Moses had that initial experience with God in the mountain, but his walk with God grew and he was permitted to talk face to

¹⁰³ Romans 15:13

face with God. God came so close to him that Moses's own face glowed with a radiance that was painful to those who looked upon him.¹⁰⁴ I pleaded that the Lord would continue to reveal Himself to me more and more consistently and more and more profoundly, so that I could remain in this experience consistently.

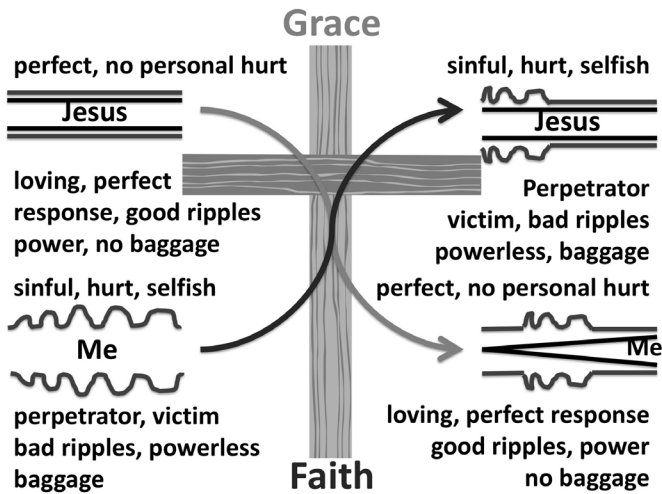
“I want more and more of you, Jesus. I want to know that you are as precious as you are. I ask for a heart to believe that You are worth what You are worth. I want to be held by you in peace, joy, and complete victory over sin, because You are the infinite treasure of my heart. Keep me by your love in your love, that I might abide in You, the Vine.¹⁰⁵”

¹⁰⁴ Exodus 34:29-35

¹⁰⁵ John 15:4

CHAPTER SIX

Leaving Your Baggage Behind



Double Crossed

You and I have a past, and each past is unique. None of us have been through the exact same difficulties and trials, and yet there are many similarities in our experiences. Unfortunately, that past has the tendency to determine the direction of our life in the future. Why unfortunately? It is because most of our past experiences direct us in the wrong path—send us in the wrong direction

What do we do about the past? Is there a solution to the things we have already suffered? Is there freedom from the baggage that we have carried with us for years and years? There is. And the solution is found at the cross.

Jesus, the unwearied servant of man's necessity, the One who poured himself into hurting humanity to raise us up from the fall, the One who sacrificed all heaven and the constant adoration of the angelic host, the One who created all creatures great and small, the One who came to reveal God to man and restore the breach made by sin; Jesus bore our sin. No, more than this, He *became* our sin. And He did so that we might become His righteousness.¹⁰⁶

"The spotless Son of God hung upon the cross, His flesh lacerated with stripes; those hands so often reached out in blessing, nailed to the wooden bars; those feet so tireless on ministries of love, spiked to the tree; that royal head pierced by the crown of thorns; those quivering lips shaped to the cry of woe. And all that He endured—the blood drops that flowed from His head, His hands, His feet, the agony that racked His frame, and the unutterable anguish that filled His soul at the hiding of His Father's face—speaks to each child of humanity, declaring, It is for thee that the Son of God consents to bear this burden of guilt; for thee He spoils the domain of death, and opens the gates of Paradise. He who stilled the angry waves and walked the foam-capped billows, who made devils tremble and disease flee, who opened blind eyes and called forth the dead to life,—offers Himself upon the cross as a sacrifice, and this from love to thee. He, the Sin Bearer, endures the wrath of divine justice, and for thy sake becomes sin itself."¹⁰⁷

It is one thing to carry sin. I can faintly understand the concept of bearing or carrying sin. But to become sin? This I can't comprehend. To think that Jesus, the Son of God, who had never been separated from His father in the span of all eternity, in some way became the very thing that His Father hated—the very thing that separates us from God. But why? Why would He do it? He did

¹⁰⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:21

¹⁰⁷ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 755). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

it because He wanted to accomplish something equally incomprehensible.

He tells us in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Here we are told the reason He became sin. He did so that we might *become* the righteousness of God *in Him*. I can’t comprehend this either. I know myself. I know how much I fail. I know my wandering thoughts, mistakes, and rebellions. I know my stubborn will. And yet Jesus became sin so that I could *become* the righteousness of God *in Him*! I do not mean to say that Jesus was ever guilty of sin or ever committed sin, but that He was permitted to become sin, so that I, in a similar way might become the righteousness of God *in Him*. What amazing love He has for me! But, in order to accomplish this incomprehensible feat, He had to go to the cross.

Before the Cross

What was the life of Christ like before the cross? Was He fully God? Yes. Was He fully man? Yes. He had a dual nature. And He was perfect. How full of perfection is perfect? Completely full. So, how much room was there for sin in His life? There was no room for even a single sin.

He had no personal hurts. He was like the UPS delivery guy, bringing His Father’s love to those He came into contact with. And if that love was rejected, He didn’t take it personally—even once! Yes, He hurt, but He hurt for others, not Himself. He was loving with an unselfish, self-sacrificing love. He always responded perfectly to anything that happened to Him even though many things happened to Him that were bad. He had power from His Father to overcome all temptation and sin. And he had good ripples.

What do I mean by good ripples? If you throw a pebble into a pond, the initial splash of the pebble swells into ever-increasing

ripples that travel much farther than the original impact. Ripples represent not just what was said and done, but the influence that those things had upon others. Because of whom Jesus was and how He lived, every word and action of His life resulted in ripples that travel through all time and space and positively impact every creature that has ever lived. Adam and Eve benefitted by His ripples, and you and I benefit from them today. Even the angels benefit from the ripples of the life of Christ. Because of His perfect life and the perfect influence that it had, Jesus had no baggage. And that life earns the blessing of eternal life.

But what about you and me? What is our life like before the cross? We look a little bit different from Him. In fact, to find a correct description of our character, what we need to do is take any true description of Christ and go to a thesaurus and find the section called “antonyms.” There we will find a correct description of ourselves. Christ was perfect, with no room for sin. We are sinful, with no room for righteousness.

Christ was *never* personally hurt by what others said or did. We *always* take what others say and do personally. Christ had a selfless, self-sacrificing love. We have a selfish “love,” which is why we take things personally and take things into our own hands.

Christ always responded perfectly to every person and situation. We have acted poorly toward others, hurting them by our words, actions, or influence. And we are victims, having had many things happen to us that we had no control over, and which we responded poorly to.

Christ had power to overcome every temptation and sin. We are powerless to truly overcome any temptation and sin from a pure motive, therefore our “overcoming” temptation is through bad motives, which itself is sin.

Instead of having good ripples, we have bad ripples. If you ever wonder about whether you have bad ripples, just have children. In them you will see the sure effects of your influence as

your tendencies and weaknesses are manifested in them. The things we say and do have a negative impact or influence upon others beyond our children also. And you can never get those bad ripples back. Every time you try to catch the bad ripples, you make new ones that spread even farther. And all this fills our heavy suitcase, which is our baggage. And this life earns the penalty of death.

Humanity is so enslaved by our past. It is as if our past experience drives our future trajectory. It is like the experiences of the past form the gun barrel of our lives, and the bullet of our lives always travels in the direction of that gun barrel. Those who were abused as a child have a tendency to become abusers when they grow up.

The Sanctuary Service

So, what did Jesus offer us at the cross? What did He accomplish there? To understand this, we first need to understand the cross in the larger context of the plan of redemption as outlined in the sanctuary service of the Old Testament.

What was the purpose of the sanctuary service of the Old Testament? One purpose was to reveal to us how God intended to take care of the sin problem.

If an individual sinned, he would bring an unblemished sacrifice (lamb, goat, bull, etc.—see Leviticus Chapter 4) to the sanctuary in the center of the Israelite camp. Once inside the outer court, he would lay his hand upon the head of the animal and confess his sin(s) over it and then slit its throat with a knife.

The blood from the lamb would be caught in a bowl by the priest and carried to the altar of burnt offering in the outer court and put on the four horns of the altar. A similar sacrifice would be made by the priest in the morning and evening for the sins of Israel, and this time the blood was taken by the priest to the holy place of the sanctuary and placed on the four horns of the altar of

incense. In figure, the sin was transferred from the sinner to the sacrificial animal, to the priest, and then to the sanctuary.

Once a year, a ceremony was performed on the Day of Atonement (see Leviticus chapter 16), where two goats were brought to the outer court and a lot was cast to see which one would be the Lord's goat and which one would be the scapegoat. The Lord's goat and a bull were killed in similar fashion, and this time, the high priest would take the blood all the way into the most holy place of the sanctuary.

The ark of the covenant, which was the only furniture in the most holy place, was a gold-covered box that contained the ten commandments—the law of God. On top of this box were two intricately carved angels, and between the angels on the center of the box was a golden lid, or seat, called the mercy seat. This is where the presence of God resided in the temple.

The high priest would come into the most holy place once a year, on the Day of Atonement, and sprinkle the blood on the mercy seat. He would then walk out to the outer court, lay his hands on the head of the scapegoat, confess the sins of Israel that had accumulated in the sanctuary for the entire year, and then have the scapegoat led out into the desert to die alone and never return to the camp of Israel.

This illustrates how God is going to take care of the sin problem. The sinner confesses his sin. Jesus (the Lamb of God) takes that sin as His own (from the end of the last supper until His death on the cross) and dies under its penalty. Jesus, after He resurrected to new life and returned to heaven, is now our High Priest, officiating in the heavenly sanctuary (see the book of Hebrews). As our High Priest, He takes our confessed sins, which His own blood paid for 2,000 years ago, and transfers them to the heavenly sanctuary, awaiting the day when the accumulated sins will be placed upon Satan—the instigator of sin—and Satan will pay for all the sin he caused God's children to commit. And when

Satan is destroyed, sin will be destroyed with him. This is God's plan to take care of sin.

At/After the Cross

So, on the cross, Jesus takes our place. He steps into the gun barrel of our lives and takes the bullet that our lives have deserved. He takes the responsibility for our sinfulness and selfishness. He takes the results of us taking things personally. He takes the penalty of being the perpetrator and the consequences of being the victim. He takes the powerlessness of human nature to overcome temptation and sin. He not only takes the responsibility for the things that were said and done, but He also takes the responsibility for the ripples—the negative influence and effects that those things have had and will have on others. He takes our baggage for us. The death that our life deserves, Jesus suffers.

In addition to doing all of this, Jesus does something else. As Jesus steps into the gun barrel of our lives and takes the force of all that it deserves, He gently places us in the gun barrel of His life. When He does so, we receive eternal life and all of the other blessings and benefits that His perfect life deserved. And the gun barrel of His life guides the bullet directly to the bullseye of the target, which is holiness. We receive His power to overcome all temptation and sin. We no longer have to be controlled by our past and our negative responses. We can be controlled by Jesus' past and His perfect responses, filled with His power.

When we enter into the experience of this divine exchange of life for life, history for history, past for past—offered to us because of God's sacrifice at the cross—Jesus' record becomes ours in the books of heaven. We are accounted perfect. We have no personal hurts. We are perfectly loving. We have responded perfectly to everything that has happened to us in the past. We have power to overcome. We have perfect ripples that have spread through all time and space and have positively influenced everyone that those

ripples have come into contact with. And we no longer have any baggage.

Jesus tells us, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”¹⁰⁸ This means that if you do it to someone else, you did it to Him. But it is equally true that if they did it to you, they did it to Jesus. Jesus so identifies Himself with us and our hurts and sins, that He, in a very real way, takes our place. It is as if those things which were done to us were actually done to Him.

On the cross, God offers us a divine exchange of life for life. This divine exchange is only made possible by God’s grace. The price He paid on the cross was the price for each of our sins. He suffered under not only the weight of the world, but of each and every specific sin that you and I have ever committed or will ever commit. He paid the price for everyone who would accept the gift, and He paid the price for everyone who would reject the gift. He paid the price for us all.

But just because He paid the price for everyone doesn’t mean that all will benefit from that gift. There will be many who are lost, for as yet, there is a part of the equation missing.

Faith is necessary in order for the gift of Grace to become mine. You see, the gift of this divine exchange of life for life is just like the buffet of God’s love. He has made it free and available to each of us, but if we don’t personally take of what has been provided, it does us no good. Faith is our action that takes of what God provided and makes it our own. It is believing that God’s gift of this divine exchange is for me. It is accepting that gift as my own and trusting that it is true for me, now. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever *believes* in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁸ Matthew 25:40

¹⁰⁹ John 3:16

What does this exchange look like in real life? Let us imagine that years ago you were in an argument with someone, and the argument became so heated that the next thing you realize, the other person is lying dead on the floor. You killed them! You think, “Uh, oh! This isn’t good. I don’t want to go to prison.” So, you get rid of the evidence, and you get away with it. No one discovers that you were the murderer. You are free, right? Wrong. You may be free in body, but you are a slave in your mind, always afraid if someone will find out, always encompassed by guilt.

But let us imagine that today you find out about this divine exchange made possible for you at the cross. You realize that Jesus is offering to step into the timeline of your life and take the consequences of the murder and all of the guilt and fear that came because of it and pay the penalty that you deserve. In exchange, you get placed into the timeline of His life, and you get all the consequences of His perfect life and the perfect ripples that it has created throughout all time and space.

You decide that you want to receive this gift, and faith accepts that gift made possible by grace. You accept it as your very own, believing that you are the recipient of all that Jesus’ life deserved, while He took all the penalty of all that your life deserved. Your sin is then transferred by the Heavenly Priest, Jesus, to the heavenly sanctuary, awaiting the day when it will be placed upon the scapegoat, Satan, and be destroyed with him. You also confess your sin to those who were injured by it (family of the one murdered, etc.), and “come clean” on what you did.

After you enter into this divine exchange, where does the guilt of the murder lie? Not with you. It is in the heavenly sanctuary, awaiting the day when it will be placed upon Satan for him to pay for. You go free from the guilt.

If the family seeks for justice and reports the murder to the police before you get a chance to do so, and the investigation finds you “guilty,” and you are placed in prison, according to heaven’s

record, are you guilty? No! You are innocent, because the guilt has been taken from you by the sacrifice made in your behalf on the cross. When you are placed in prison for the crime, you can be totally free in your mind, knowing that you are innocent in heaven's record.

You find yourself in the exact opposite situation than before coming to the cross. Before, you were free in the body and captive in the mind. Now you are free in the mind, but captive in the body. And that is a much better freedom. Like Paul and Silas, you can sing praises and hymns to Jesus in your imprisonment with a consciousness of your innocence because of the gift given to you at the cross.

Not only does the cross free us from what we did to others, it also frees us from what others did to us. There is not one of us who has had perfect parents. We have not had perfect family members. We have not had perfect friends. And because of this, we find ourselves the unwilling victims of what others have said and done.

In my position, I have the opportunity to hear many stories from people. Sometimes I am the only one that they have ever shared their secret with. Others have kept their story within the confines of a small circle of confidants. I have heard stories of abandonment, abuse, neglect, torture, rejection, divorce, and much more, and I know that I have only heard a small part of the pain that is out there.

I know that in a group as small as 5 people, there is likely to be one in the group who was sexually abused as a child. I know that within a group of as small as 2 married couples, one marriage will end in divorce. And I know that within a group as small as 1, there is a history of rejection, hurt, disappointment, etc. It is our universal experience in this world of sin.

So, let us imagine that you have been neglected, abused, rejected, abandoned, and mistreated in the past. Let us imagine that it is hard for you to get along with—much less love—the one(s)

who did it to you. Let us imagine that you have carried, to one extent or another, resentment, hurt, shame, and/or bitterness, and as many times as you have tried to let it go, when you look again, it is still there.

And then today, you find out about the cross. You find out that God made it possible for you to go free from all of it. Jesus offers to step into the timeline of your life—your gun barrel—and take the brunt of the resentment, hurt, shame, bitterness, and all that was done to you and the death that it deserves. And in doing so, He gently nudges you into the timeline of His life—His gun barrel—and you get all of the blessings that His life deserved, including a clear record and eternal life.

In contemplating this unfair exchange, you wonder, “How could it be?” and Jesus answers, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”¹¹⁰ You realize that if you do it to someone else, it is done to Jesus, so, it must also be true that if someone else does it to you, they do it to Jesus, and therefore if it is done to you, it is done to Jesus. So, Jesus takes your place, and in doing so, He who was able to say, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do,”¹¹¹ is also able to forgive those who treated Him so badly (when they treated Him badly through you).

When I believe myself to be the victim of what others have said and done, I have lots of baggage. There is a lot that weighs me down. I may have attempted to forgive, but the roots of bitterness are still alive deep in my heart. When I think about them and what they did, I have hurt feelings and painful memories. The only way that I seem to get away from it is to try not to think about it. If I succeed in not thinking about it, I’ll be okay, right? Wrong! Freedom doesn’t come from a vacuum, and to simply not think about something is an attempt to create a vacuum.

¹¹⁰ Matthew 25:40

¹¹¹ Luke 23:34

Now imagine that you are doing prison ministries. You go to the prison and mix with the prisoners and minister to them. The people you work with are rapists, addicts, thieves, and murderers, but you can work with them just fine and love them. Why? Because they didn't do it to you. They didn't do it to your loved one. In prison ministries, you can relatively easily love those who hurt others, because they didn't do it to you.

There is a family that I know of whose 11-year-old daughter went missing one day. It was in the days before cell phones, and parents kept track of their children by time. If you didn't come home by a certain time, you were in trouble, because your parents wanted to know that you were safe.

Well, she didn't come home on time, so her mother called the school. The school said that she left after school and headed toward home. Mother then called friends, and they confirmed that they saw her leaving school, walking toward home. Next Mother called Father, and he left work early to look for her.

He drove the street while Mother stayed at home awaiting her daughter's arrival. But she never came. As the shadows began to stretch across the fields, and as the sun fell below the tree line and darkness began to spread across the land, their hearts sank as they made the phone call they never thought they would make. They called 9-1-1 and told the operator, "We have a missing child."

First one officer was dispatched, and then others, and by the morning, as the search team grew, so did their hopes. But as the sun set each evening, their hopes of finding her died a little more, and each morning as they continued the search, their hopes rose less than the day before. A couple weeks later they received the word...one of the search teams had found her remains in the woods. The nightmare that they never dreamed they would have, became the nightmare they would never wake up from. Hope died its last death. Their daughter would never come home.

As the investigation continued, the horror of the situation unfolded. It was revealed that a neighbor with a criminal record had abducted their daughter, treated her like bad people treat young girls, and then did the unspeakable, hiding her remains in the woods where the search dogs eventually found her. You can only imagine what was going on in the heart of that mother and father.

Now, let's imagine that that family had been accustomed to doing prison ministries, and one day they are at the prison, and they meet him there. How easy will it be for them to love him and minister to him? I tell you; it would be impossible. Why? Because what he did, he did to *their* daughter.

The same is true of you and me. Others have done bad things to us and ours, and it is impossible for us to love them because we are the victim. At the cross, Jesus provided a way that we could escape from our past. He steps into the timeline of our lives and takes all that it entails, and He nudges us off into the timeline of His life and gives us all that it deserved. We don't have to be personally hurt by what was done, because after entering into the experience of the cross, Jesus takes our place. And just like prison ministries, we can love them and work for them and serve them, because they did it to Jesus, and He loves them, and He offers them forgiveness.

Because I have entered into this experience of the cross, I love Jesus. And because Jesus loves them, I love them too. And if He is willing to sacrifice Himself for them, I am willing to do the same, because I have taken (accepted) that love and forgiveness for myself and am now just giving it away.

You see, God has a plan to save us from the current emotional hurts that we suffer. That plan involves giving us a new heart—by grace through faith. God also has a plan to save us from our past baggage. That plan involves the divine exchange made possible at the cross—by grace through faith.

Now, I want to point out one more truth that the cross teaches us. Before the cross, who is the unwilling victim who responds negatively to what was done? I am. After the cross, am I still the unwilling victim who responds negatively to what was done? No! That history and guilt and responsibility is transferred by Jesus, our heavenly high priest, through the blood Jesus shed upon the cross, to the heavenly sanctuary awaiting the day when it will be placed upon Satan, who will pay for all of what he instigated.

In entering the experience of the cross, I can no longer remain the unwilling victim. And all of the negative feelings and thoughts associated with that victimhood (resentment, bitterness, anger, shame, etc.) can no longer stay with me. It is taken away from me by Jesus. I go free!

Now, I want to make this following point clear. If you are still the victim, you are living in an experience before the cross. You cannot come to the cross and remain the victim. Jesus, at the cross, sets you free from your past. But if you are not free from your past—if you are still the victim—it is because you have not come to the cross and accepted by faith the divine exchange made possible for you by God's grace. You are still bearing your burdens. You are still bearing your pain and shame. You cannot come to the cross and accept the divine exchange on your behalf and still be the victim.

Before the cross, who is the perpetrator? I am. After the cross, am I still guilty of being the perpetrator? No! That guilt and responsibility is transferred by Jesus our heavenly high priest, through the blood Jesus shed upon the cross, to the heavenly sanctuary awaiting the day when it will be placed upon Satan, who will pay for all that he instigated. In entering the experience of the cross, I can no longer remain guilty of the perpetrator's acts. And all of the negative feelings and thoughts associated with being the perpetrator (guilt, remorse, self-hatred, etc.) can no longer stay with me, because it is taken away from me by Jesus. I go free!

Now, if you are still holding on to the guilt of the perpetrator, you are living in an experience before the cross. You cannot come to the cross and retain the guilt of the perpetrator. Jesus, at the cross, sets you free from your past. But if you are not free from your past—if you are still the perpetrator—it is because you have not come to the cross, as it is your privilege, and accepted by faith the divine exchange made possible for you by God’s grace. You are still bearing your burdens. You are still bearing your guilt. You cannot come to the cross and accept the divine exchange on your behalf and still be the perpetrator.

Forgiven?

How much of your sin did Jesus pay for on the cross? All of it! Did that include everything that you have ever done? Yes! Does that include everything that you will ever do? Yes!

How much of your life is God aware of? David speaks of God saying, “Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.”¹¹² We see here that God knows the future. He knows everything that will ever happen to us. On the cross, Jesus didn’t just make a blanket of forgiveness to throw over all of our sins. He suffered under the guilt and condemnation and shame of each and every sin that each and every one of us have and ever will commit.

Knowing everything that I would ever do, He accepted me as His child. That means that nothing will ever come up in the future that will ever make God say, “Oops! I didn’t account for that. I forgot to pay for that one on the cross. I guess you’re on your own now.” No, that will never happen! It doesn’t matter what I do, Jesus has already paid the price for it on the cross. He offers me His forgiveness full and free. Why wouldn’t He? He already paid the price!

¹¹² Psalm 139:16

But just because He paid the price for your sin and mine, doesn't mean that we are automatically forgiven. There are always two sides to the equation. God's grace provided for the forgiveness, but it is our exercise of faith that accepts the forgiveness so that it becomes ours. And faith complies with the conditions of forgiveness.

The Steps of Forgiveness

To understand this a little more, let us look at the steps of forgiveness.

1. The Plan of Salvation.

Before we were even aware of our need of it, God put into place the whole plan of salvation to save us from the impossible mess we got ourselves into. Christ is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."¹¹³ He came "to seek and to save that which was lost."¹¹⁴ And He couldn't wait until we were better to save us. He had to save us in the condition we were in. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."¹¹⁵

2. Working of the Holy Spirit

God always makes the first move. Men only respond to what God is already doing in the life. Human nature is such that we have no desire for righteousness. We naturally see no problem with sin. We gravitate toward it naturally. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be."¹¹⁶

But God has sent His Holy Spirit to work upon our hearts and minds so that we might even desire forgiveness, restoration, and righteousness. "It is God who works in you both to will and to do

¹¹³ Revelation 13:8

¹¹⁴ Luke 19:10

¹¹⁵ Romans 5:8

¹¹⁶ Romans 8:7

of His good pleasure.”¹¹⁷ When we have a desire to be righteous, forgiven, and restored from our current state, it is evidence that God is *already* working in our lives to save us.

3. Conviction of Sin

The working of the Holy Spirit in my life brings me to the law of God and shows me that I am a sinner. “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”¹¹⁸ “By the law is the knowledge of sin.”¹¹⁹ As the law of God is revealed to me as the great standard by which all men will be judged, and as I see that I fall far short of this standard, I am convicted that I am a sinner. “For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.”¹²⁰ Therefore, I recognize that I need a Savior.

4. Cooperation of the Will

Now that I am convicted that I am a sinner in need of a Savior, I must enlist my will to act upon those convictions and choose whom I will serve. “Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.”¹²¹ Will I continue to serve self, or will I surrender what I want to what God wants and make a complete and total surrender of myself to Him? The will must be enlisted to make this decision and carry it into action.

5. Choose to Fulfill the Conditions of Forgiveness

The conditions of forgiveness include confession, repentance, and restoration.

Confession specifically acknowledges what was done or said and admits that it was wrong. In confession, I offer no excuse for why I did what I did. I only acknowledge that it was wrong. I seek

¹¹⁷ Philippians 2:13

¹¹⁸ 1 John 3:4 KJV

¹¹⁹ Romans 3:20

¹²⁰ Psalm 51:3

¹²¹ Joshua 24:15

forgiveness and restoration, even as I offer, to the best of my ability, proper restitution. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹²²

Confession should be as broad as was the offence. If the sin is private, my confession should be to God only. If it affected my spouse, I should confess to her and to God. If it affected my whole family, I should confess to my whole family and to God. And if it affected my whole church, business, etc., then I should confess to my whole church, business, etc. and to God.

I had the opportunity of doing this not too long ago. A character defect that I have possessed since childhood, but of which I was unaware, became apparent in a situation that arose in my church. When I became aware of this character defect, and when I saw how it had affected others at church, I realized that I needed to confess and apologize to the whole church.

So, the following weekend, I stood in front of the whole church and confessed my wrong and asked them to forgive me, and I promised that I would work on this defect with the Lord and, by God’s grace, resolve this issue. It was embarrassing and humiliating, but it needed to be done, because I had hurt others and had spread a wrong influence through my behavior, and it needed to be corrected so that negative influence would not continue to spread and hurt others.

Repentance involves sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. But repentance is not something that you and I produce. It is a gift of God. We cannot grunt, strain, moan, push, pull, or do anything hard enough to create repentance. We can simply ask for it and accept it by faith.

And as the repentance becomes ours, we become sorry, not because we were caught, but because we disrespect, dishonor,

¹²² 1 John 1:9

misrepresent, and crucify again our Savior. We are not sorry because of the consequences that come to us because of the sin. We are sorry because of what we have done to God because of our sin. And as the repentance becomes ours, we exercise it in turning away from the thing we are repenting from. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy.”¹²³

Restoration involves giving back whatever is possible and appropriate in relation to a wrong. For example, an acquaintance of mine stole a sweater from a department store when he was young. A couple decades later, as conviction came upon him, he realized that he needed to restore what he stole. So, he went back to that department store and spoke with the manager and offered to pay for the sweater (at a current cost) with interest to cover what the store could have gained by investing that money over the last couple decades.

We are told, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”¹²⁴ “If the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die.”¹²⁵

6. Believe & Accept the Divine Exchange at the Cross

As we accept the divine exchange at the cross and enter into the life of Christ, we are empowered to overcome and are set free from the past. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.”¹²⁶ We comply with the conditions above, and forgiveness and its sweet peace and joy are ours! I want that freedom, don’t you?

¹²³ Proverbs 28:13

¹²⁴ Matthew 5:23,24

¹²⁵ Ezekiel 33:15

¹²⁶ John 3:16

The Results of Forgiveness

So, what are the results of forgiveness? I have no more guilt, even though I still remember what I did. I have no more bitterness because they no longer did it to me. I love them because God loves them, and I want them to go free just like He set me free. And I will cooperate with the Holy Spirit in assisting in their freedom, even if it requires self-sacrifice.

What is one of the functions of forgiveness? It is to allow one to enter back into relationship with another. God wants a relationship with each of us, and His forgiveness is offered to each of us to allow us to enter back into relationship with Him. The cross makes this restoration of relationship possible. What amazing love! What great grace! What full forgiveness that flows from the heart of God toward us!

Take Up Our Cross

Because of what Jesus has done for you and me, we are gratefully indebted to Him. We love Him because of the freedom He has given to us, and our greatest joy is to obey and serve Him. And He bids us, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”¹²⁷ What does it mean to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

“Man is to leave the error of his ways, to follow the example of Christ, to take up his cross and follow Him, denying self, and obeying God at any cost.”¹²⁸ “...to lift the cross...means to take up the very duties that cut across the natural appetites and passions.”¹²⁹

“True religion is the imitation of Christ. Those who follow Christ will deny self, take up the cross, and walk in His footsteps. Following Christ means obedience to all His commandments. No

¹²⁷ Mark 8:34

¹²⁸ White, E. G. (1991) *Counsels for the Church*. (p 269). Nampa, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

¹²⁹ White, E. G. (1932) *Medical Ministry*. (p 278). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

soldier can be said to follow his commander unless he obeys orders. Christ is our model. To copy Jesus, full of love and tenderness and compassion, will require that we draw near to Him daily.”¹³⁰

“He says to us, ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ Christ alone can make us capable of responding when He says, ‘Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.’ This means that every day self must be denied. Christ can give us the noble resolve, the will to suffer, and to fight the battles of the Lord with persevering energy. The weakest, aided by divine grace, may have strength to be more than conqueror.”¹³¹

Toward the end of this book, you will see what taking up your cross really means and what it looks like. When that key ingredient is in your life, all of what was mentioned already in taking up your cross and following Jesus will become a joyful and natural part of your life.

¹³⁰ White, E. G. (1957) *S.D.A. Bible Commentary Volume 7*. (p 949). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

¹³¹ White, E. G. (1976) *Maranatha*. (p 85). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Talent of Suffering

Losing Loved Ones

I want to switch topics slightly and look at loss from another perspective. I have talked with many individuals who have developed cancer and other serious health conditions, and when I explore their life and experiences prior to developing their health challenge, I frequently find that they have lost a significant loved one in the years prior to their illness. But there are others who lose loved ones and do just fine. What is the difference? Does the Bible give us the correct perspective on how to deal with the loss of loved ones? It does.

At birth, how much do we have? How much do we possess? Absolutely nothing. At death, how much will we have? Absolutely nothing.

Between birth and death there is this squiggly line called life. Life has ups and downs, its good times, and not so good times. We meet people, we learn to love people, and we lose people in this path. If I start this pathway with nothing, and I finish this pathway with nothing, then is everything between point B (birth) and Point D (death) a gain or a loss?

Job gives us a good perspective on this topic. After losing all of his children, his animals, and his servants in one day, Job says. "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the

name of the Lord.”¹³² Job recognized that he began his journey of life without anything, and he would end his journey without anything, so anything that he had between point B & point D was a gain.

When you start and end without anything, when everything you have is not yours but the Lord’s, when you didn’t produce it, and when you are not even your own, you can’t lose anything.

Imagine that you are the steward of a wealthy businessman’s estate. Your job is to keep everything in good repair and operating smoothly. The owner has seven Lamborghinis that you help maintain. One day, the owner decides to give away two of the Lamborghinis. Now you are only steward of five Lamborghinis. Do you get upset at the owner because you lost two Lamborghinis? No. That would be ridiculous. They weren’t yours. They were the owner’s. He can get rid of them whenever he wants to.

God is the owner, but we go through life like we are the owners. If the car is stolen, I get all upset, because I think it was my car. If the house burns down, I mourn the loss, as if it was mine. But it was never mine. It all belongs to God. He is the owner. We are just the stewards.

Remember the family who lost their 11-year-old daughter? If they mourn like people normally mourn, it will break down their constitutions, and some physical problem will develop in their bodies later. How would they mourn?

They might have thoughts like this, “She was only 11 years old. She missed out on so much. We won’t be able to see her graduate from elementary school, high school, or college. We won’t be able to walk her down the aisle and see her married. We won’t have the joy of grandchildren from her.” And so on. What are they mourning for? They are mourning for that which they never had. They never had tomorrow. They never had the graduations. They never had the son-in-law or the grandchildren. What they mourn

¹³² Job 1:21

is the loss of what they expect. Were they ever guaranteed tomorrow? No. They only have now.

Those parents could either live the rest of their lives in loss, mourning the cruel death of their 11-year-old daughter, or they could live a life of gratitude, thankful for the 11 years of life they had with their daughter. Was their experience a loss or was it a gain? Did they have her when they were born? No. Would they have her when they died? No. So, even though she died, they are not at loss. They are actually in gain because they had 11 years with her. They were blessed with 11 years of smiles, hugs, shared experiences, and companionship. They were blessed with 11 years!

If their perspective is one of gratitude for how God blessed them with 11 years with that daughter, if they focused on what they had gained rather than what they had supposedly lost, if they had remembered that they were only the steward and not the owner, how would their health be after the death of their daughter? It would remain good.

I am not trying to say that it is wrong or a sin to mourn. I am not saying that at all. What I am saying is that when we have the correct perspective, we will get to the point where we won't *have to* mourn in the usual way that people mourn. And with the correct perspective, our thoughts will not cause dysfunction in the body as happens when our thoughts are wrong.

Paul gives us a better perspective on this issue when he says, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."¹³³ What Paul is telling us is that God can take whatever comes our way and turn it into good. Even the things that seem like the most difficult and impossible to endure are talents that God can use for good. He doesn't allow anything to befall us that He doesn't plan to use for our good and for the good of others.

¹³³ Romans 8:28

The following is one of my favorite quotes. “The Father’s presence encircled Christ, and nothing befell Him but that which infinite love permitted for the blessing of the world. Here was His source of comfort, and it is for us. He who is imbued with the Spirit of Christ abides in Christ. The blow that is aimed at him falls upon the Saviour, who surrounds him with His presence. Whatever comes to him comes from Christ. He has no need to resist evil, for Christ is his defense. Nothing can touch him except by our Lord’s permission, and ‘all things’ that are permitted ‘work together for good to them that love God.’ Romans 8:28.”¹³⁴

What this quote tells me is that God surrounds every one of His children with His own presence. If someone comes up to me to punch me in the face, their fist must go through God first in order to get to me. And God will only allow that fist to get through if He can work it out for good. I don’t have to defend myself. God is my defense. I can turn the other cheek.

There is another promise in 1 Corinthians 10:13 that tells us that God will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape. That means that God won’t allow anything to come to us unless He will give us strength to endure. That means that anything that comes to us, no matter how bad it may be, is wrapped with God’s love, assuring us that it will work out for good, and He will give us strength to endure. What a merciful God we serve! We can trust Him even with the most painful circumstances and experiences of our lives.

The Talent of Suffering

A talent is defined as a natural ability, an endowment, or an aptitude. We usually think of talents in relation to someone’s capacity to excel in doing something. But did you realize that

¹³⁴ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 71). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

suffering can be a talent? It can be an endowed ability or aptitude that can be used for good. And just like the other talents Jesus talked about, if this talent is buried, God cannot be glorified through it. He is robbed of His purpose through allowing it. But if it is used, God is glorified. Are you using your talent of suffering? Or is it buried, lost to the world, useless in its unused state?

Before I go further, I want to clarify something. God is not the author of suffering. Suffering is a result of sin—of choosing to separate from God and sever our ties with the Source of life. Suffering is the result of the working of an enemy. Peter tells us, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”¹³⁵

And Jesus tells us, “The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.”¹³⁶ Again, God is not the cause or author of suffering. Suffering is the result of the work of an enemy. And God is the master of weaving His goodness and love through all of the tangled mess of pain and suffering that the devil causes so that He can rescue His children from the enemy and then make them instruments in the salvation of others.

So, let us consider a little closer the topic of suffering and how it can be a talent.

Who can best comfort a mother who has lost her new-born child? Another mother who has lost her new-born child and made it through. Who can best comfort someone who lost their leg? Someone else who lost their leg and have overcome their disability. Who can best comfort someone struggling with a challenging disease? Someone else who has gone through the same challenging disease and has survived and thrived.

How can suffering be a talent? Satan hates God and wants nothing more than to hurt Him. And Satan knows that the best

¹³⁵ 1 Peter 5:8

¹³⁶ John 10:10

way to hurt God is to hurt His children, as God experiences and identifies with everything His children go through. Everyone is God's child, so, God has children who are suffering from all types of issues and in all types of situations around the world. And God wants to reach those who are suffering and comfort them. But God needs others who understand what it is like to go through the pain and suffering to best comfort those who are currently in the pain and suffering. God needs others who can reach His other children who are going through the same thing.

“In God's great plan for the redemption of a lost race, He has placed Himself under the necessity of using human agencies as His helping hand. He must have a helping hand, in order to reach humanity. He must have the cooperation of those who will be active, quick to see opportunities, quick to discern what must be done for their fellow men.”¹³⁷

The proper use of the talent of suffering is going up to someone who is suffering through the same thing Satan brought upon you and God rescued you from, and saying, “I know what you are going through. I've been there too, and God got me through it. Let me tell you how I made it through. I would like to walk with you through this.”

But if you bury your talent, God's purpose in bringing you through your suffering and turning it into good will be thwarted. And that child of His who is suffering, whom you could help, may never be reached by His love in the way that God designed they should be reached.

In the early 1900's a passenger train derailed near Chicago. Hundreds were killed or injured in the accident, but in one of the rear passenger cars which had not derailed, there was a red cross nurse. As she worked her way up the wreckage, assisting whomever she could, she looked over and saw a well-dressed man looking at

¹³⁷ White, E.G. (1958) *Selected Messages Book 1*. (p. 99). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

all of the injured passengers. Recognizing that he was a well-known Chicago surgeon, she went over to him and shook him out of his daze to ask him to help her care for the injured. As he was coming out of his dazed state, he said to her, "My instruments!" And then he went about helping whomever he could.

Later that evening, the two of them met again, and as he thanked her for taking the lead in helping the wounded, she was curious and asked him, "When I found you, you were just standing there, not doing anything. And when I got your attention, you said, 'My instruments.' What was going on?"

He replied, "I was standing there looking at all of these injured people and thinking to myself, 'My instruments, my instruments, if only I had my surgical instruments, I could help them.' You see, I am a surgeon, and I do what I do well, but I need my instruments in order to do what I do. I didn't have my instruments with me, so I could do very little for them."

God is the master surgeon, but He has pledged himself to use human beings to reach human beings. He has His children in all forms of suffering, and He needs other children trained by those same experiences in suffering to reach those who are going through those same trials. Those of us who have suffered are His instruments to reach others who are similarly suffering.

What instrument can the surgeon use best? It is the one he can use in the most situations and circumstances. I want to encourage you by one other thought. The more you have suffered, the more useful you are as an instrument in God's hands, because you can identify with more people in their suffering. You can look at more people in the eye and honestly tell them, "I know what you are going through. I have been there too. Let me tell you how God got me through. And let me walk with you to freedom."

Do you want heaven's perspective on suffering? Here it is. "God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern

the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon. “Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake.” Philippians 1:29. And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.”¹³⁸

Rather than being a curse, or something to be looked down upon, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. It is the most honorable gift heaven can bestow upon you.

And there is another purpose for suffering that we must consider. In the context of sin, suffering is a necessary part of molding us into the image of Christ. The diamond can never become a diamond without extreme pressure and heat, but the beauty and worth of the diamond are worth all of the pressure and heat that is necessary in its formation. God sees us as His precious jewels, not worthless coal, and so He permits the pressure and heat to come so that we can become precious jewels, reflecting His love and character to others.

“We are forming characters for heaven. No character can be complete without trial and suffering. We must be tested, we must be tried. Christ bore the test of character in our behalf that we might bear this test in our own behalf through the divine strength He has brought to us.”¹³⁹

“Many who sincerely consecrate their lives to God’s service are surprised and disappointed to find themselves, as never before, confronted by obstacles and beset by trials and

¹³⁸ White, E. G. (1898). *The Desire of Ages*. (p 224). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

¹³⁹ White, EG. (1979). *This Day With God*. (p 427). Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association.

perplexities. They pray for Christlikeness of character, for a fitness for the Lord's work, and they are placed in circumstances that seem to call forth all the evil of their nature. Faults are revealed of which they did not even suspect the existence. Like Israel of old they question, 'If God is leading us, why do all these things come upon us?'

It is because God is leading them that these things come upon them. Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success. He who reads the hearts of men knows their characters better than they themselves know them. He sees that some have powers and susceptibilities which, rightly directed, might be used in the advancement of His work.

In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to correct these defects and to fit themselves for His service. Often, He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified.

The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He does not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines.

The blacksmith puts the iron and steel into the fire that he may know what manner of metal they are. The Lord allows His chosen ones to be placed in the furnace of affliction to prove what temper they are of and whether they can be fashioned for His work. The potter takes the clay and molds it according to his will. He kneads it and works it. He tears it apart and presses it together. He wets it and then dries it. He lets it lie for a while without touching it. When it is perfectly pliable, he continues the work of making of it a vessel.

He forms it into shape and on the wheel trims and polishes it. He dries it in the sun and bakes it in the oven. Thus it becomes a vessel fit for use. So the great Master Worker desires to mold and fashion us. And as the clay is in the hands of the potter, so are we to be in His hands. We are not to try to do the work of the potter. Our part is to yield ourselves to be molded by the Master Worker.”¹⁴⁰

Peter admonishes us, “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”¹⁴¹

Who Can Hurt Me?

Now let’s look back at the topic of the heart and personal hurts. Who can hurt me? From an emotional or spiritual standpoint, no one can hurt me, I can only hurt myself. You see, only I can breathe for myself. Only I can eat for myself. Only I can drink for myself. And only I can think for myself. Only MY breathing, eating, and drinking—not somebody else’s—impacts my body & my health. Only my thinking—not somebody else’s—impacts my body & my health.

What someone else does may provide a hurtful environment from which I could feed from, but the buffet of God’s love is always present, so I will never be in a situation where I *must* choose from the hurtful environment that others provide. I have a choice of which source I take from. If I take God as my source, I will eat from His buffet of love. If I take others as my source, I will eat from their buffets of selfishness. The source I choose determines my outcome.

¹⁴⁰ White, E.G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (pp. 469-471). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

¹⁴¹ 1 Peter 4:12,13

Patient Example Martha

Herb and Martha had been married for 35 years. Herb was a traveling salesman, and Martha was a homemaker. Herb was gone to work during the week and home on the weekends. Their marriage was fairly good as far as marriages go, not too great, not too poor. That is...until Martha found out.

She found out that Herb was not exactly faithful to her. In fact, she found out that he had been unfaithful to her for the entire 35 years of their marriage. In fact, she found out that he had another family in another city, whom he lived with during the week, and she was his second wife!

During the three years following this discovery, Martha's health began to decline rapidly. It seemed as though one health challenge followed the other until her situation appeared to be hopeless.

What was the cause of Martha's decline? Was it her husband's infidelity? No! He had been cheating on her for 35 years, and it didn't affect her one bit. She didn't become sick until she *knew* what was going on.

The cause of Martha's decline was not his infidelity. It was her thinking. You see, she thought he was hers. She thought she loved him with her love. He was her love source, and she was in significant personal loss because of this.

But was he hers? Was it her love? Was he really the source of her love? No. Did she really have anything to lose? No. If she would have looked at the situation and been grateful for how he had supported her over the years; if she would have been thankful to God for supporting her all these years; if she would have celebrated the good weekends they had for 35 years, what would her health have been like?

It was not what happened to her that destroyed her health. It was her thinking about what happened to her that destroyed her health. I see this all the time in my practice. I see people who

develop cancer in times of great loss. I see people with autoimmune disorders following great losses. I see people physically all messed up because of personal loss.

At this point, someone in a similar situation usually will ask the painful question, “Do you mean my disease is my fault?” And my answer is, “You have no blame for your disease. You did not create it on purpose. You are not sick because you want to be sick. But, in most cases, it does come from your own mind—your own thoughts and attitudes.”

If your disease is someone else’s fault—if someone else is the cause—then you can’t do anything about it. You are stuck with no solutions because you can’t fix or change them. If your disease is because of your inherited genes, you can’t do anything about it. If your disease is because of your environment, you are left trying to control your environment, which is impossible. You have no solutions. But if the problem begins in your mind, there is hope, because God, with your cooperation, can fix the problem. If the problem begins with you, there is hope!

When I give the gift of time or love or concern or care, I can recognize that I am just the delivery guy. I am just the steward of God’s resources, and if I am rejected, it is not me who is rejected, because I am God’s. He is the one rejected. If the gift is destroyed, it was God’s gift, not mine. I don’t have to be upset and hurt for myself because it’s not mine. It’s God’s. But this doesn’t mean that I am not hurt or disappointed for others. The degree to which I love them is the degree to which I hurt for them when they reject God’s goodness to them.

Taking It Personally

From another perspective, many of our problems come because we take things personally. Imagine that your cat is playing on the table, knocks over a glass, and water spills all over the table. Why is it that there is *water* all over the table? If you

bump into the table and the glass spills over and there is coffee all over the table, why is it that there is *coffee* all over the table? If an earthquake comes along and the glass on the table spills over and there is milk all over the table, why is it that there is *milk* all over the table? And if your friend bumps into the table and wine spills all over the carpet, why is it that there is *wine* all over the carpet?

You might say that water is on the table because the cat knocked over the glass, coffee is on the table because you bumped into the table, milk is on the table because of the shaking of the earthquake, and wine is all over the floor because you tripped.

The reality is that what is on the table or on the carpet is there because that is what was in the glass before it was spilled over. If there was nothing in the glass before it was turned over, nothing could come out. Water came out because water was in there. Water couldn't come out if water wasn't in there. Coffee came out because coffee was in there. Coffee couldn't come out if coffee wasn't in there. The same is true of people.

If someone says something to you that is hurtful, it has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with them. Why? Because it couldn't come out of them if it were not in them. Just like the cup that is spilled over. It doesn't matter what it was that spilled the cup over, what comes out comes out because it was in there. The same is true of people. It doesn't matter what triggers them to say what they do and act the way they do; whatever they say, however they say it, and whatever they do comes out of them because it was in them.

The Bible, in Luke 6:45 says, "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." And Proverbs 4:23 tells us, "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life." What the Bible is telling us is that what someone else says or does to us is not about us. It is about them. Because it could not come out of them if it were not in them. So, don't take personally what others

say and do to you. It really has nothing to do with you. It has everything to do with them.

That being said, it is possible that they are telling the truth, so we should pay attention to what is being said and bring it in prayer to the Lord and compare it with the Bible to see if what they are saying is true. I may need to change what I do and how I do it, because it is affecting others negatively.

The opposite is also true. It doesn't matter what someone else does or says. It doesn't matter what your circumstances are. It doesn't matter how tired you are or how stressed or pressured you are. Your response—what comes out of you—has nothing to do with them or your circumstances. Your response could not come out unless it were in you—in your heart. Your response reveals to you what is truly in your heart, “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

So, in arguments or stressful situations, watch yourself, not them, and see what is coming out of you, for that reveals what is in you. Then go to work with God to resolve those things that are revealed.

Margaret

Margaret came to see a colleague of mine a few years ago. She had been coughing uncontrollably for a couple years, and she also suffered from urinary incontinence—unable to hold her urine in for more than 30 minutes or when she was coughing. She had seen many doctors and tried many treatments, all without success. She came to see my colleague to see if he could identify the cause of her coughing, and after examining her, he did not find a source. But he asked her about her life and about love issues.

What he discovered was that Margaret had been in a prolonged conflict with her daughter over her daughter's boyfriend. Margaret didn't like the boyfriend, and her daughter wouldn't listen to Margaret regarding the relationship. Margaret,

as many parents do, tried to control her daughter, and her daughter had been in rebellion for several years, leaving home and moving in with the boyfriend. My colleague talked with Margaret about the Law of Life, and encouraged her to come to God every morning, so that she could take of His love. He instructed her to see how much God loves her daughter and has forgiven her, and to forgive her likewise.

He talked with her about principles of love and freedom and encouraged her to stop trying to control her daughter, and simply to love her. And he challenged her to practice only thinking positive thoughts about her daughter and the boyfriend. When Margaret returned to his office a few weeks later, she was no longer coughing, and her urinary incontinence was resolved!

So, was it all just in her head? No! There were very real physical things going on in her body. But the foundation of the issue was in her mind. The conflict with her daughter, and her attempt to control her (which, by the way, is not what love does), was the foundation of her chronic cough and urinary incontinence. Once the cause was removed, the effect ceased.

Janet

Janet suffered from severe migraine headaches. They had started 13 years before and recurred every weekend. She would be fine through the week, but they would begin on Friday and continue through Monday morning. She frequently received medications, injections, and IV fluids, because she would keep vomiting and could not keep anything down. She had gone from doctor to doctor, trying to find a solution to her issues, but without success. Then one day, she went to see my colleague. After examining her and reviewing her medical record and not finding anything physical to explain her symptoms, he began to ask about her past.

She related to him that her father was an alcoholic and was mean when he was drunk. He worked in another city, and was away

from the home during the week, but would come home on Friday, stay for the weekend, and head back to work on Monday morning. She hated her father and how he treated her. Several months before her migraines began, her father died. My colleague immediately saw the correlation between her father's presence in the home on weekends, and Janet's pattern of migraines on weekends. He shared with her the Law of Life and encouraged her to spend time every morning with God, taking of the love He offered.

He encouraged her to see her father through God's eyes of love, and to ask God to give her a heart to love her father. He challenged her to think only positive thoughts about him and to forgive him. Janet began putting these things into practice, and within a week she stopped having migraine headaches.

So, was it all just in her head? No! There were very real physical things going on in her body. But the foundation of the issue was in her mind. Her hatred for her father (which, by the way, is not what love does), was the foundation of her migraine headaches. Once the cause was removed, the effect ceased.

Carl

Carl was a 65 y/o diabetic cattle rancher in Idaho. One day, he noticed an ulcer on his foot, and he immediately went to his doctor to check it out. He was placed on a course of antibiotics, and when he returned, it wasn't any better, so his doctor debrided the ulcer (that means he cut out the dead tissue) and put him on another course of antibiotics. His sugars were not under control, so they were working on medications and lifestyle changes, but he didn't improve. Eventually, infection got to the bone, and Carl was sent to the surgeon.

The surgeon told him he needed to amputate his little toe in order to save the rest of the foot. After the amputation, Carl was sent to see a diabetes specialist, who worked with him on his sugars. Despite the help of the diabetes specialist, his sugars still

weren't under control. His wound got worse and infected the bone of the next toe, and again, he saw the surgeon for another amputation. Two toes down, three to go, but you can't handle weight on the foot if you have too few toes, so the next amputation would be across the middle of the foot.

His diabetes specialist admitted him to the ICU so that they could put him on an insulin drip and see if they could get his sugars under control, and even in the ICU on an insulin drip they couldn't get his sugars under control.

The doctors are completely confused. No one can figure out what is going on. His foot wound is getting worse, and he will soon need another amputation. So, the surgeon tells Carl about a new physician in town who does things a little differently. John, another colleague of mine, is an internal medicine specialist with a strong interest in lifestyle medicine. In fact, he and his family ran a lifestyle program in their home for a time. So the surgeon referred Carl to John.

At the first visit, John reviewed Carl's medical information and looked through all of his doctor's notes, x-rays, and MRI scans. He spoke with Carl about his lifestyle and diet, etc. In all of this, John didn't find anything significant that Carl isn't already complying with. But John has a questionnaire that he gives to each of his patients, and the questionnaire asks about grief, anxiety, discontent, remorse, guilt, and distrust. It also asks about courage, hope, faith, sympathy, and love. So John gave the questionnaire to Carl. One result on that questionnaire was very abnormal. Carl was dealing with a lot of guilt.

When John asked Carl about the guilt, Carl explained that he was a Christian, and he knew that he should be doing a better job at taking care of his body. He felt guilty because he was responsible for the health problems he was facing. John asked Carl, "In your church, what do you do when you feel guilty about something?"

Carl said, “Well, we pray and ask God to forgive us.” John said, “Well, what about praying now?” So right there in the office, Carl knelt down and prayed and asked God to forgive him for not taking care of his body like he was supposed to. After getting up off his knees and sitting back in the chair, John asked Carl, “In your church, after you pray and ask God to forgive you, what do you do?” Carl said, “Well, we trust that God forgave us, and we don’t do the bad things anymore. But Doc, I’m already not doing those things anymore.” John could not identify anything else to address, so Carl left. John felt somewhat dissatisfied with the whole encounter, because he didn’t feel like he had helped Carl that much.

But after that meeting, Carl’s blood sugars started to be controlled, his foot started to heal, and within 6 weeks his foot had healed up, after 4 months of doctors, hospitals, medications, surgeries, and ICU stays. The only issue that was identified and addressed was guilt.

So, was it all just in his head? No! There were very real physical things going on in his body. But the foundation of the issue was in his mind. His guilt (which, by the way, is not what love allows), was the foundation of his uncontrolled blood sugars. Once the cause was removed, the effect ceased.

Michelle

I took care of Michelle several years ago when she came to the lifestyle center with cancer. She had multiple tumors in her abdomen, and she had already failed several courses of chemotherapy. So, she came looking for another way to help herself be healthy. We do not cure cancer. We simply teach people how to live the healthiest way possible within the context of their disease to give them the best chance of healing.

As I met with Michelle, it became evident that there were some issues going on in her life that were not helping her cancer.

We helped her correct some of her lifestyle issues and used some simple remedies to help her out. But the big issue, as I met and counselled with her, was her issue with her mother.

Michelle never knew her father. Her mother raised her for a few years and then left Michelle with her grandparents for them to raise her. Michelle's mother would come back into her life periodically, and thoughts and feelings of resentment, abandonment, anger, confusion, etc. would well up in Michelle. It was evident that she didn't love and honor her mother, and I knew that couldn't be good for her cancer.

So, I counselled with Michelle, helping her to see that her mother is not her source. God is. I challenged her to go to God and take of His perfect love and ask Him to give her the same love for her mother. I helped Michelle to see that she doesn't have to take what her mother does personally, because what her mother does is not about Michelle. It is about her mother, because what comes out of her mother does so because that is what is inside of her.

Michelle took this to heart and began spending time alone with God and learning to take from Him so that she could love her mother with God's love.

Before Michelle came to our center, her cancer markers were elevated, but two weeks later, they were back into the normal range. A couple months later we received a happy report that nearly half of her tumors were gone, and the remaining ones were smaller than before.

But about four months after that, I received a report that Michelle was discouraged, because her cancer marker tests were back up again. So, I called her and found out that her mother had come back into the picture and stirred things all up again. Michelle forgot much of what I had taught her, and she was back to taking things personally and seeing her mother as her source. So, we spent another hour going over the principles again and helping her regain a correct perspective. She did. And a couple

months later, we had the joyful report that her cancer markers were back down into the normal range.

So, was it all just in her head? No! There was very real cancer in her body. But the foundation of the cancer was in her mind. Her resentment toward her mother (which, by the way, is not what love does), was the foundation of her cancer. Once the cause was removed, the effect began to go away. When the cause returned, the effect returned as well.

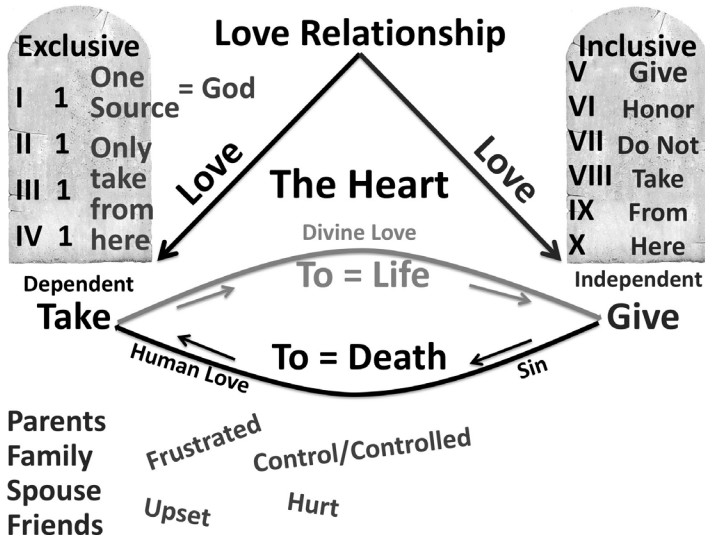
You see, most of our diseases have their foundation in the mind. “Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine tenths of the diseases from which men suffer have their foundation here.”¹⁴²

Now, I don’t want you to get the idea that everything—all disease—has its foundation in the mind. But I do want you to recognize that most of it does—approximately 90 percent of it.

¹⁴² White, E. G. (1923) *Counsels on Health*. (p 324). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Law of Love...and Health



Love and the Law

Let us take one more look at love relationships and their impact on health. There are two legitimate love relationships that function in the heart. The one love relationship is a relationship from which I take. The other love relationship is a relationship to which I give. Both are legitimate love relationships. And God has created us so that we take from one relationship in order to give to another. This is how divine love functions correctly in the heart.

But the enemy, who cannot create anything new, has messed up God's plan by simply turning the equation around. Instead of taking to give, we then give to take (receive), going in the opposite direction that God designed for us—making a “new order” of

things according to Satan's way. This "new order" is found in human love, which resulted because of sin. Now, to follow God's design brings life, but following the enemy's plan brings death.

Have you ever wondered why God wrote the ten commandments on two tables of stone? When I was young, I guess I just thought it was because His finger was too big to write everything on one stone. But that is not the case. He had a purpose in writing the commandments on two stones.

You see, each table of the commandments governs each of the love relationships. The first four commandments are exclusive commands, and the last six are inclusive commands. According to the first commandment, how many gods are there? One and only One. And the second commandment states that we are to worship how many gods? One and only One. And the third commandment states that we are to reverence and make holy the name of how many? One and only One. And the fourth commandment states that we are to worship specifically on how many days of the week? One and only One. The first four commandments are exclusive, meaning that they include only one, and exclude all else.

In essence, what the first four commandments are saying is: there is only one source, and that source is God. Another way of putting it is this: *Only take from here*. These four commandments govern the exclusive taking love relationship. We are to take from God as our only source.

But what about the other six commandments? The fifth commandment states that we are to do what to our parents? We are to honor them. To honor our parents—is that giving or is that taking? It is giving.

So, the next set of commandments govern the giving love. Does the fifth commandment give any qualifications of one's parents that would exclude them from this commandment? Does it say for you to honor your parents only if they are honorable? No! The commandment says to honor your parents, regardless of

whether they are honorable or not. It is inclusive. It includes all parents, no matter what their qualifications or characteristics are. We are simply to give honor to them. But what about the other five commandments (You shall not murder... commit adultery... steal... bear false witness... covet)? All of these commandments say, "Do not take from here!" It doesn't matter who they are, how they treat you, what they have, or how they look. You give to them. You don't take from them.

The one you take from you are dependent upon. But the one that you give to, you are independent of. For example, imagine a pure mountain stream flowing to the valley below, and along the stream there are three farms. You purchase the second farm, the one in the middle, and you are very happy with your situation. You use the water from the stream to provide water to your home, you use it to water your fields and keep your crops and animals alive, and you enjoy sitting by the crystal-clear stream in the afternoons.

Let us say that the neighbor downstream from you decides that they are going to start some kind of manufacturing industry, and they divert all of the water from the stream coming into their property to their manufacturing plant, and only a little, polluted water flows out of their farm downstream. Does their decision affect you directly? No! Why? Because they are downstream from you. You still have access to all of the water that you need and can use it for what you need/want, and what they do with the water after that is their problem. You aren't dependent upon them because they don't control your source.

But let us imagine that the neighbor upstream from you decides they are going to start the same manufacturing industry, and they divert all of the water from the stream to their manufacturing plant, and only a little, polluted water flows out of their farm to yours. Does their decision affect you directly? Yes! Why? Because they are upstream from you. You need the water that comes through their farm to your farm. They control your

source, and so you are dependent upon them. And what they do directly affects you. If they are one you take from—if they are upstream from you, if they are your source—you are dependent upon them. But if they are the one you give to—if they are downstream from you, if they are not your source—you are independent of them. What they do doesn't affect or control you.

We find ourselves in a problem. You see, the law is not governing our lives, and we have everything backward. Instead of only having God as our source, our parents, family, spouses, friends—and even our pets—are our sources.

How can you know if they are your source? You are dependent upon them. They frustrate you. They make you upset. They hurt you. And they try to control you, while you try to control them. You see, you have to control your sources because you need them to be okay so that you can be okay. You have to protect yourself by protecting your sources. And you cannot trust any human being, so if they are your source, you must try to control them.

But God never intended for others to be your source (except for young children in their parents' care, which is temporary and should result in the parents weaning the children from them as a source to God as the source). The law states that God is our only source. Everyone else is there for us to give to, no matter who they are or what they are like.

Through the sacrifice that He made on the cross, and the working of the Holy Spirit in the heart, God wipes out the old heart of sin, with its giving to receive, and with its putting others in the place where only God should be, and He restores us to the heart of divine love which He created us to enjoy originally.

In giving us that new heart, God restores the function of the law in our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit. "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds,

and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.”¹⁴³ And when the law is restored to its proper function in us, our parents will cease to be our source. Our family will cease to be our source. Our spouse will cease to be our source. Our friends and our pets will cease to be our source. Everyone will be someone whom we give to. What we take through others we recognize came from God, and God will be our only source.

So, ultimately our problem is the sources we choose to take from. As long as I live by the law of God, taking love from God and giving love to others, I will have health. But if I start taking love from the wrong sources or keeping it to myself, I will eventually experience symptoms, disease, and eventually death. When that law that governs love is broken, that is called sin, and sin is the root cause of disease. It is interesting. When you read the Bible, and it talks about being healthy, it doesn't instruct you to eat your greens. It instructs you to obey the law.

“If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.”¹⁴⁴ Do you want health? Do you want to be free from the diseases of the Egyptians (they suffered from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, etc.)? Then “give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes.”

Do you want healthy skin and muscles, and strong bones? “Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil. It will be health to your flesh, and strength to your bones.”¹⁴⁵

Do you want life? “My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. Do not let them depart from your eyes;

¹⁴³ Jeremiah 31:33

¹⁴⁴ Exodus 15:26

¹⁴⁵ Proverbs 3:7,8

keep them in the midst of your heart; for they are life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”¹⁴⁶

Do you want to be blessed, fertile, and healthy? “Then it shall come to pass, because you listen to these judgments, and keep and do them, that the Lord your God...will love you and bless you and multiply you; He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your land...You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be a male or female barren among you...And the Lord will take away from you all sickness, and will afflict you with none of the terrible diseases of Egypt which you have known.”¹⁴⁷

Do you want your land, which provides your food, to be healed? “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”¹⁴⁸ Do you want to be healed? “For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.”¹⁴⁹

Do you want health without complying with the conditions? It won't work. “It is through faith in Jesus Christ that the truth is accepted in the heart and the human agent is purified and cleansed. Jesus was ‘wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.’ Is it possible to be healed, while knowingly committing sin?—No; it is genuine faith that says, I know that I have committed sin, but that Jesus has

¹⁴⁶ Proverbs 4:20-23

¹⁴⁷ Deuteronomy 7:12-15

¹⁴⁸ 2 Chronicles 7:14

¹⁴⁹ Matthew 13:15

pardoned my sin; and hereafter I will resist temptation in and through His might.”¹⁵⁰

We see, then, that the Lord brings health through His word, through the promises that it contains, through surrender to that word, and through compliance with its conditions. But we also see from this same word that there is an enemy on the loose that we have to watch out for.

¹⁵⁰ White, E. G. (1894) Words to the Young. *The Youth's Instructor*. (February 15, 1894, paragraph 5).

CHAPTER NINE

A Love that Takes

What Do I Do?

Now that we see our problem more clearly, the question we must ask ourselves is, “What do I do about it?”

1. Come & Take from God’s love

Recognizing that God is the only source, we must come to Him and take of His love. Imagine with me that you meet someone that you are interested in, and you are thinking about pursuing a relationship with them. There is only one problem. They are mute (cannot speak). Just because they are mute does not mean that a relationship is impossible. It just changes somewhat how you communicate. You may be able to talk to them, but they will either have to use body language or write what they are thinking.

In pursuing a relationship with God, in coming to Him as your only source, you can talk to Him like you talk to a friend—in prayer. Tell Him what went right and what went wrong. Tell Him how you feel. Tell Him what you are struggling with and what you would like Him to help you with. He can handle your feelings. If you are angry, frustrated, depressed, or whatever, He can take it. Don’t stop talking with Him just because you don’t think He would like what you will say. Just keep talking to Him.

Some people recommend following the PRAY acronym (Praise, Repent, Ask, Yield). **P**raise and thank Him for the blessings in your life. Look for blessings and ways He is helping you. **R**epent (express your sorrow for your sin and turn away from

it). Ask Him for help to overcome your difficulties and strength to overcome your weaknesses, and Yield yourself to His control, so that He can lead your life in the way that He knows is best.

In this relationship, God rarely speaks directly to us in an audible voice. But He has left us His love letters (the Bible) that we can read. The Bible has all the answers that we need to all of our problems, situations, and questions. The more you read the Bible, the more you understand about God, and the more you find His answers to your questions. When you are in love, you love reading the love letters of your loved one. And as you learn more about Him and His love for you, you can spend time contemplating His love.

There is a law by which the mind operates. That law is: By beholding we become changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). What we spend our time thinking about, contemplating, watching, listening to, hanging out with, etc. we become like, whether we like it or not. That is just how we operate. So, if you want love, you have to spend time contemplating love. And the only place you will find pure love is God. The greatest revelation of the love of God is found in the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. I recommend you spend a good amount of time every day reading about and contemplating the love of God as manifested in Jesus' sacrifice from the last supper to His death on the cross. You will be immensely blessed by this!

"I saw how...grace could be obtained. Go to your closet, and there alone plead with God: 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' Be in earnest, be sincere. Fervent prayer availeth much. Jacoblike, wrestle in prayer. Agonize. Jesus, in the garden, sweat great drops of blood; you must make an effort. Do not leave your closet until you feel strong in God; then watch, and just as long as you watch and pray you can keep these evil besetments under, and the grace of God can and will appear in you...Come with zeal, and when you sincerely feel that without the help of God you perish, when you pant after Him as the hart panteth after the water brooks, then will the Lord

strengthen you speedily. Then will your peace pass all understanding. If you expect salvation, you must pray. Take time. Be not hurried and careless in your prayers. Beg of God to work in you a thorough reformation, that the fruits of His Spirit may dwell in you, and you shine as lights in the world.”¹⁵¹

Sources

I want to reiterate something very important at this point. Where do you go to for understanding? When you want to be understood, who can you go to? If you need to be accepted, where do you go? What about for security? With whom do you feel secure? And where do you go to for love?

If you honestly take a survey of your life, how many sources do you have? Spouse, parents, children, friends, colleagues? Let me ask a question we asked previously. Can another human being be the source of what you, as a human being, need? No, they can't, because they need the same things too. So, who is the REAL source of what you need? It is God.

But in reality, is He your only source, or is He only one of your sources? Isaiah reminds us, “O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, the One who dwells between the cherubim, You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.”¹⁵² David reminds us, “For You are great, and do wondrous things; You alone are God.”¹⁵³

Paul reminds us, “For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ White, E. G. (1868). *Testimonies for the Church Volume 1*. Page 158. Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

¹⁵² Isaiah 37:16

¹⁵³ Psalm 86:10

¹⁵⁴ Colossians 1:15-17

Your mother is not your source. Your spouse is not your source. Your child is not your source. Your friend is not your source. Your dog is not your source. Your cat is not your source. None of these are your sources. You have only ONE source, and that source is God.

Do you need to belong somewhere and with someone? Go to God, not to your mother. Do you need to be accepted by someone? Go to God, not your friend. Do you need to feel secure? Go to God, not your financial advisor. Do you need harmony? Seek it from God, not from your spouse.

I picture God above me and everyone else beside me. Vertically, God is to be my source for everything I need, so what is the purpose for having horizontal relationships (relationships with other people)? Others are not there to be my source. Only God is there to be my source. Others are there to give me an opportunity to give away what I took from God. Others are not there for me to take from as a source. They are there for me to give to.

But just like I can serve as a channel of God's love to others, others can serve as a channel of God's love to me. No one can serve as an unlimited channel of God's love, for His love is far greater than the channel itself. But they can serve as a channel of His love to a limited degree. And to that extent, I can be blessed by His love manifested through them. But I don't take the love as coming FROM them, because I understand that they are not the source of the love they give. I take the love as coming THROUGH them, from God. My dependence remains upon God, the Source, not the channel.

In order to be able to give to others, I must have something to give. So how do I get that which I need from God? Besides what I mentioned previously; I have found that it primarily comes from trusting in His promises.

Do you need acceptance? God promises you, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of

God, to those who believe in His name.”¹⁵⁵ “But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.”¹⁵⁶ “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.”¹⁵⁷ “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.”¹⁵⁸

Do you need belonging? God promises you, “But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine.’”¹⁵⁹ “Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me.”¹⁶⁰ “But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, ‘Abba, Father!’ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.”¹⁶¹ “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that

¹⁵⁵ John 1:12

¹⁵⁶ Acts 10:35

¹⁵⁷ Ephesians 1:3-6

¹⁵⁸ John 3:16,17

¹⁵⁹ Isaiah 43:1

¹⁶⁰ Isaiah 49:15-16

¹⁶¹ Galatians 4:4-7

we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.”¹⁶²

Do you need security? God promises you, “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear Him, and delivers them.”¹⁶³ “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”¹⁶⁴ “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.”¹⁶⁵ “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.”¹⁶⁶ “No weapon formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue which rises against you in judgment you shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is from Me,’ says the Lord.”¹⁶⁷

Do you need understanding? God promises you, “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.”¹⁶⁸ “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”¹⁶⁹

Do you need truth? God promises you, “The entirety of Your word is truth, and every one of Your righteous judgments endures forever.”¹⁷⁰ “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.”¹⁷¹ “Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one

¹⁶² 1 John 3:1

¹⁶³ Psalm 34:7

¹⁶⁴ Philippians 4:19

¹⁶⁵ Isaiah 41:10

¹⁶⁶ Isaiah 43:2

¹⁶⁷ Isaiah 54:17

¹⁶⁸ Isaiah 53:4

¹⁶⁹ Hebrews 4:15,16

¹⁷⁰ Psalm 119:160

¹⁷¹ John 17:17

comes to the Father except through Me.”¹⁷² “Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.’”¹⁷³

Do you need forgiveness? God promises you, “He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.”¹⁷⁴ “Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in mercy. He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.”¹⁷⁵ “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹⁷⁶

Do you need joy? God promises you, “You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.”¹⁷⁷ “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit.”¹⁷⁸ “For God gives wisdom and knowledge and joy to a man who is good in His sight; but to the sinner He gives the work of gathering and collecting, that he may give to him who is good before God. This also is vanity and grasping for the wind.”¹⁷⁹ “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.”¹⁸⁰ “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may

¹⁷² John 14:6

¹⁷³ John 8:31,32

¹⁷⁴ Psalm 103:10-12

¹⁷⁵ Micah 7:18,19

¹⁷⁶ 1 John 1:9

¹⁷⁷ Psalm 16:11

¹⁷⁸ Psalm 51:12

¹⁷⁹ Ecclesiastes 2:26

¹⁸⁰ Jeremiah 15:16

remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”¹⁸¹ “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”¹⁸² “But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves.”¹⁸³

Do you need peace? God promises you, “The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace.”¹⁸⁴ “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.”¹⁸⁵ “I will hear what God the Lord will speak, for He will speak peace to His people and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly.”¹⁸⁶ “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”¹⁸⁷ “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”¹⁸⁸ “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸⁹

Do you need compassion? God promises you, “But You, O Lord, are a God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering and abundant in mercy and truth.”¹⁹⁰ “But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.”¹⁹¹

Do you need hope? God promises you, “Be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart, all you who hope in the

¹⁸¹ John 15:11

¹⁸² John 16:24

¹⁸³ John 17:13

¹⁸⁴ Psalm 29:11

¹⁸⁵ Isaiah 26:3

¹⁸⁶ Psalm 85:8

¹⁸⁷ John 14:27

¹⁸⁸ John 16:33

¹⁸⁹ Romans 15:13

¹⁹⁰ Psalm 86:15

¹⁹¹ Matthew 9:36

Lord.”¹⁹² “It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”¹⁹³ “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.”¹⁹⁴ “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.”¹⁹⁵ “Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”¹⁹⁶

“When the promises of God are freely and fully accepted, heaven’s brightness is brought into the life.”¹⁹⁷ You and I primarily take of God’s love by becoming familiar with His promises, reciting them, using them in times of need, allowing them to be the theme of our thoughts, and believing them.

2. Accept A New Heart / New Love

In addition to praying, reading His Word, and contemplating His love, we must accept the new heart God desires to give us, which operates by the Law of Life—take to give.

I don’t know if you have seen a heart transplant surgery before, or if you have been involved in one or had a friend or family member that did. But if you have, there is one thing you will quickly realize, and that is that a heart transplant is not painless! Why would someone go through a heart transplant? Why would you participate in a heart transplant, and what are the steps you need to consider as you consider accepting that new heart?

¹⁹² Psalm 31:24

¹⁹³ Lamentations 3:26

¹⁹⁴ Jeremiah 29:11

¹⁹⁵ John 14:1-3

¹⁹⁶ Romans 15:13

¹⁹⁷ White, E. G. (1933) *A Call to Medical Evangelism and Health Education*. (p. 26). Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association.

1. You must have an incurable, fatal heart condition.

If your heart can be cured or managed any other way, you are not a candidate for a heart transplant. It is only those who have an incurable heart condition that is fatal who are eligible for a heart transplant.

2. You must trust the Surgeon and give consent.

The Surgeon, Christ, will not take you to surgery without your consent. He respects your freedom of choice and will not force you to do good or to do wickedness. So, you must give Him consent to perform the procedure before He will perform it. But if you are going to give Him consent, you must trust Him.

Imagine that you are in need of a heart transplant, and you are at the hospital, all hooked up and ready for surgery, and the surgeon walks in, and he's a young guy with barely three hairs growing on his upper lip. You ask him how many of these procedures he has done before, and he somewhat sheepishly tells you that this will be his first time. Are you going to let him cut you open? I wouldn't! I would be looking for a second opinion. I want a surgeon who has done the procedure many times before and has a very good success record.

Jesus has performed this procedure millions of times and has never lost a case. You can trust Him with your heart transplant.

3. You must be willing to go through the pain.

As mentioned before, open heart surgery is not painless. To begin with, a scalpel is used to cut the skin from the center of the lower neck to just below the breastbone. Then a saw is used to cut the breastbone in two from top to bottom. Next, rib spreaders are placed in the chasm and cranked by hand to spread the chest apart so the surgeon can see inside. Next, the left lung is pushed aside gently, and the sack containing the heart is cut so the heart can be delivered. Finally, the surgeon holds the heart in his hand and can begin working on the heart.

At the end of the surgery, everything is reversed. But the breastbone is still not attached, so the surgeon takes a large, curved needle with a wire attached to it and pushes it through the breastbone on one side and then the other. He draws the wire through and then uses pliers to “twisty-tie” the two sides of the breastbone together. He does that several times down the breastbone. And, finally, the skin is stapled together.

The patient may have been asleep during the surgery, but after the surgery they have to wake up. And when they wake up, it hurts! Their back hurts. Their chest hurts. Their throat hurts. Praise God for something to dull the pain!

But, in order to prevent the development of pneumonia, the patient is then instructed to breathe deeply and is given a device that helps them to practice breathing deeply. Why do they need to be encouraged to breathe deeply? It is because the wire twisty ties do not hold the breastbone together perfectly, and every time the patient breathes deeply, coughs, sneezes, or laughs, the one side of the breast bone rubs against the other side, and there is intense pain. For the sake of any friends that you visit in the hospital after open heart surgery (or any surgery for that matter), please don’t make them laugh!

If you are going to receive a new heart, you have to be willing to face the pain. In receiving this new heart, there is pain as well. There is confession. There is repentance. There is humiliation. There is giving up one’s idols and dreams. There is letting go of one’s possessions. There is a complete surrender of oneself to the Surgeon.

4. There must be a donor with a good heart.

If you have an incurable, fatal heart condition, and the donor has another incurable, fatal heart condition, there is no point in having the surgery. If you are going to undergo the surgery, you must have a donor that has a good heart to exchange for your bad one.

God knew this, and after looking all over and finding no suitable heart, He decided that His heart was the only one that would work.

5. The donor must die.

Of course, we know that if you are going to receive a new heart, the former owner of that heart must die. Jesus knew that too, and when He decided that only His heart would suffice, He knew that He must die in the process. But He loved us so much that He was willing to make the sacrifice for us.

6. The recipient must die...and be revived.

Many people don't realize that the recipient of the new heart must die as well. You see, the surgeon has to cut out the old heart before suturing the new one in place.

I have been in open heart surgery, and it can be quite nerve-racking. The bypass machine has been pumping blood through the body but not through the heart for quite some time. When the new heart is finally sutured together, blood is allowed to flow through the heart as the bypass machine ports are removed. But the heart isn't beating.

The surgeon takes small metal paddles and places them in the chest next to the heart and gives the heart a shock. Then there is nervous waiting. No heartbeat. The surgeon shocks again. More nervous waiting. Still no heartbeat. He reaches into the chest and rhythmically squeezes the heart in his hand for a while, circulating blood to the body and especially the brain. He then shocks the heart a third time and waits. Still no heartbeat. You can feel the tension in the room. If this heart doesn't beat, all will be for nothing. One more shock, and the heart responds with a disorganized quivering for a few seconds. And then a sigh of relief spreads throughout the operating room as the heart begins to beat in a regular fashion. The dead has been revived!

7. You must follow the Surgeon's instructions for the rest of your life.

Now that you have successfully survived the heart transplant, you must follow the Surgeon's instructions, for you are no longer in possession of your heart. You are in possession of His. And His heart must be treated a certain way in order for it to be preserved. If you treat that new heart like you treated the old one, the same terminal condition will result. No, you must follow His instructions and do so for the rest of your life.

But how do you obtain this new heart? What is the missing ingredient? It is faith. The new heart is a gift of God's grace, received and accepted by faith. But let us look at this a little closer so that we understand what faith is and how it is exercised. For this, we will go back to the very beginning.

Creation & Faith

"Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light."¹⁹⁸
"Then God said, 'Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters.' Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so."¹⁹⁹
"Then God said, 'Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so."²⁰⁰ "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth'; and it was so."²⁰¹ "Then God said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth'; and it was so."²⁰² "Then God

¹⁹⁸ Genesis 1:3

¹⁹⁹ Genesis 1:6,7

²⁰⁰ Genesis 1:9

²⁰¹ Genesis 1:11

²⁰² Genesis 1:14,15

said, 'Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens.' So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good."²⁰³ "Then God said, 'Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, each according to its kind'; and it was so."²⁰⁴

Here we see that God spoke everything into existence by the power of His word. He spoke and it was. It wasn't that He spoke the thing and then had to accomplish what He spoke. His word is creative and accomplishes the thing that is spoken. God's word can create something from nothing: light, atmosphere, land, stars and planets, plants, and animals. All were created by the power that is in God's spoken word.

Not only is His word creative, but His word is recreative. In the book of John, we find that, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."²⁰⁵ So, we see that Jesus was the one who spoke all things into existence. He was the creator of all the universe and created it all by the power of His word. But John helps us to realize that not only did He speak and create, but that He *was* the Word, and that the God who was the Word, who spoke all things into being from nothing, that same Word became a human being and lived among us.

²⁰³ Genesis 1:20,21

²⁰⁴ Genesis 1:24

²⁰⁵ John 1:1-4,14

In the life and ministry of Jesus, we see His recreative power at work. In Matthew 9 and verses 27 through 30 we read, “When Jesus departed from there, two blind men followed Him, crying out and saying, ‘Son of David, have mercy on us!’ And when He had come into the house, the blind men came to Him. And Jesus said to them, ‘Do you believe that I am able to do this?’ They said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ Then He touched their eyes, saying, ‘According to your faith let it be to you.’ And their eyes were opened.”

This was only one representative healing among thousands of people whom Jesus healed. But in healing people, there is an additional factor that we must consider. In creation, Adam and Eve could give no consent in their own creation. But with recreation, with healing, each person that Jesus healed exercised faith in Him and His ability to heal them.

God allows for complete freedom of choice. He is not interested in robots serving Him. He wants creatures who can choose to serve, creatures who can love. In giving us the capacity to choose and to love, God respects our choice, even when it is not a good one. Jesus would not heal someone who had no faith in Him, because to do otherwise would be to force good (healing) on that person, and God will not force good on you just as he will not force evil on you. You must choose. Therefore, healing is a consensual act between God who has the power to heal, and a creature who consents to the healing.

Let us take one more example when considering faith and what it is. Matthew 8:5-13 says, “Now when Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to Him, pleading with Him, saying, ‘Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘I will come and heal him.’ The centurion answered and said, ‘Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority,

having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.' When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, 'Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel...' Then Jesus said to the centurion, 'Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you.' And his servant was healed that same hour."

If Jesus says that something is faith and is great faith, we should pay attention. Jesus said that the centurion had faith, great faith. So, what was that faith? The centurion came to Jesus, expecting that Jesus had the power to heal his servant. When Jesus said that He would go and heal the servant, the centurion showed that he believed Jesus did not need to go to the home to heal. He believed that Jesus was God and had creative power in His word. All He needed to do was speak the word and his servant would be healed. That is faith. It is knowing that the word of God has power in itself, expecting the word of God itself to do what it says, and depending upon the word itself to accomplish it.

How much righteousness resides in your heart? None. Then, just as in creation, God must speak righteousness into existence in your heart from nothing.

"'He spake, and it was.' Before He spoke, there were no worlds; after He spoke, the worlds were there. The word of God spoken by Jesus Christ is able to cause that to exist which has no existence before the word is spoken, and which, except for that word, never could have existence. In the same way precisely it is in man's life. In man's life there is no righteousness. In man there is no righteousness from which righteousness can appear in his life. But God has set forth Christ to declare righteousness unto and upon man. Christ has spoken the word only, and in the darkened void of man's life there is righteousness to everyone who will receive it. Where, before the word is received, there was neither righteousness nor anything which could possibly produce

righteousness, after the word is received, there is perfect righteousness and the very Fountain from which it springs. The word of God received by faith—that is, the word of God expected to do what that word says and depended upon to do what it says—produces righteousness in the man and in the life where there never was any before; precisely as, in the original creation, the word of God produces worlds where there never were any worlds before. He has spoken, and it is so to everyone that believeth: that is, to everyone that receiveth. The word itself produces it.”²⁰⁶

So, how do you obtain the new heart that you desperately need but which you cannot produce? It is in the same way. God has given His word, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” Ezekiel 36:26. The creative word has spoken it, but in redemption, there must be the consent of the recipient. You must go to the restaurant and take what you need. You must agree to undergo the heart transplant operation, allowing the Surgeon to do His work. When faith takes hold of the creative word, that which the creative word has spoken is so, and will be realized in your life at the very time when it is needed most. You hope for the promise which you do not see in reality. But “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”²⁰⁷ That means that faith, by the power of the word, allows that which is not in existence to become reality. And faith itself is the evidence of that which you cannot see yet.

Faith and trust are inseparable, so can you have faith in someone and distrust them at the same time? No, you cannot. So, faith in God’s word means that you trust that word, and it means you trust the One who spoke that word.

²⁰⁶ Jones, A.T., Waggoner, E.J. (1995) *Lessons on Faith: A Selection of Articles & Sermons*. (p. 13) Brushton, N.Y.: Teach Services.

²⁰⁷ Hebrews 11:1

CHAPTER TEN

A Love that Values

3. Accept the Divine Exchange at the Cross

By faith, become a participant in the divine exchange at the cross, where you receive Jesus' past as your own, and He takes from you your past. You cease to be the victim and the perpetrator, and you go free! But be careful to not pick up your burden again. It is so easy for us to come to Jesus with our burdens in prayer and mention them to Him but not leave them at the cross. We walk away still carrying our burden.

For instance, suppose there is a parent who is concerned about their child. Perhaps the child is pursuing a life of self-destruction through substances, addictions, and other harmful lifestyle behaviors. The parent, if they are a praying parent, will most likely bring that child to God in prayer daily or multiple times through the day. They will ask for the Lord to protect and convert their child and generally intervene in their life in order to save them.

But then what does the parent do? They go throughout their day worrying about their child and what they are doing and whether they will ever respond to God again. That is not bringing your burden to the cross and leaving it there. That is bringing the burden to the cross and then taking it with you and bearing it yourself.

Does God love your child? Of course He does. How much does He love your child? More than you do or less than you do? More than you do. How much more than you do? Infinitely more than

you do. Does God have power? Yes, He has power. Does He have more power than you do? Of course He does. How much more power does God have than you? Infinitely more power. So, if it is for the good, and if it does not violate the child's rights, will God use His infinite power to work out salvation for the child whom He loves infinitely? Yes, He will!

The next question is not an easy one in reality. Can you trust God to work out the salvation of your child that you prayed for? "Of course," you say. But can you, in reality? If you can trust God and if you do trust God to work it out, then you have nothing to worry about.

"Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."²⁰⁸ So faith takes hold of the love of God and believes that He will work out what is best in His own time and way and believes it to such a degree that the thing to come is a current reality to me—so real that it is like physical substance in front of me and evidence that can be used in a court of law. And if there is a present reality of what is to come, I have nothing to worry about, because it is already taken care of in Christ.

So, when you bring your burdens to the Lord, by faith leave them there. Let the Lord work it out in His own time and way and just trust that He will work it out infinitely better than you ever could. His death on the cross proves His love for you and for those you love. His love is infinite, and you can trust such an infinite love.

Valuable

What makes something worth what it is worth? Is it what it is made of? Is it based upon what it can do? Ultimately, value is determined by what someone (the highest bidder) is willing to pay for the thing. So, how much are you worth? Before we answer that question, let us take a detour for a little while.

²⁰⁸ Hebrews 11:1

The earth that you and I live on is a beautiful place. And it is relatively large. The Earth's circumference is 24,901 miles, which means that if you were to drive around the world in a straight line at the equator at 70 mph, it would take you 355.7 hours, or almost 15 days straight to drive around the world once.

And the earth has a mass of 5,973,600,000,000,000,000,000 kg. If you were to be able to bench press 200 pounds, and you could do so every second, you would have to bench press at that rate for 1,960,000,000,000,000,000,000 years to eventually lift the same weight as Earth.

If you have a fast car, you can drive over 200 mph, but the earth rotates at about 1,000 mph, and its orbital speed is 66,611mph. That's fast! If you drive in the right direction at the right spot on the earth, you can be going 67,811 mph!

And, of course, the earth is only one of eight or nine planets in our solar system. Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune, (and maybe Pluto?). And all of these planets are orbiting around the sun. Our sun is a medium-sized star that is 93 million miles away from us. Even at the immense speeds of light, it takes over 8 seconds for light to travel from the sun to earth. At its surface, the sun is 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. The sun is so big that if the earth were the size of a golf ball, the sun would have a diameter of 15 feet. You could fit 960,000 earths inside the sun. That is enough golf balls to fill a school bus.

And when we compare the earth to other planets, we find that it is slightly larger than 3 or 4 of the other planets. But it is much smaller than the rest. But when we compare our planets to stars, there is very little comparison.

Betelgeuse is called the "orange giant," and is a part of the Orion constellation. It is 427 light years away from us and is twice the size of the Earth's orbit around the sun. If the Earth were the size of a golf ball, Betelgeuse would be the size of 6 Empire State

Buildings on top of each other! That is 612 stories tall. You could fit 262,000,000,000,000 earths inside of Betelgeuse. That is enough golf balls to fill the Superdome in Louisiana 3,000 times!

Mu Cephei is 3,000 light years away from us. If the Earth were the size of a golf ball, Mu Cephei would be the size of 2 Golden Gate Bridges end to end! That is a 2.4-mile diameter! You could fit 2,700,000,000,000,000 (quadrillion) earths inside of Mu Cephei.

To get an idea of how large a number quadrillion is, consider that 1 million seconds ago was 11.5 days ago, 1 billion seconds ago was 31.7 years ago, 1 trillion seconds ago was 31,688 years ago, and 1 quadrillion seconds ago was 31,688,088 years ago. A quadrillion is a ridiculously large number. And you could fit 2.7 quadrillion earths inside of Mu Cephei.

But the largest star that we know of is called VY Canis Majoris (the Big Dog). If the Earth were the size of a golf ball, Canis Majoris would be the size of Mt. Everest, 5.5 miles from sea level to the peak. You could fit 7 quadrillion earths inside of Canis Majoris.

When we look into the sky on a dark night, many times we think we are seeing stars. But if we only looked at those “stars” with more and more powerful telescopes, we would notice that some of them are not stars. They are galaxies. These galaxies are made up of many stars, with anywhere from 10,000,000 to 100,000,000,000,000 stars in a single galaxy. And if we had more and more powerful telescopes, we would probably find much more than we now know.

The average distance between stars in our galaxy is 4.3 light years. That is equal to 5,878,625,000,000 miles. These stars that are close to us make up the Milky Way Galaxy, which is our galaxy. The Milky Way Galaxy contains approximately 300,000,000,000 (billion) stars, and it is about 10,000 light years thick (or 58,786,250,000,000,000 miles), and about 100,000 light years wide (or 587,862,500,000,000,000 miles).

The largest galaxy that we know of is inside the Abell 2029 cluster. It contains approximately 100,000,000,000,000 stars. The most distant known galaxy, UDFj-39546284, is approximately 13.37 billion light years from Earth. That is equivalent to 78,597,216,250,000,000,000,000 miles away from earth. It is estimated that the entire “known universe” is 91 billion light years across. That is 546,700,000,000,000,000,000,000 miles!

There are an estimated 200 billion galaxies and 1,000,000,000,000,000,000,000,000 (septillion) stars in the entire observable universe.

To get an idea of what 1 septillion is like, imagine that you go down to the beach, and you take a pair of tweezers and a bag with you. You start picking up grains of sand one by one until you have picked up the entire beach and ocean floor and land mass near you, and then you work your way around all of the beaches and islands and continents around the entire world. Once you have finished picking up every single piece of sand on planet earth, then go to the deserts of the earth and pick up every piece of sand until there are no more. You will then have approximately 1 septillion pieces of sand. This is how many stars that are estimated to be in the observable universe.

And God promised Abraham, “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.”²⁰⁹

On August 6, 1945, the United States dropped a nuclear bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. That nuclear bomb released an estimated 6.0×10^{13} Joules of energy. But such a devastating explosion is nothing compared to the sun. The sun releases 3.8×10^{26} Joules of energy in 1 second. That is 6,333,333,333,333 (trillion) times the Hiroshima nuclear bomb every second!

²⁰⁹ Genesis 22:17

That is incredible power! But our sun is not the most powerful thing out there. When it comes to the release of power, the most powerful things in the universe that we know of are quasars. A quasar can release 1.95×10^{39} Joules of energy in 1 second. That is 5,100,000,000,000 (trillion) times the power of the sun every second! And where do the stars and quasars get their power?

“By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”²¹⁰ God is the power behind these universal powerhouses.

And is God bigger or smaller than the creation that He has made? Can He create into a space where He is not at or has no access to? No, of course not. So, He is bigger than His creation.

Imagine with me about heaven. What would it be like to be there? Imagine the city of God, made from 12 different jewels, and its 12 gates, each made from a single pearl. Imagine streets that are pure gold, so pure that they are transparent. Imagine the river of life that contains living, pure, clean water miles wide. And imagine the tree of life, with one trunk on one side of the river of life and one trunk on the other side coming together in the middle—a tree miles high and miles wide! Imagine the angel choirs of millions of voices blending in perfect harmony and perfect timing, singing praises to the God who created all of this beauty. Just imagine what it would be like to be there. If you went there, would you ever want to leave?

Now, imagine God as the center of all worship and adoration. Imagine that beings are constantly singing praises to Him and blessing Him for His holiness and love. Imagine Him surrounded by such beauty that we can't describe. Imagine that He is bigger than all of the universe and so powerful that everything comes into existence just because He speaks it.

And now, imagine two small creatures on a small planet in the vast expanse of the universe rebel against God and choose

²¹⁰ Psalm 33:6

their own way rather than His perfect way. It would be like two microscopic viruses on the surface of a single grain of sand down at the beach. How easy would it have been for God to just blot out their existence?

But no, God had a greater plan. Instead of blotting out those two specks and their planet (so insignificant in the expanse of the universe), God decided that He was going to become one of them in an attempt to rescue and redeem them from their rebellion and restore them to friendship with Himself.

An angel was sent to Mary, and when she consented to be a part of God's plan to become man, God packaged Himself in a single cell in Mary's womb. God, who is greater than the universe we have been talking about, became the smallest, most insignificant, and vulnerable form of life possible—a single cell.

That cell divided from one into two, then two into four, then four into eight cells. It became a morula and then a blastula and started to form ectoderm, mesoderm, and endoderm. It started to form a vertebral column and a head and then budded legs and arms and eventually feet and hands. Its heart began to beat, and its bones began to form. It twitched and moved and sucked its thumb, all inside of Mary's womb.

Then one day, it happened. After a bumpy ride on a donkey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, baby Jesus was born. But it was a cold, dismal, uncaring world that He was born into. No royalty of earth came to greet the newborn Savior, only animals and lowly shepherds. Jesus' only place to sleep was an animal's feeding trough.

Poor as they were, it was not likely an easy existence for Joseph and Mary in Bethlehem. Joseph probably had to work hard and long to try to support the family and find a place for them to stay, for the stable could only be lived in for a short time.

None of the religious leaders came to see and worship the God-man who had come into the world. Everyone around only

saw a typical baby. No one, including Jesus' parents, really understood the significance of Who He really was.

By the age of two, His life was threatened, and His family had to flee for their lives, exiles in a foreign land. And when they returned home, there was no greeting party to meet them and escort them to the palace in Jerusalem. So, they lived a life of common laborers in Nazareth. Unrecognized and unappreciated.

Jesus' life was lived to bless and lift up others. Everything He did was for the sake of helping others. He thought of them, prayed for them, treated them as they should be treated, and sacrificed Himself for their good. But all the time, He was misunderstood and treated with suspicion and even hatred.

The religious leaders were constantly sending spies to catch Him in His words so that they could condemn Him to death. Several times, His Father had to miraculously preserve His life, because the people hated Him for what He said and tried to stone Him or throw Him off of a cliff.

Was He discouraged by this? Did He stop His work and go back to heaven to leave us to our stubborn, sin-filled, rebellious lives? No! "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."²¹¹

Man's rebellion earned for him the penalty of death, and Jesus must come to pay that penalty for man, the innocent for the guilty. Jesus' perfect life earned for Him the reward of eternal life, and He came to give that reward to man. Jesus could not succeed in His mission to rescue us if He sinned—even once. Nor could He succeed in His mission if He did not die the death we deserve. The mission must be complete.

Rejected and despised by those He came to save, He had only thoughts of good for them and acted only for their restoration. But

²¹¹ John 3:16

men misinterpreted His works and motives, and they would not allow themselves to be convicted by His perfect life that their lives were sinful and deserving of death. He came as the light of the world, but they loved the darkness and would not come to the light.

So, in the dark of night, they came and arrested Him. During the night, they arraigned Him before the highest council of their nation. They condemned Him before the Romans. They called for His death, saying, “His blood be on us and on our children.”²¹² With a cat o’ nine tails, he was whipped 78 times, turning His back and sides into a bruised and bloody mess. Thorns were twisted into a make-shift crown and then pounded into his head with the blows of a staff.

He was mocked, spat upon, punched, and kicked. Pieces of His beard were ripped out, and eventually, those hands which had been so busy helping others were nailed to the cross. Those feet which had walked so far to reach others with messages of love and restoration, were spiked to that tree. The One who had only love was shown only hatred. The One who sought to restore was the object of destruction.

But far beyond the physical pain and torture that He endured, the torture of Jesus’ soul was the hiding of His Father’s face. As Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself—as He became sin for us—those sins separated Him, who had always been one with the Father, from His Father. He became the object of His Father’s wrath against sin and suffered the second death for each of us.

Why? Why go through the torture? Why suffer so much? Why pay such a tremendous price? “For God *so loved* the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should

²¹² Matthew 27:25

not perish but have everlasting life.”²¹³ Praise God that He loves us so much!

The Worth of a Soul

So, how much are you worth? You are worth the life of Christ! Why are you worth the life of Christ? Because He was willing to pay that price for you. And why was He willing to pay that price for you? Because He knew you *are* worth the price He paid for you. You see, God doesn't pay for trash. He pays exactly what it is worth.

It was a patient of mine that helped me to understand this concept more clearly. He was dying of cancer, and I was treating him at the end of his life. And while I was trying to be a blessing to him, he was a blessing to me. The following concept came from him.

How many people have there been on this planet since Adam and Eve until now? Let us just imagine that it is 20 billion people. What is the average lifespan of people from creation until now? Most people before the flood lived over 900 years, but there have been many children since who died shortly after birth. Let us say that the average life span is 100 years. So, 20 billion people living an average of 100 years would then represent 2 trillion human life-years.

And what has been accomplished in the last 6,000 years by 20 billion people over 2 trillion life-years? See the advancements that have been made, books written, devices developed, infrastructure constructed, etc.

Now, take one person and give them eternal life. When Jesus comes, they are resurrected and go with Him to heaven. They live 1,000 years, 2,000 years, and 5,000 years. They live 10,000 years, 100,000 years, and a million years. They live 2 million, then 5 million, then 10 million. They live 100 million, a billion, 10 billion and 100 billion. They live a trillion years and then 2 trillion years.

²¹³ John 3:16

Then they live 3 trillion years, 5 trillion, 100 trillion, a quadrillion, quintillion, sextillion, septillion, octillion, nonillion and decillion years.

Eventually, a single individual, saved in eternity, will accomplish infinitely more than all that humanity has accomplished since creation until now. God knew what you were worth, and He paid the price that you were worth.

Treat It Like It's Worth It

Let us imagine that we have two vases. One is from Walmart and costs \$1. The other is Ming Dynasty and is worth \$3,500,000. Would you treat each of the vases the same? They both have the same function. They are both vases. They both can hold water or marbles or plants or other things. They can both be placed in the middle of the table to hold something beautiful or interesting to look at. But, while they both have the same function, their value is significantly different.

Would you put water and flowers in the Ming Dynasty vase? Would you carry it around the house over your tile floors? Would you clean it in the sink like you do the Walmart vase? Would you leave the flowers to rot in it? Would you leave it on the edge of the bookshelf where it could possibly be knocked off? No! You wouldn't do any of those things.

You would protect the Ming Dynasty vase. You wouldn't put anything inside of it. You probably wouldn't touch it without gloves on your hands. You would make sure that if it is ever moved, it is done with utmost care and caution. You would probably keep it in a prominent place where there would be virtually no possibility of it falling and breaking.

Something's perceived value determines how you treat it. What is your value? You are worth the life of Christ. So, how should you treat yourself? You should treat yourself like you're worth the price He paid for you.

If you are worth the life of Christ, shouldn't that change how you treat yourself? Shouldn't that change what you eat and drink? Shouldn't that change how you dress and speak? Shouldn't that change how you exercise and rest? Shouldn't that change how you think and act?

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”²¹⁴ “Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”²¹⁵

How much are others worth? Regardless of their situation in life or how degraded they have become through poor choices and difficult circumstances; every human being is worth the life of Christ. And if that is so, how will you treat them? You will treat them according to the value that they have in Christ. You will love them, respect them, treat them well, and sacrifice for their restoration.

“The value of a soul, who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross. Hear that despairing cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Mark 15:34. Look upon the wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet. Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul.”²¹⁶

²¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:19,20

²¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:31

²¹⁶ White, E.G. (1900). *Christ's Object Lessons*. (p. 196). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

A Love that Surrenders

4. Surrender My Life Entirely to Him

The Wheelbarrow

On June 30, 1859, about 25,000 people gathered to watch French acrobat and tightrope walker, Charles Blondin, attempt to cross Niagara Falls. As this particular version of the story goes, Blondin first attempted to cross the falls with his 50lb balancing pole, successfully passing from America to Canada. He returned to America on the tightrope using only his arms to balance. Next, he crossed pushing a wheelbarrow in front of him. Then he went out on the line and juggled while he walked. For the grand finale, he did a flip and successfully landed on the line.

The crowd, however, wanted more. So Blondin thought for a while and came up with a plan. He would put someone in the wheelbarrow and push them across the falls to the other side. Blondin asked, “Who believes I can push someone safely across in the wheelbarrow?” The crowd cheered and applauded at the idea. Then Blondin called to the crowd, “Who will volunteer to get into the wheelbarrow?” Suddenly, everything went silent. No one volunteered. You see, it’s one thing to say you believe something, its entirely different to act on it!

Jesus has made it safely across the chasm of sin. He has proved that He can do it. We have proved that we cannot. The only way we are going to get across is if He takes us across. He offers to bring us across (grace), knowing that we cannot make it ourselves. But in order to take us across, we have to exercise faith. Faith is

not standing on the ground, looking up at Jesus and saying, “Yes, I believe you can get me across.” Faith is *getting into* the wheelbarrow. And that is absolutely terrifying! Because when you are faced with the decision to get into the wheelbarrow, it feels like you will lose all control of your life.

I remember when I was challenged with this decision. I had grown up in church, but I had some addictions that I couldn’t overcome. My life began spinning out of control, and I found myself on the verge of leaving my family and plunging into my addictions without restraint. At that point, I was confronted and challenged to give God another try. I thought I had “tried” God before, but this time I was challenged to give up all control of my life. For the first time in my life, I found myself in a situation that I couldn’t get out of, and I realized that I had no answers. I was destroying my life and hurting my loved ones, and if I continued on my current course, I was going to kill myself.

I was challenged to “get into the wheelbarrow.” I realized that if I was to make that decision, I would no longer have control of my life. Figuratively, I looked God in the eye at that moment and said, “I don’t know if I can trust you. I know you want me to get into the wheelbarrow, but I don’t know if I can trust you to not drop me.” God reminded me that I was inevitably going to destroy myself if I continued to be in control, and that with Him there was a chance of success. So, I made the decision. No matter what You ask me to do, I will do it. No matter what You ask me to stop, I will stop it. No matter what You ask me to give up, I will give it up. If You want my entertainment, You can have it. If You want my thoughts, You can have them. If You want my reputation, You can have it. If You want anything...You can have it. Just save me from this mess!

It was only when I “got into the wheelbarrow” that I began to successfully overcome. It was only then that I could successfully take of God’s love, so that it became mine. What about you? What are you struggling with? What have you never been able to

overcome? Isn't it time for you to get into the wheelbarrow? You can't make it on your own. You need Him. Won't you make the decision to give Him everything and get into the wheelbarrow? I can tell you from my experience, it is well worth getting into the wheelbarrow. God won't drop you.

While we talk about riding in the wheelbarrow, the reality is that once we get into the wheelbarrow, we are now standing on the tightrope. We now have access to Jesus' balance. And we walk across, with Jesus as our guide, protector, and companion. We still retain control of our own decisions, but they are now surrendered to Him. He leads and empowers. We follow. Success is the result.

Getting into the Wheelbarrow

Growing up, I struggled to overcome self and sin. I struggled with several addictions, and while I liked the idea of serving God and obtaining heaven, I just couldn't seem to overcome. I did grow up going to church, so I would read in my Bible about people who were victorious in their lives. I read about Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Joseph, Moses, and Daniel. I read about Peter, Paul, Timothy, and Luke. I went to church with people who appeared to be victorious in their personal lives, and I wanted that victory. As I contemplated the victorious lives of others, I saw that there were some common themes in how they lived.

People living in the land of victory would pray. People in the land of victory would read scripture. People in the land of victory would serve others. And people in the land of victory would obey God. Observing their lives and wanting to be victorious myself, I thought, "If the people who are victorious pray, read scripture, serve, and obey, then if I want to overcome, I must pray, read scripture, serve, and obey."

So, I started on my journey from the land of defeat to the land of victory. I prayed. I read my Bible. I got involved in service

projects. I tried to obey. But with every attempt to get into the land of victory, I always failed. It seemed to me like there was a thin, transparent, dividing line between myself and my attempts to overcome and those who were living victorious lives. I couldn't really see the difference between the two, and it frustrated me that I couldn't overcome. I began to think that I was just a defective model. "It works for others, but it doesn't work for me." "Maybe I'm predestined to failure and being lost." "Maybe I've already committed the unpardonable sin, and there's no hope for me." All of these thoughts and more confronted me as I continually failed at overcoming.

What I didn't realize was that the difference between the attempt to overcome by prayer, scripture reading, service, and obedience, and the life of victory which included prayer, scripture reading, service and obedience, was not a thin, transparent dividing line. It was a vast canyon—a canyon so large and deep and treacherous and wide that no one could possibly get across.

On the other side of this vast canyon in the land of victory, people prayed earnestly and with faith. They read their Bibles and loved what they read. They were naturally involved in serving others. And they obeyed the Lord joyfully.

But over in the land of defeat, there was a different experience. In the land of defeat, it was like I was practicing for the long jump. I used to compete in the long jump in high school. The first time I tried the long jump, I didn't do so well. But I practiced, and learned some techniques to help me jump farther. And as I exercised, built up strength and agility, and honed my technique more, I could jump a little farther and a little farther.

So, in the land of defeat I practiced so that I could jump over into the land of victory. I prayed. I read scripture. I participated in service projects and went on mission trips. And I tried to obey, all in an attempt to get over into the land of victory. When it didn't work, I tried again. I learned a new, improved way to pray, I

learned different ways to study scripture. I signed up for international mission trips. And I tried and tried to obey.

Then I looked around and realized that there were other people who were doing the same thing. I had been practicing the long jump for a long time, and I could jump pretty far. But those people, they hadn't been at it very long, and they couldn't jump very far. I looked at them and thought to myself, "Look at those poor people. They really need to practice more! Look how bad at this they are! I'm so glad I'm better at this than they are!" And in my pride, I was just like the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:10-14, "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Unfortunately, I have found myself in this situation of judgmental attitudes too many times in my life—looking down upon others because they aren't as "good" as I am or don't have the same "good" practices that I do. Paul tells us, "But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."²¹⁷

How foolish is this?! Both of us are standing on the edge of an impassible canyon, and I think that I'm better than you because I can jump farther. But both of us are going to fall into the depths of the canyon to our deaths, because neither of us can possibly

²¹⁷ 2 Corinthians 10:12

jump across the canyon. What does it matter if I can jump a few more feet than you, if both of us will die when we jump?

As long as I am trusting in anything that I can do—prayer, Bible study, service, or obedience, I am practicing for and participating in the long jump. It doesn't matter if I am trusting in myself and these things 100%, 50%, or even 1%—if I am trusting in myself and my practice of these things to any degree, I am in long jump mode, and I will never get across the canyon. The canyon is impassible by my own efforts.

But Jesus knew this, and that is why He came and lived a perfect life in human flesh and died the death that we deserve on the cross. Jesus spanned the canyon with the tightrope of His perfect life to make a way across the canyon. And He stands at the edge of the canyon on the tightrope holding a wheelbarrow, inviting you to get in. That wheelbarrow represents faith—a faith that trusts in Jesus and surrenders my life to Him.

On the other side, in the land of victory, people pray, read their Bibles, serve, and obey, but they do not trust in these things to get them across the canyon. There is 0% trust in self, prayer, Bible reading, service, or obedience, to get across the canyon. Only in the wheelbarrow, with 100% trust in Jesus, can I get across the canyon to victory.

So, what are you not willing to do to be free—to be victorious? Maybe you aren't willing to give up your entertainment. Maybe you aren't willing to give up your career. Maybe you aren't willing to give up your friends or family, because they will reject you if you follow Jesus. Maybe you aren't willing to give up _____ (you fill in the blank). Whatever you answer that question with—whatever you are not willing to give up —is the very thing that will keep you from getting to the other side. It is the very thing that will keep you out of the land of victory.

Getting into the wheelbarrow is an act of faith, and it is potentially one of the most frightening decisions that you and I

will make in our lives. Because, in our delusional state, the thought of getting into the wheelbarrow represents the complete loss of the control of our lives. It seems like someone else will make all the decisions for us. But in reality, I never lose control of my decisions. I just surrender my decisions to God, trusting that He has better plans for me than I have for myself.

Getting into the wheelbarrow represents complete surrender of myself, my wishes, my desires, my plans, my dreams, my aspirations, and my life to Christ. I am willing to do anything that God asks me to. I am willing to give up anything He asks me to give up. I am willing to face shame, embarrassment, ridicule, suffering, and even death if necessary. I just want to be free. I just want to be victorious. I just want the joy and peace that I have always needed but never possessed with any consistency.

There are two realities that help in this decision. First, if I remain in control of my life and stuck in the land of defeat, I will die and be lost eternally, regardless of whether I go to church (you aren't saved by going to church), profess to be a Christian (I can profess I am a Christian and live like the devil. Profession proves nothing.), or live a "good" life ("There is none who does good, no, not one."²¹⁸ "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."²¹⁹ "No one is good but One, that is, God."²²⁰ "But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags...."²²¹). I am lost, hopelessly lost, on my own. I cannot save myself. I cannot get to the land of victory on my own.

Second, the land of victory contains everything that I need. There is where perfect love abides. There is where one has and retains peace. There is where perfect joy abides. There is where you find freedom from the past. There is forgiveness for all.

²¹⁸ Romans 3:12

²¹⁹ Romans 3:23

²²⁰ Matthew 19:17

²²¹ Isaiah 64:6

There is where you become free—truly free. There is heaven. There is eternal life. There is where Jesus abides with and in His people.

You may ask, “How do I get into the wheelbarrow? How do I surrender completely?” Imagine with me a large rope hanging down into a vast dark space. You are there, clinging to the rope. You cannot see or hear anything. You do not know where you are in space in relation to anything else. You try to climb the rope, but there is some ceiling above you that you cannot get around. You work your way to the bottom of the rope and stretch as far as you can to see if your toes touch something. They don’t. You try swinging from side to side to see if you can feel anything around you that you might be able to grab on to or land on, but you don’t find anything.

In this scenario, you can hold on to the rope indefinitely without getting tired and falling off. In fact, you can die holding on to the rope.

Then you hear God’s voice say, “Let go of the rope.” And you start thinking, “How far is the ground below me? Will I land on flat solid ground? Will it be jagged and rough? Will it be bouncy and soft? Will it be watery and wet? Is it 2 inches below me, 2 feet below me, or 2 miles below me? Will it hurt? Will I break? Will I drown? Will I die?”

You ask God for answers, but He is silent. You simply have the request, “Let go of the rope.” So, you must ask, “Can I trust myself to God, that when He asks me to let go, it will be okay to let go? Will He take care of the consequences that I do not know about and cannot control? Am I willing to potentially face death and the loss of all things and follow His advice to let go?

You can ask all the questions you want to ask. You can think through all of the scenarios that you want to think through. You can try to intellectually understand everything involved in the process before you let go. But all of this will simply delay your obedience

and your freedom. You don't need to figure it out or understand it all. You simply need to obey. You simply need to let go.

Surrender—getting into the wheelbarrow—is not *wanting* to let go. It is not *thinking about* letting go. It is not *agreeing* to let go. It is not even *trying* to let go. Surrender—getting into the wheelbarrow—is simply letting go. And only letting go gets you into the wheelbarrow. Because, when you let go of the rope, you land in the wheelbarrow, and Jesus takes you across the canyon on the tightrope of His perfect life. He makes it work.

“If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.”²²²

“All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us.”²²³

Letting go of the rope is taking up your cross and following Christ. “Then He said to them all, ‘If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.’”²²⁴

Taking up your cross and following Christ is not about taking up duties and responsibilities that are burdensome and dragging

²²² White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 54). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

²²³ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 668). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²²⁴ Luke 9:23

along behind Christ. No! Never! Taking up your cross is about giving up and letting go of the rope. It is about surrendering all of your hopes, wishes, plans, dreams, and aspirations to Christ and letting Him determine the direction and path of your life, whatever may come. Taking up the cross is about surrender.

Jesus wants to accomplish for us things that are infinitely greater than we are looking for ourselves, and in order to do that we must surrender what we want and what we hope for so that He can replace those with His thoughts and plans for us. “‘For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’”²²⁵

As we surrender entirely to Him, we are grafted into Christ, and we begin to produce His fruit in our lives, for He lives through us. What kind of fruit do we produce? We produce the fruit of the Spirit. “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”²²⁶ And how many of these fruits will be seen in our lives? Will it only be one or two? No. It will be all of them.

“‘Abide in Me, and I in you.’ Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character. The root sends its nourishment through the branch to the outermost twig. So Christ communicates the current of spiritual strength to every believer. So long as the soul is united to Christ, there is no danger that it will wither or decay. The life of the vine will be manifest in fragrant fruit on the branches. “He

²²⁵ Isaiah 55:8,9

²²⁶ Galatians 5:22,23

that abideth in Me,” said Jesus, “and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.” When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in our lives; not one will be missing.”²²⁷

When we are saved by such a loving God and we are released from the failure and misery that our lives have been, won't we express gratefulness to the God who set us free? Won't we live differently than we did before? No longer will we live for ourselves. We will live for Him. No longer will any task or duty be burdensome because it will be done from love to the One who set us free. We will eat what He created us to eat and drink what He created us to drink and wear what He desires us to wear. We will no longer be a slave to appetite and taste. We will no longer be a slave to fashion and entertainment. We will no longer be a slave to sinful pleasures and earthly powers. We will gladly do what is necessary to keep ourselves in good health, because our bodies are His temple.

When that great salvation becomes ours, we will love those whom He loves and sacrifice ourselves for them, not out of duty, but out of love. We will love what God loves, because He loves it, and we will hate what God hates, because He hates it. Our lives will be entirely transformed, because of love. And in that love, there will be great joy and peace, the ability to suffer long for others, and kindness for others, goodness of life, faithfulness to God, gentleness to all, and self-control.

“If they would open their hearts fully to receive Christ, then the very life of God, His love, would dwell in them, transforming them into His own likeness; and thus through God's free gift they would possess the righteousness which the law requires.”²²⁸

²²⁷ White, E.G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 676). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

²²⁸ White, E.G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 54). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

CHAPTER TWELVE

A Love that Thinks Well

The Battlefield of the Mind

Throughout this book, we have been studying the Law of Life. We have seen that health, relationships, freedom, forgiveness, and victory are all connected to love. We have explored the difference between human love and divine love. We have discovered that God's design is not that we would give in order to receive, but that we would take from Him in order to give to others.

But there is an important question that remains. Where does this process actually occur? Where do we take from God? Where do we choose our source? Where do we decide whether we will live according to the old heart or the new heart? The answer is found in the mind.

Many people focus primarily on behavior. They want to stop doing certain things, start doing certain things, overcome particular habits, or correct particular actions. While behavior certainly matters, behavior is never the root problem. Behavior is simply the visible fruit of an invisible process occurring within the mind.

Everything begins with thought. Before an action is performed, it is imagined, considered, evaluated, and chosen. Before words are spoken, they are first thoughts. Before habits are formed, they are repeated thoughts. Before relationships are damaged, unhealthy thoughts are entertained. Before relationships are healed, healthier thoughts replace unhealthy ones.

The mind is the battlefield upon which the great controversy between Christ and Satan is fought. It is in the mind that truth and

error compete for supremacy. It is in the mind that faith either takes hold of God's promises or rejects them. It is in the mind that we choose our source.

This is why Scripture repeatedly emphasizes the importance of thinking. Paul writes, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."²²⁹ Again, he says, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind."²³⁰ And Solomon tells us, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."²³¹

Notice that Scripture teaches that a person becomes like what he consistently thinks about.²³² This truth is both encouraging and sobering. It is encouraging because change is possible. It is sobering because much of what we experience in life is connected to the thoughts that continually occupy our minds.

Not every thought which enters our minds belongs there. Temptations come. Suggestions come. Memories arise. But what we choose to dwell upon gradually shapes our character. The old saying is true. You cannot prevent a bird from flying over your head, but you can prevent it from building a nest in your hair. Thoughts are similar. Some thoughts arrive uninvited. Our responsibility begins when we decide whether to entertain them.

The challenge, however, is that we have a problem. We do not understand our own minds nearly as well as we think we do.

The Deceptive Heart

One of the most startling statements in all of Scripture is found in Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" Most people believe they understand themselves, but very few actually do.

²²⁹ Philippians 2:5

²³⁰ Romans 12:2

²³¹ Proverbs 23:7

²³² See 2 Corinthians 3:18

Many people can explain why another person reacted poorly. They can identify character flaws in spouses, children, coworkers, church members, politicians, neighbors, and strangers. Yet when it comes to understanding themselves, they are remarkably blind.

We each have an extraordinary ability to justify ourselves. We explain our anger. We excuse our impatience. We rationalize our fears. We defend our selfishness. We blame our circumstances. We point to other people. And all the while we remain largely ignorant of what is happening inside our own hearts. This condition affects all of us. None of us are exempt.

Think about how easy it is to become accustomed to something that is constantly present. When I first received glasses, they felt awkward. I could feel them sitting on my nose. I noticed the pressure behind my ears. I was aware of them constantly. But after a few days, I stopped noticing them. The glasses remained exactly where they had always been. Nothing about them had changed. What changed was my awareness. My mind became so familiar with their presence that it ignored them.

The same thing happens with character defects. We live with ourselves all day, every day, year after year. Because of this constant exposure, we gradually lose awareness of many of our faults. We may become highly sensitive to the faults of others while remaining remarkably insensitive to our own.

This is why Jesus asked: “Why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?”²³³ The problem is not merely that we have flaws. The problem is that we often do not know we have them.

The human heart is so deceptive that, left to ourselves, we can sincerely believe we are doing well while moving steadily in the wrong direction. Therefore, if we are ever going to understand our hearts, we must have help from outside ourselves. David

²³³ Matthew 7:3

understood this principle. That is why he prayed, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”²³⁴

Notice that David did not merely ask God to change his heart. First, he asked God to reveal it. This is where transformation begins. No one seeks a cure for a disease they do not know they have. No one repairs a defect they cannot see. No one surrenders a problem they do not recognize. Before God can heal the heart, He must first reveal the heart. And how does He do that?

While God uses many methods to reveal character, there are three primary ways that He commonly exposes what is hidden in the heart: trials, the body, and our treasure. Let us begin with the first.

Trials Reveal the Heart

Most people dislike trials. I certainly do. When difficulties come, our immediate response is often to ask, “Why is this happening to me?” But what if the trial is actually answering that question? What if one of God’s purposes in allowing difficulties is not merely to test us, but to reveal us to ourselves?

Consider a simple illustration. Imagine that I have a cup sitting on a table. Inside the cup is water. If someone bumps the table and water spills everywhere, why is water on the floor? Most people would answer, “Because the table was bumped.” But that is not entirely true.

The bump did not create the water. The bump merely revealed what was already inside the cup. If milk had been inside, milk would have come out. If juice had been inside, juice would have come out. The bump only exposed what was already present.

Human beings work in very much the same way. When life goes smoothly, we can convince ourselves that we are doing quite

²³⁴ Psalm 139:23-24

well. Then someone criticizes us. Someone misunderstands us. Someone rejects us. Someone embarrasses us. Someone ignores us. Someone treats us unfairly. And suddenly something spills out of us. Anger. Bitterness. Defensiveness. Self-pity. Resentment. Fear. Why did it come out? Because it was already there. The trial did not create it. The trial revealed it.

This understanding has transformed the way I view difficulties. Instead of focusing primarily on what the other person did, I try to ask a different question: “Lord, what are You showing me about my heart?” That question changes everything. The irritation becomes information. The frustration becomes revelation. The trial becomes a diagnostic tool. Rather than simply enduring the experience, I can learn from it.

When something unpleasant comes out of me, I no longer need to spend all my energy explaining why it happened. Instead, I can bring it honestly before God. “Lord, I see anger. Lord, I see fear. Lord, I see pride. Lord, I see insecurity. Why is that there?”

This perspective turns trials into one of God’s greatest instruments for character development. He is not trying merely to make life difficult. He is attempting to show us what otherwise might remain hidden. The trial is not the problem. The trial is the flashlight. It illuminates what is already present within the heart. And once something is exposed to the light, God can begin the work of healing it.

The Body Reveals the Heart

There is another way God often reveals what is happening within us, and that is through the body.

Now, before we go any further, I want to be very clear. Not every disease originates in the mind. We have already discussed this earlier in the book. Some diseases are related to inheritance. Some are the result of environmental factors. Some involve toxins, injuries, or other physical causes. Yet we must also acknowledge another reality.

The mind and body are intimately connected. God never designed them to function independently of one another. Thoughts influence physiology. Beliefs influence behavior. Attitudes influence hormones, nervous system activity, immune function, digestion, sleep, and countless other bodily processes. The body faithfully records what is taking place in the mind.

One reason I pay attention to the body is because the body cannot deceive itself the way the heart does. Suppose I write a sentence on a piece of paper. The paper itself does not know what I wrote. The paper has no awareness of whether the sentence contains truth or error. Yet the paper accurately records what was written on it. The paper cannot lie. It faithfully reflects the message placed upon it.

The body functions similarly. The body simply responds to the inputs it receives. It honestly displays the consequences of what has been happening internally. While the mind may justify, excuse, deny, rationalize, or reinterpret reality, the body often tells the truth.

Many times I have encountered individuals who insist they have forgiven someone, yet their body tells a different story. They insist they are at peace, but they cannot sleep. They insist they no longer resent what happened, but every conversation circles back to the same injury. They insist everything is fine, but chronic tension grips their muscles. Their digestion suffers. Their blood pressure remains elevated. Their immune system struggles.

Again, I am not suggesting that every physical symptom is caused by unresolved emotional conflict. Not at all. But I am suggesting that whenever the body is struggling, it is worthwhile to prayerfully ask: "Lord, is there something in my heart that I need to see?" That question has often revealed issues that otherwise would have remained hidden.

You see, the body makes a poor judge but an excellent witness. It cannot diagnose the spiritual problem. But it often testifies that one exists.

Rather than becoming angry with the symptoms, perhaps we should thank God for them. Just as pain warns us about a physical injury, symptoms alert us to deeper issues requiring attention. Instead of asking only, “How do I get rid of this symptom?” we should sometimes ask, “What is God trying to teach me through this?” That question opens the door to self-examination and growth. And that leads us to a third way that God reveals the heart.

The Treasure Reveals the Heart

Jesus said, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”²³⁵ This statement is one of the simplest and most powerful diagnostic tools ever given. Many people spend enormous amounts of energy trying to figure out what is most important to them. Jesus simplifies the process.

Look at your treasure. Your treasure reveals your heart. The problem is that we often misunderstand what treasure means. Treasure is not merely what we claim is important. Treasure is what actually occupies our time, energy, attention, resources, and thoughts.

Suppose someone tells me that God is the most important thing in their life. That may be true. But how would we know? Words alone are insufficient. If I want to discover my treasure, I must honestly examine my life. Where does my time go? What occupies my thoughts when I am alone? What dominates my conversations? Where do I invest my money? What excites me? What discourages me? What do I fear losing? The answers to these questions reveal my treasure.

Suppose someone spends hours every day thinking about money. Their emotional state rises and falls with financial circumstances. Their greatest joys revolve around financial

²³⁵ Matthew 6:21

success. Their greatest fears revolve around financial loss. What has become their treasure? Money.

Or perhaps someone spends most of their emotional energy seeking approval from others. Praise energizes them. Criticism devastates them. Rejection crushes them. Acceptance exhilarates them. What has become their treasure? Human approval.

The treasure may not be wrong in itself. The problem occurs when anything occupies the place that belongs only to God. Because whatever becomes our treasure becomes our master. And whatever becomes our master becomes our source.

When God is our treasure, our thinking begins to align with His thinking. But when something else becomes our treasure, our thinking gradually conforms to whatever we worship. This is why honest self-examination is so important. God is not asking us to condemn ourselves. He is asking us to understand ourselves. You cannot surrender an idol you have never recognized. You cannot relinquish a false treasure you refuse to acknowledge. God lovingly reveals what has occupied first place in the heart so that we can turn to Him as our only source.

Learning to Search the Heart

As I reflected upon these principles over the years, I began developing a habit. Each morning, during my prayer time with God, I review the previous day. I think through conversations. I think through my reactions. I think through significant moments. And I ask God two simple questions. First, “What legitimate need was I trying to fulfill?” And second: “How did my heart deceive me into trying to fulfill that need in the wrong way?” These two questions have become enormously valuable to me.

You see, most of our errors begin with legitimate needs. The need itself is not the problem. We all need love. We all need acceptance. We all need belonging. We all need security. We all need understanding. None of these needs are wrong.

The problem occurs when we seek to fulfill them from the wrong source. That is where deception enters. And that is why these questions are so powerful. Let me illustrate.

The Committee Meeting

Several years ago I was participating in a series of committee meetings. The day had been busy, and several meetings followed one another in rapid succession. After lunch, another committee convened. Many of the same people were present, and in an effort to move things along efficiently, I immediately began discussing the first agenda item.

A few moments later our vice president gently interrupted and said, “Mr. President, shouldn’t we begin with prayer?” Immediately an excuse came out of my mouth. I explained why I had moved ahead so quickly. I tried to justify what had happened. Someone prayed, the meeting continued, and everything appeared normal.

But something bothered me. It wasn’t the correction itself that bothered me. It was the excuse. Why had it come out so quickly? That night I couldn’t answer the question. The following morning, during my walk-and-talk time with God, I brought the situation to Him.

“Lord, why did I make that excuse?” At first, no answer came. So, I continued praying. Eventually another question formed in my mind: “What need were you trying to fulfill?” I thought about it for a while. Finally, I realized the answer. I was seeking acceptance and belonging.

Of course I need acceptance and belonging. Every human being does. But how did that produce the excuse? So, I kept praying. And eventually the answer became clear. I believed that my acceptance and belonging depended upon the people in that committee meeting. I believed that if I appeared inadequate, mistaken, careless, or flawed, I might lose their approval. So, when

the error was exposed, I instinctively defended myself. The excuse was an attempt to protect my source.

But that was the deception. They were never my source. God was. My acceptance in Christ was not threatened because I forgot to begin with prayer. My belonging in God's family was not threatened because someone corrected me. The correction exposed a false belief. I had sought from people what only God can securely provide.

Once I saw the issue, everything made sense. The mistake was not forgetting prayer. The real issue was the motive behind the excuse. God had allowed a simple, harmless correction to reveal something much deeper in my heart. And that is often how He works. He uses ordinary circumstances to expose hidden beliefs. Not to condemn us. Not to shame us. But to heal us.

The Legitimate Need Behind Every Wrong Response

One of the most helpful discoveries I have made in understanding the human heart is this: Every sinful response is an attempt to fulfill a legitimate need. Let me say that again. Every sinful response is an attempt to fulfill a legitimate need.

The need itself is not the problem. The problem is where we go to fulfill it.

You and I were created with genuine needs. We need acceptance. We need belonging. We need security. We need understanding. We need significance. We need love. None of these needs are sinful. God created us with them. The problem arises when the heart seeks to fulfill those needs from the wrong source.

Suppose someone criticizes you, and you immediately become defensive. What is the issue? Is defensiveness the primary issue? Not necessarily. Often defensiveness is an attempt to protect acceptance. You fear losing approval. You fear losing belonging. You fear losing significance. The behavior is the fruit. The need underneath is legitimate.

Or suppose someone becomes controlling. What often lies underneath control? Fear. And what lies beneath the fear? The desire for security. Security is a legitimate need. Control is an illegitimate method of trying to obtain it.

Or consider resentment. Why does resentment develop? Because someone violated an expectation. Perhaps they did not love us. Perhaps they did not respect us. Perhaps they abandoned us. The need beneath the resentment was often belonging, acceptance, understanding, or justice. Again, the need is legitimate. The source is wrong.

Satan doesn't deceive us by creating entirely new needs. Instead, he takes legitimate needs and redirects us toward illegitimate sources. He persuades us to seek from people what only God can adequately provide. The result is frustration.

Human beings make poor gods. They were never designed to function as our source. They cannot consistently supply what they themselves need.

The more I have worked with people, the more convinced I have become that many of life's conflicts can be traced back to this simple problem. We are asking people to do what only God can do. And because they cannot perform the role we have assigned to them, both parties become frustrated.

This is why heart examination is so important. When something spills out of me, I ask, "What need was I attempting to fulfill?" Then I ask, "Why was I seeking it there instead of from God?" Those questions often reveal the true issue.

Learning to Think Like God Thinks

Once God reveals the deception, another challenge presents itself. We must learn to think differently. Many people want different feelings. Others want different circumstances. Some want different relationships. But God begins somewhere else. He starts with our thinking.

The reason is simple. If the thinking remains unchanged, eventually the same feelings, behaviors, and conflicts will reappear. A new life requires a new way of thinking. Paul writes: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”²³⁶ That statement is far more profound than we often realize. God does not merely want us to imitate Christ’s actions. He wants us to participate in Christ’s thinking. He wants us to see situations as Christ sees them. He wants us to evaluate people as Christ evaluates them. He wants us to respond as Christ responds.

This is one reason I spend so much time encouraging people to contemplate the life of Jesus. The more we behold Him, the more clearly we understand how different His thinking is from ours.

We naturally look for faults. Christ looked for opportunities to save. We naturally focus on offenses. Christ focused on redemption. We naturally highlight weaknesses. Christ saw potential. We naturally think about what others have done to us. Christ thought about what He could do for them. The difference is enormous. And yet this is the very mind God desires to place within us.

What Does God See?

Consider for a moment how God looks at people. When we look at others, we usually see behavior. God sees something much deeper. We see the addict. God sees a son or daughter worth rescuing. We see the criminal. God sees someone worth dying for. We see the failure. God sees the potential restoration. We see what a person currently is. God sees what they can become through His grace. This difference of perspective changes everything.

Imagine someone you struggle with. Someone who has hurt you greatly. Someone difficult to like. Perhaps difficult even to

²³⁶ Philippians 2:5

tolerate. Now ask yourself this question: Why does God love them? Not whether He loves them. Why. That question can be surprisingly difficult to answer. And yet learning to answer that question is one of the most important exercises we can undertake. It teaches us to see through Heaven's eyes rather than our own.

The Woman Who Could Not Find Anything Good

Several years ago I worked with a woman suffering from severe digestive distress. She experienced significant gastritis and reflux symptoms. Multiple treatments had been attempted without lasting success. As I spent time talking with her, another issue became apparent.

She harbored profound bitterness toward her former husband. Every conversation eventually returned to him. Everything that had gone wrong seemed connected to him. The emotions were still alive. The wounds were still fresh. The resentment remained powerful.

As we talked, I suggested an exercise. I asked her to go and write down two positive things about her ex-husband. When she returned, she had nothing. Not one thing. At first this surprised me. Then I realized what was happening. She was not incapable of identifying something positive. She was unwilling.

Her bitterness had become so firmly established that she no longer viewed him as a complete human being. She saw only his failures. She saw only his weaknesses. She saw only his mistakes.

So, I gave her a different assignment. I asked her, "Does God love your ex-husband?"

She immediately answered, "Yes." There was no hesitation. "Of course God loves him. God loves everyone."

Then I asked, "What does God love about him?" That question stopped her. Eventually she admitted she did not know.

So, I asked her to make this her prayer assignment: “God, what do You love about him?” Then write down at least two things God loves about her ex-husband.

The following appointment arrived. Again, she had no answer. The next appointment came. Still no answer. Why? Because she was still unwilling to see him through God’s eyes.

Please understand. I am not defending his mistakes. I am not minimizing any pain he may have caused. I am not suggesting that wrong behavior should be ignored. But there is a tremendous difference between recognizing a person’s faults and reducing them to nothing but their faults. That is what bitterness does.

Bitterness narrows our vision. It progressively removes every positive feature from our perception until all we can see is what hurts us. The result is that we no longer think about the person as God thinks about them. And because our thoughts move farther and farther away from God’s thoughts, our hearts move farther and farther away from His heart.

The tragedy was not simply that she could not identify a positive quality. The tragedy was that she could no longer see what God saw. As long as that remained true, healing could not fully occur.

Love always sees more than failure. Love sees value. Love sees possibility. Love sees redemption. God saw enough value in that man to die for him. Until she was willing to see him through the same lens, bitterness retained its hold.

Why This Matters

Some people might wonder why this issue is so important. After all, isn’t it enough simply to avoid saying negative things? Isn’t it enough simply to behave politely? No. Because God is not merely interested in modifying behavior. He is transforming character. The goal is not merely that we refrain from speaking evil. The goal is that we genuinely begin to think differently.

The heart of divine love thinks well. Not because it is naïve. Not because it ignores reality. Not because it pretends sin does not exist. It thinks well because it sees people through the perspective of their value to God.

Christ looked upon a thief and saw a future citizen of Heaven. He looked upon a persecutor and saw an apostle. He looked upon fishermen and saw leaders. He looked upon failures and saw possibilities. This is how divine love thinks.

This is how God desires us to think, for when our thoughts begin changing, our responses begin changing. When our responses begin changing, our relationships begin changing. And when our relationships begin changing, the Law of Life begins expressing itself through us.

What Others Reveal About Themselves

One of the most liberating truths I have ever learned is this: What comes out of others reveals what is in them. It does not primarily reveal anything about me. Years ago, this simple realization changed the way I think about criticism, conflict, rejection, and mistreatment.

Remember, it doesn't matter what knocks the glass over. What comes out of the glass is simply the result of what was in the glass before it was knocked over.

The same principle applies to people. When someone speaks harshly, why did harshness come out? Because harshness was inside. When someone speaks words of encouragement, why did encouragement come out? Because encouragement was inside. When someone responds with anger, bitterness, condemnation, manipulation, or resentment, those things come out because they were already present within the heart.

Jesus said: “For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”²³⁷ Think about the implications of this. Suppose someone says something cruel to me. My natural tendency is to interpret their words as a statement about me. But in reality, their words reveal far more about them than about me. The response came from what was inside of them.

This does not excuse wrongdoing. Neither does it remove accountability. But it changes how I interpret what happened. It allows me to stop assuming that everything is about me. Instead, I can begin seeing others as God sees them. Broken. Wounded. Confused. Afraid. Needing grace. Needing healing. Needing a Savior.

The moment we begin viewing others through that lens, our responses change dramatically. We become less offended and more compassionate, less defensive and more understanding, less judgmental and more merciful. The issue becomes less about what they did to me and more about what God needs to do in them. That change alone brings enormous freedom.

What My Responses Reveal About Me

But the same principle also works in reverse. What comes out of me reveals what is inside of me. This is the part we often do not like. It is much easier to analyze everyone else’s heart. It is much harder to examine our own. Yet God’s purpose in every trial is not simply to reveal the other person’s condition. His primary purpose is often to reveal mine.

Suppose someone criticizes me. I immediately become defensive. Why? Because defensiveness was already there.

Suppose someone ignores me. I become hurt. Why? Because something within me interpreted the experience through a particular belief system.

²³⁷ Matthew 12:34

Suppose someone succeeds where I wanted to succeed. I become jealous. Why? Because jealousy was already present. The external event simply revealed the internal reality.

This understanding changes how I approach conflict. Instead of spending all my energy trying to diagnose others, I begin asking: “Lord, why did I respond that way? What does my response reveal? What are You trying to show me about my own heart?” These questions transform trials from enemies into teachers.

What once appeared to be interruptions become opportunities. Opportunities for God to reveal hidden fears. Hidden insecurities. Hidden selfishness. Hidden pride. Not so that He can condemn me. But so that He can heal me. Every revealed defect becomes an invitation for transformation.

Receiving the Mind of Christ

Once God reveals the heart, and once we become willing to see ourselves honestly, a beautiful promise appears before us. God does not merely show us our defects. He offers His own mind in their place. When God says, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”²³⁸ He is not asking us to manufacture Christlike thinking. He is not asking us to produce divine love from ourselves. He is not asking us to force ourselves into a different character. He is offering us the mind of Christ.

The same Christ who could look at those driving nails through His hands and pray: “Father, forgive them.”²³⁹ The same Christ who looked upon Judas and still loved him. The same Christ who looked upon Peter after Peter’s denial and offered compassion instead of condemnation. The same Christ who thought continually of others instead of Himself.

Where do we find the mind of Christ perfectly manifested? It is in the Bible. The Bible contains God’s thoughts. And the Bible becomes the key to overcoming negative thoughts.

²³⁸ Philippians 2:5

²³⁹ Luke 23:34

Overcoming Negative Thoughts

When we are trying to overcome negative thoughts and unhealthy thinking patterns, it helps to understand what I call the Displacement Principle. To understand this principle, we first need to understand how the mind was designed to function.

The mind was created to be occupied. God never designed it to be empty. Scripture does not tell us to empty our minds in order to meditate. Instead, we are instructed to fill our minds with the right things. We are told, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,”²⁴⁰ to “meditate on these things,”²⁴¹ and to “occupy till I come.”²⁴²

Jesus even gave an illustration of the danger of an empty mind. In Matthew 12:43–45, He describes a man who had a demon cast out of him. Later, the demon returned and found the house “empty, swept, and put in order.” He then brought seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and the man ended up worse than before. The point is simple: the enemy occupies empty space.

Please do not misunderstand me here. Years ago, I became involved in a form of supposedly Christian meditation that focused on emptying the mind so God could speak directly to me. In the quiet, I began hearing the words, “Mark, I love you.” At first I assumed these were simply my own thoughts. Eventually, however, I came to believe God was speaking to me.

The experience felt wonderful. It seemed to meet a deep need for love and acceptance. But over time I trusted that “voice” more and more, and I spent less and less time in my Bible. I began making decisions based on what the voice was telling me. Looking back, I can see that I made some serious mistakes. Eventually, I realized what had happened. The enemy had been leading me,

²⁴⁰ Philippians 2:5

²⁴¹ 1 Timothy 4:15

²⁴² Luke 19:13

little by little, away from the very thing that could have protected me—the Word of God.

Satan was once in heaven. He knows what heavenly love feels like, and he is remarkably good at counterfeiting it. What I experienced felt loving. It sounded spiritual. But it was drawing me away from Scripture and toward dependence on impressions and feelings.

Healthy meditation does not empty the mind. Healthy meditation fills the mind with truth. It involves reading God's Word, reflecting on His promises, contemplating Christ's life and sacrifice, and dwelling on the home He is preparing for us. The mind was designed to be occupied, but it must be occupied with the right things.

There is another principle we need to understand. While the mind was created to be occupied, it can only focus on one thing at a time. We may shift rapidly from thought to thought, but we cannot truly concentrate on two things simultaneously. This principle is the key to overcoming negative thoughts.

Most people try to stop negative thinking by attempting not to think the negative thought. But that approach usually fails. The entire time you are trying not to think about the thought, you are actually focused on it. You are trying to create a void in a mind that was never designed to be empty.

The solution is not to stop thinking. The solution is to think about something else. Because the mind can only focus on one thing at a time, I cannot simultaneously focus on a negative thought and on a truth from God's Word. If I intentionally direct my attention to the truth from God's word, the negative thought is displaced by the positive one. That is the Displacement Principle.

Failure to Victory

Let us look at a practical example of how the Displacement Principle works. When I struggled with addiction, one of the

thoughts that continually ran through my mind was, “I can’t do it. I’ve tried and failed too many times. It may work for other people, but it doesn’t work for me. I might as well give up.”

Is that thought true? No. It is a lie. What does God’s Word say? “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”²⁴³ The lie says, *I can’t*. God’s Word says, *I can through Christ*.

So how do we apply this principle in real life? One helpful method is to write the promise on an index (3x5) card:

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:13

Then write a short prayer beneath it:

“Thank You, Lord, for the truth of Your Word. I choose to believe
that I can overcome
because You said so. Thank You for helping me overcome.”

Every time the thought “*I can’t do it*” comes into my mind, I pull out the card and read the verse and prayer out loud. I may still feel discouraged afterward, but while I am concentrating on God’s promise, I am no longer focused on the negative thought. The mind can only focus on one thing at a time.

If the negative thought returns, I do it again. If it comes back five minutes later, I do it again. If it comes back ten times that day, I do it ten times. Overcoming negative thoughts does not happen in a single battle. It is a series of battles. Victory comes by consistently believing truth over lies.

Think of it like a battlefield. The enemy advances, and you are standing there with a sword in your hand. If you leave the sword

²⁴³ Philippians 4:13

in its sheath, you will lose the battle. If you pull it out once and then put it away, you will still lose. The sword only helps when it is used.

The Bible tells us that “the sword of the Spirit...is the word of God.”²⁴⁴ Many Christians know Bible promises. Many have memorized Bible promises. Yet they continue to lose battles because they fail to use the promises when the battle comes. The enemy attacks with a lie. We answer with truth. The enemy attacks again. We answer again with truth. That is how the sword is used.

There is another reason why the battle feels so difficult at first. Every time we think a particular thought, we strengthen the pathway that carries it. Years of negative thinking create strong pathways in the brain. Those pathways become familiar and easy to travel. It is like walking through a jungle on a well-worn trail. The path is already cleared. You hardly have to think about where you are going.

When you begin replacing negative thoughts with God’s truth, you are cutting a new trail through untouched jungle. At first there are vines, thorns, and obstacles everywhere. Progress feels slow and difficult. But each time you choose the truth, you make the new pathway a little stronger. Each time you believe the promise instead of the lie, the path becomes a little easier to travel. Eventually, the new path becomes the preferred path.

I remember when I first began practicing this principle in my own life. The battle felt relentless. It seemed like I was pulling out my Scripture cards all day long. There were times when I wondered if I would ever be free. But I kept using them.

Then one evening, as my wife and I were talking about our day, I realized something remarkable. An entire day had passed

²⁴⁴ Ephesians 6:17

without one of those old thoughts entering my mind. A whole day! Before that, I could hardly go a few minutes without them. The battle was not over, but that experience gave me hope. I was seeing for myself that the process worked.

I also discovered something interesting later. My dreams did not change as quickly as my conscious thoughts. For a while, I still had dreams that reflected the old patterns, even though I was gaining victory during the day. But over time, even that began to change. As the new pathways became stronger, my dreams gradually reflected my new experience instead of the old one. Praise the Lord.

The negative thoughts had not disappeared because I fought them directly. They were losing their power because they were being displaced by something better—the truth of God’s Word.

Before moving on, I would like to offer a couple practical suggestions.

First, I recommend carrying no more than three index cards at a time. I have seen this method become less effective when people try to carry too many promises. If you are in the middle of a battle and have dozens of weapons to choose from, you may spend more time deciding what to use than actually fighting. Keep it simple. Choose a few promises that address the specific lies you struggle with. Know them well. Use them often.

Second, follow what I call the 4-Second Rule. The 4-Second Rule is simple: once you become aware that you are entertaining a negative thought, you have four seconds to pull out your card and begin reading it aloud. You may have been dwelling on the thought for several minutes before you realized what was happening. Do not worry about that. The important thing is what you do once you become aware of it. The moment you recognize the negative thought, respond immediately. Do not argue with it. Do not reason with it. Replace it.

Unloved to Loved

Another common lie many people believe is, *“I am unloved.”* But what does God say? “I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”

When that feeling comes, pull out your card and read:

**“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you.”**

Jeremiah 31:3

Then pray something like this:

“Thank You, Lord, for the truth of Your Word. I choose to believe
that I am loved
because You said so. Thank You for loving me.”

Every time the thought returns, answer it with the Word of God. Over time, the truth becomes stronger than the lie.

Guilt to Forgiveness

Another area where many people struggle is guilt. There is a healthy response to guilt, and there is an unhealthy response. A healthy response recognizes a specific sin and leads us to confession, repentance, and forgiveness. An unhealthy response produces a general sense of condemnation that drives us away from God. Instead of bringing us closer to Him, it fills us with discouragement and despair.

When God shows us a specific sin, we should confess it. If the sin was private, confess it to God. If it involved other people, confess it to them as well. Confession should be appropriate to the scope of the offense.

But confession is only part of the process. There must also be repentance. Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. It is not something we can manufacture on our own.

It is a gift from God, and we should ask Him for it. True repentance will always lead us away from the sin we are confessing.

For many years, guilt was one of the greatest struggles in my life. I often felt that I had failed too many times to be forgiven. Those thoughts led me into discouragement and despair. If you have ever felt that way, you know how miserable it can be.

But is it true that we have been too bad to be forgiven? What does God's Word say? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."²⁴⁵ Notice what the text says. It does not say that He forgives us only after we feel forgiven. It does not say that He forgives us only after we have suffered enough. It says that if we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive. The promise rests on His faithfulness, not on our feelings. So when guilt comes after confession, answer it with the promise. Write the verse on a card and read it aloud:

"If [I] confess [my] sins, [You are] faithful and just to forgive [me
my] sins
and to cleanse [me] from all unrighteousness."
1 John 1:9

Then add a prayer of faith:

"Thank You, Lord, for the truth of Your Word. I choose to believe
that I am forgiven because You said so. Thank You for forgiving
me
and cleansing me from all unrighteousness."

²⁴⁵ 1 John 1:9

Every time the feeling of guilt returns, repeat the process. Do not place your confidence in your feelings. Place your confidence in God's Word.

Lies to Truth

The same principle can be applied to any negative thought pattern. Whether the struggle is fear, rejection, shame, anxiety, discouragement, or resentment, the solution is the same. Find the truth that answers the lie. Fill your mind with that truth. Speak it. Pray it. Believe it. It is God's word. He cannot lie. His word creates what it says. Trust His word to do in you what you cannot do for yourself. This is not positive thinking. It is choosing to agree with God.

I suggest you keep a thought journal for a day or two. Write down every thought that is negative, distracting, or problematic. Then categorize them. Are they guilty thoughts, unloved thoughts, abandonment thoughts, failure thoughts, jealousy thoughts, lustful thoughts, bitter thoughts, etc.? Identify the top 1-3 categories that cause you the most trouble. Then go to the Bible and find a promise that is opposite of that negative thought category that also speaks to your heart. Write it down on an index card.

Then write a Bible promise that goes something like this: "Thank You, Lord, for giving me the truth of Your word. I choose to believe _____ [put here what the promise is promising]. Thank You for _____ [put here what the promise will accomplish in your life]." Then go to battle with the word of God as your sword.

As we repeatedly replace lies with truth, God begins to change the way we think. New pathways are formed. Old patterns lose their strength. The thoughts that once controlled us gradually lose their hold because they are being displaced by something greater.

The goal is not merely to stop thinking negative thoughts. The goal is to fill the mind with truth. As we do that, we discover for ourselves that the Displacement Principle works. The negative thoughts lose power, not because we wrestle them into submission, but because they are continually displaced by the truth of God's Word.

The Mind of Christ

This is the mind God wants to place within us. And just as every other aspect of salvation, it is received the same way—by faith. We come to God acknowledging that we do not naturally think this way. We confess that our thoughts are often selfish, fearful, critical, resentful, and self-protective. Then we ask Him to give us His mind.

And He answers that prayer. Over time, things that once offended us lose much of their power. People who once irritated us become objects of compassion. Situations that once produced anxiety begin to reveal trust. The transformation may be gradual, but it is real. And it is one of the greatest miracles in the Christian life.

Practical Steps Toward a Love That Thinks Well

As we conclude this chapter, I want to leave you with several practical suggestions.

First, spend time alone with God every day. The mind cannot consistently think God's thoughts while remaining disconnected from Him. Prayer is essential. Scripture is essential. Communion with God is essential.

Second, ask God daily to reveal your heart. Do not fear what He shows you. Anything He reveals, He intends to heal.

Third, when difficulties arise, ask what they reveal instead of merely wishing they would disappear. Every trial contains valuable information. Let it teach you.

Fourth, stop rehearsing the failures of others. When negative thoughts arise, bring them to God immediately. Ask Him to show you what He loves about the person you are struggling with. Ask Him to help you see them through Heaven's eyes.

Fifth, remember that every human being is worth the life of Christ. Every person you meet. Every difficult person. Every frustrating person. Every broken person. Every person. The cross establishes their value forever.

Sixth, remind yourself continually that God is your Source. Not your spouse. Not your children. Not your friends. Not your coworkers. Not your church. Not your reputation. Not your accomplishments. God alone. The more firmly this truth is established in the heart, the freer you become. For no one can take from you what God supplies.

Finally, put the Displacement Principle into action in your life, believing the truth of God's word over the lies that have filled your mind. Trust in God's word to do what it says, and run to His word with every battle in your mind.

Through the transforming power of His love, the Law of Life would be written not merely in your mind, but in your heart.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A Love that Gives All

5. Love Others

We need to think loving thoughts toward others. We need to speak to them with love in our voice. We need to treat them with love, choosing to sacrifice ourselves for them and their best good. We can't create the love, but we can come to Him and take His love, so that we can pass it on to others. This is what happens when the Holy Spirit is living out His life within us and we are operating with God's heart of divine love. We can be a channel of God's love to others, even if they have done hurtful things to us. When we come to the cross and accept the divine exchange on our behalf, it becomes God's past and we are set free from that burden, that personal hurt, that baggage. And just like someone who is ministering to prison inmates in prison ministries, we can love them, because they didn't do it to us. They did it to Jesus.

To highlight what this love looks like in action, I quote a story that Pastor Mark Finley tells, "In the early 1990's, one of the most horrible events in the history of the world occurred—the genocide in Rwanda. In that genocide—Hutu's battling against Tutsi's—a million people were killed in less than nine months. When the genocide began, there were 370,000 Seventh-day Adventists in Rwanda. When it ended, 100,000 were dead. In six months, 100,000 Adventists were slain, not because they were Adventist, but because they were a part of the minority tribe.

In recent years, I have traveled to Rwanda on a number of occasions speaking in large stadiums. There are trials going on

right now trying the killers. As we traveled there, I talked to my host, the Union President, Aman Rutilinga, and I said, 'Pastor Rutilinga, did anyone you know die in the genocide?'

He said, 'Pastor Mark, I was out preaching the day that the radio announcement came, 'Cut down the tall trees,' and when the radio announcement came, 'Cut down the tall trees,' tens of thousands of militia, largely young people with machetes ran through the streets killing every Tutsi they could see. The killing was so great that the bodies stacked up in the streets and dogs came and ate them. The killing was so great that they threw thousands of bodies into the river, and the river was clogged with bodies.'

Pastor Rutilinga was out preaching as Union President, the militia came into the church [and] brought out his wife, his children, and his three grandchildren and killed them outside the church that day.

I talked to the Conference President, 'Did you lose anybody?' He said, 'Yes I did.' I said, 'Who did you lose?' He said, 'I lost my wife and my seven children.' I talked to my driver, 'Did you lose anybody?'

'Yeah. I lost 47 members of my family. I'm the only one that survived.'

As I talked to them, Pastor Aman Rutilinga said to me, 'Mark, I want you to meet a woman, and when you meet her, your life will be changed forever. Her name is Adelle Selfu.'

So, we got in the truck, and we went on this rough road, back country, outside of Kigali, Rwanda. And Pastor Rutilinga told me the story as we went. This woman had been with her husband when the killers came, and she held his hand as they [used] a machete [to] split his head open, and as they hit him in the neck, and they murdered him. She was there. And Pastor Aman Rutilinga said, 'Mark, I believe she will tell you the story.'

As I walked into her house, I saw a picture of her Seventh-day Adventist pastor husband on the wall, and in respect I simply

walked over and stood and looked at the picture. And I thought about what it would be like if I were holding my wife's hand, and someone ran to me and the horror that she would go through as they split my head open with a machete.

As we sat down, we made small talk for a while, and Mrs. Selfu came into the room. And I broached the subject very carefully. I said, 'Sister Selfu, I understand you were with your husband when the militia hacked him to death. It may be very difficult to talk about it, but would you like to share it with me?'

She began to cry, and she said, 'Pastor, I'll share it. We got word that the militia was coming closer and closer to our village. We fled with 45 others to a Catholic church basement. We thought it would be a hiding place. They may go by the church. As we were in the basement, the militia came in with machetes. They began to hack and hack and hack. Actually, there were 60 people in the room. Forty-five were killed immediately.'

She said, 'I held my husband's hand, and someone just came with a machete and hit him in the head, and the blood from his head splat all over me.' She said, 'It was horrible, pastor. And then the person took the machete and hit me in the head.'

She pulled back her beautiful black hair, and I saw a scar that began [at her hair line] and ran down the center of her head. She said, 'Pastor, they then hit me in my wrist, trying to chop off my wrist.' She held up her wrist. It was just flapping around. She said, 'Pastor, then they hit me on the shoulder.' And she pulled down her dress a little bit, and I saw the scar down her shoulder. She said, 'They left me for dead, and my body lay among the dead bodies for three days.'

At the end of three days, the militia had moved on, so...villagers came to bury the dead. Somebody, before they buried me, felt my pulse, and I still had a pulse. So, they took me. I was unconscious. They began to nurse me back. Pastor, I was in and out of hospitals for three years.

By this time, the forces that were from outside of Rwanda from the Congo, fought their way back, liberated the country, and they built 18 prisons for the murderers. They put 180,000 people in prison.'

Mrs. Selfu took three years to get back to health, but by now there was stability in the country. And she said to me, 'Pastor Mark, I have to make a decision as to whether I will be a bitter, angry old woman or not.' And she said, 'I made a decision that my husband's death would not be in vain. I had the assurance beating in my heart that Jesus Christ is coming again, and that the thing that my husband would want would be me to go and minister to the killers.

So, Pastor, there is a prison not far from this village, and I became the mother of that prison. I would go in and bring blankets to the prison because [of] the cold nights. I would go in and bring food to the prison. I began studying the Bible with the prisoners. These were killers.

One day, Pastor, I was in the prison. A young man fell at my feet, and he began to kiss my feet. And I looked at his face, and he said, 'Do you remember me?' And she said, 'I wish I could get that face out of my mind. It was the young man in his early 20's who chopped my husband's head in half. It was the young man. I never knew he was in that prison. I never thought that I would see him again. It was the young man who put the scar in my head and gave me such pain. And he said, 'Would you forgive me?'

And she said, 'I picked him up and I hugged him.' And she said, "I will forgive you.' Pastor, I studied the Bible with him for six months. Pastor, he stood up before the whole prison, and we assembled all the prisoners in the prison yard the day of his baptism, and he confessed his sin. Pastor, we baptized him. Now Pastor, he got amnesty after a few years and was let out of the prison. And here's the problem. His father and mother were killed in the genocide. He had no place to live. Pastor, I adopted him as my son. Would you like to meet him?'

My heart was beating. Beads of perspiration stood [on] my head. I looked at the pastor's picture whom this man had killed. I thought a killer was going to walk through the door, and Luis walked through the door—a gentle smile on his face, a sparkle in his eyes. And Mrs. Selfu walked over, put her arms around him, and she said, 'Let me introduce you to my adopted son.' She said, 'One day when Jesus comes, all the suffering will be worth it all. One day when Jesus comes, all the heartache will be worth it all. One day when Jesus comes, all the burdens will be worth it all. One day when Jesus comes, the past will be gone.' She said, 'What inspires me is the forward look. Jesus is coming again.'"

Is there something in your heart right now that needs to be dealt with? Have you been harboring bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness? If God can transform Adelle Selfu, if God can take that woman and take any bitterness—any anger—out of her heart, God can do the same miracle in your life.

The Law and the Heart

The Law of Life, taking to give, can only come from a heart that is transformed by the grace of God. It can only come from God's own heart, recreated within us. This Law of Life is in perfect harmony with the 10 commandments, the transcript of God's character. And only one whose heart is operating under the Law of Life, only one whose motive of operation is divine love can keep the law.

If I am living by the old, sinful heart, if I am living under human love—giving to receive, if I am hurt by what others do to me because I am thinking that It's mine, I cannot keep God's law, because His law can only be kept by divine love.

If I try to obey my parents so that I can have long life, I cannot do it with man's heart. If I try to keep my thoughts pure and avoid lustful desires, I cannot do it with man's heart. If I seek to be content with what I have and not covet what is my neighbor's, I

cannot do it with man's heart. And If I try to keep the Sabbath of the fourth commandment holy, I cannot do it with man's heart.

If we are not on the right side of the equation—if we are not operating with divine love—we cannot keep any of the commandments. It is only faith in Christ that leads to a complete surrender of myself to God. This surrender leads me to cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He transforms my heart and gives me divine love. With that new heart, I can finally obey the commandments of God, because it is He who is living His life out within me to will and to do of His good pleasure. It is then that sin ceases to be the reality of my life, and I become the righteousness of God, in Christ.

How can I know which side of the equation I am on? If I think it's mine. If I am hurt personally by what others do. If I give to receive back again, with strings attached, investing with expectation of returns; then all I do amounts to nothing, because I am living by the old, sinful heart. But, if I recognize that it's not mine, that all I have, all I can do, and all I am is God's, if I am not hurt personally by what others do, if I find my joy in giving and I come to God constantly to take from His love so that I can give it to others, if I produce the fruit of God's vine, then I am living by God's heart of divine love.

Love & Liberty

Let us now consider, for a minute, the interrelationship between love and liberty. Human love operates in a predictable manner. As human beings, when we have high interest in someone, we seek to control them more. High interest leads to low freedom (high control). But if we have low interest in someone, we don't try to control them. We give them lots of freedom.

For example, if you are walking down the street and a stranger is smoking a cigarette, you are most likely going to pass on by without a comment. But if it is your 14-year-old child who

was smoking, you may walk over to them, grab them by the ear, throw the cigarette on the ground, and take them back home and ground them to their room for a month.

Remember, we must control our sources in order to “protect” our interests—protect our love sources. We do this with God too. There are ways that we try to control Him. We try to do this or do that, behave this way or behave that way, so that we can manipulate God to do this or that for us. We try to barter with Him, offering Him something (tithe, offerings, time, service, behavior, etc.) in order to get something else in return (forgiveness, acceptance, belonging, security, etc.).

Sometimes, we see Him as the genie in the bottle. If we simply have the right faith—if we rub the bottle the right way—then God will do for us what we wish. Faith, however, is not the hand that moves God to do what I want. It is the hand that accepts from God whatever He sees is best, whether I like it or not.

Divine love operates differently than human love. Divine love maintains maximum interest while at the same time permitting total freedom. Some of you have probably eaten a sugar-filled candy bar in the past. Maybe you ate a whole box of candy bars. Is a candy bar healthy for you? Absolutely not! And do you know that before you ever try one? Of course, you do.

Does God know it isn't healthy for you? Of course, He does. Does He know that it will contribute to you dying earlier than you would have if you hadn't eaten it? Of course. But does God ever get that Twinkie and knock it out of your hand, grab you by the ear and drag you home and ground you because you were going to eat that Twinkie? Or does He allow you to eat it if you so choose? He allows you to do it.

He loves you infinitely, but He respects your freedom. He will not force you to do good, neither will He prevent you from harming yourself. You can kill yourself quickly or slowly if you choose. He will respect your choice.

He may speak to your conscience and reason with you and try to convince you to change your mind, but He will not force you to do right. You see, love always allows freedom. In order for love to be maintained, freedom must be maintained as well. You are not God's source, so He is not dependent upon you. But in order to give you the freedom to love Him in return (because He loves you), He has to give you total freedom to choose Him...or choose something else. Because He loves you so perfectly, He gives you complete freedom to destroy yourself if you so choose. God's love—real love—gives perfect liberty to choose the good or the bad; it does not force or control.

Since we were created in the image of God, we were created to think and act like God, who is love. Thus, our bodies were created to respond and function perfectly according to love. So, when you and I attempt to control the choices of others, we are operating outside of love and the result is damage to the body. We cannot maintain proper function if we are operating outside of the context of love.

This is true even when we try to control others for the good. We believe something to be right, and we want those whom we love to be right, so we try to control them to do the right so that they can be right. We do it from selfish motives, though. They are our source, and we want them to be a better source for us, so we try to fix them to match what we understand is good. And when they don't respond, we are frustrated and upset, and perhaps we even try to control them in different ways or more forcefully in the future in order to obtain compliance and uniformity. Those we have as the greatest treasures are those whom we try to control the most.

But we also try to control others relative to issues or principles that are dear to us. We will control strangers who are not sources if it is related to an issue or a principle that we are passionate about. Our actions are still from the motive of selfishness, and the result is an attempt to control others.

This selfish, human propensity, when unchecked, will eventually lead us not just to limit the freedom of those who do not comply with our ideas of right, but to destroy them if they refuse to conform to our ideals. This is the foundation of the erosion of religious liberty, and it will be seen more and more clearly in this great country in the next few years. You will see American liberties removed, restrictions imposed, and increasing penalties for nonconformity. And eventually there will be the death penalty for those who will not follow the nation's ideals of right and wrong, even though those ideals are in direct opposition to the Word of God.

Looking back to God and His love and the perfect freedom by which it operates, I am not saying that real freedom can be found in choosing whatever I want and in going in whatever direction I want to go. True freedom is only found in the context of boundaries—the boundaries of God's law.

“True liberty and independence are found in the service of God. His service will place upon you no restriction that will not increase your happiness. In complying with His requirements, you will find a peace, contentment, and enjoyment that you can never have in the path of wild license and sin. Then study well the nature of the liberty you desire. Is it the liberty of the sons of God, to be free in Christ Jesus? or do you call the selfish indulgence of base passions freedom? Such liberty carries with it the heaviest remorse; it is the cruelest bondage.”²⁴⁶

And looking back to God and His love and the perfect freedom by which it operates, I am not saying that God's love allows evil to happen without consequences. There are consequences. There are always consequences. It is a divine law that, “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”²⁴⁷ And this same law shows us that,

²⁴⁶ White, E.G. (1923) *Fundamentals of Christian Education*. (p. 88). Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association.

²⁴⁷ Galatians 6:7

“He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”²⁴⁸ There are consequences to the decisions we make.

How does God train His sinful, wayward children? It is not by preventing them from doing wrong. He will teach them, educate them, warn them, reason with them, give them examples of others who have made the same bad decisions; all so that He can give them the best information from which to make their decision. But the decision is theirs. And God will not prevent it. But when the decision is made, there are specific consequences to that decision. And God teaches us through those consequences. They are for the purpose of diverting us from wrong and leading us back to the right.

Remember, He is the Good Shepherd, searching for the lost sheep so that He can lovingly carry it back home. The consequences are not for the purpose of punishment and abandonment. They are for the purpose of redemption and restoration.

In protecting freedom, do we have to eliminate standards? No. God maintains perfect freedom and at the same time holds up definite standards. God gives us freedom to follow or break those standards, but there are consequences for keeping (good consequences) or breaking (bad consequences) those standards.

Every person, family, organization, and government must have standards for its members; and those standards must be taught, their obedience encouraged, and their violation enforced. But mind you, enforcement is through the designated authorities (parents, church board, police, etc.).

Freedom *is not* eliminating the standards or preventing their enforcement. Freedom *is* allowing each individual the liberty to

²⁴⁸ 2 Corinthians 9:6

either obey and enjoy the blessings of obedience or disobey and suffer the consequences of disobedience. Each one has the choice to make of whether they will obey or disobey, follow, or not follow.

In true freedom, the authority will enforce the consequences of breaking the principle, but they will do so with a selfless motivation. They will enforce the consequences for the benefit of the offender as well as the benefit of others.

Free Moral Agents

We are free moral agents. God loves us supremely, and He created us with the capacity to love Him in return. But love must be voluntary in order to be love. Love necessitates freedom of choice. And freedom of choice—of will—allows for the possibility of service, or the possibility of rebellion. In order to preserve the capacity to love, God must also preserve the capacity to be selfish, to hurt, to destroy.

What Does Love Look Like?

If love is so necessary to maintain at such extreme costs, what does love look like? Let us go to the Bible and read from the “love chapter,” 1 Corinthians 13. I want to begin in verse 4, giving you my paraphrase of the text.

“Love suffers long and is kind....”²⁴⁹ When I live by love all of the following will be true. I will not be exempt from suffering. In fact, I can suffer, and I can suffer for a long time. Not only that, but I can suffer for a long time and be kind while I suffer. With love, I can suffer long and be kind to the one causing my suffering.

“...love does not envy....”²⁵⁰ I do not want what you have, because I recognize that God is my source, not you. I am happy that you have what you have because the Lord has blessed you with it. I don’t need your stuff. I need God.

²⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:4

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

“...love does not parade itself....”²⁵¹ I don’t do things to make people look at me, notice me, or think good of me. In fact, I avoid doing things publicly that would draw attention to myself. My motivation for what I do is not what you think, it is what God thinks. And God knows my heart, so I don’t need to prove anything to Him.

Love “is not puffed up....”²⁵² I don’t think of myself as better than others or act like I am better. I don’t put others down so that I feel bigger or more important. I don’t try to look more holy, nicer, prettier, or anything else. I don’t need fancy clothes, makeup, jewelry, a nice car, a nice home, or anything else to embellish who I am. I am content with how God has made me.

Love “...does not behave rudely....”²⁵³ I do not behave rudely to those who are rude to me. I treat them with patience, kindness, compassion, and love.

Love “...does not seek its own....”²⁵⁴ I do not seek my own rights. I will allow myself to be taken advantage of without retaliation or resistance (recognizing that if God allows it, He will work it out for good and will give me strength to endure), and I will allow God to work it out in His time and in His way. “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”²⁵⁵ While I do not seek my own rights, I do uphold the rights of others.

Love “...is not provoked....”²⁵⁶ I cannot be provoked. In other words, I have no buttons. You know what I mean, right? There are some people that can easily “push our buttons.” Usually those who are closest to us can push our buttons the best—like family. They know exactly what to do or say or how to say it to get us upset, frustrated, angry, etc. so that we respond in a negative way. It is a

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ 1 Corinthians 13:5

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Romans 12:19

²⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:5

form of control, and because we are one of their sources, they must try to control us.

Buttons represent emotional hurts that have not been healed. Let me illustrate. You have just broken your arm in an accident, and you go to the emergency department. They take x-rays, put your arm in a sling, and send you home to follow up with the orthopedic surgeon tomorrow to have a cast put on your arm. But, while you are going home, you remember that you **MUST** pick up an item at the store now. In the store, someone bumps into your broken arm, and you yell at them, “Watch out! Don’t be so clumsy!” They don’t have a clue that your arm is broken. They might be thinking, “Why are you so grumpy!?”

Your response to them bumping into you is not because of what they did, it is because of how you feel. If you didn’t have a broken arm, you might not even have noticed that they bumped into you, or if you did, it wouldn’t be a big deal. The bigger the hurt, the more easily a response is evoked and the more exaggerated the response is. Also, the more unhealed hurts that there are, the more buttons there are to “push.”

If you are someone who is always responding negatively to others, and you don’t know why, it is probably because you have suffered many hurts which have not healed yet. You need a personal experience at the foot of the cross where Jesus can take your hurts and give you His hurt-free life in exchange. Love has no buttons because love heals all the hurts from the past. And when you have no buttons, you cannot be provoked.

When someone responds poorly to you, remember they aren’t responding to you, *per se*. They are responding to their internal pain. Be gentle and patient with them. They are still hurting.

Love “...thinks no evil....”²⁵⁷ I think no evil about you. I assume that your motives are pure for why you are doing what you

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

do. I try to understand where you are coming from, and in compassion I pray for you, work with you, and am patient with you. My thoughts about you are always positive.

Love "...does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth...."²⁵⁸ It gives me no pleasure when you sin, fall, or fail. My concern is for your best good. Your sin hurts me, because I hurt for you and what that sin is doing in your life. I cry for you in prayer, interceding on your behalf and lifting you up before my Father in heaven. And it is my greatest joy and rejoicing when you receive the truth in your life and the truth sets you free.

Love "...bears all things...."²⁵⁹ Love is able to carry anything, no matter how big or how bad. There is nothing—in my life, in my associations, in my experience—that God is not acquainted with and has not made provision for. God, who is love, can and did bear it all. And knowing me intimately, He has pledged that He will not allow anything to come to me that I cannot bear. Therefore, I can bear all things that come to me, because they are filtered by God first so that not one of them is too great. By His grace, I can overcome in each and every situation and temptation. Love leaves me no excuses for failure because it gives me everything needed to overcome.

Love "...believes all things...."²⁶⁰ Love believes all things that God has promised. I know who He is and how trustworthy He is. I have proved Him by personal experience many times in the past, and my faith has grown to the point that I happily surrender all to Him.

Love "...hopes all things...."²⁶¹ Love has great hope, because I know that God is trustworthy, and I can confidently hope for what He has promised.

²⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:6

²⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 13:7

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

Love “...endures all things....”²⁶² Love is able to withstand anything and everything. Love is the greatest power in existence—there is no greater power. Force, coercion, shame, guilt, threats, abuse, deception, temptation—are all powerless to overcome love, because it is infinitely greater than all these things. There will never be anything that can wear me down and outdo my endurance if love is the motivation and experience of my life. I will endure to the end, only by love.

“...love never fails.”²⁶³ Because of what love is and Who love is, it will not—cannot—fail. It will be victorious at last!

Now, let us go back to the first part of 1 Corinthians 13 and read more about this love. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not [this] love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not [this] love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not [this] love, it profits me nothing.”²⁶⁴

Matthew 7:21-23 states the following, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” What we have read in 1 Corinthians 13 and here in Matthew 7:21-23 tells me this: selfishness can do so much “apparent” good that it fools many into believing it is the real thing (even the one who is doing it), when God knows that it is not.

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ 1 Corinthians 13:8

²⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:1-3

How can God say, “I never knew you,” to those who were apparently working for Him? It is because there is one thing that God recognizes—love. And if there is no love in you and me—if we are operating from the old heart of selfishness and pride—He doesn’t recognize us.

Does God recognize you? If not, you must come to and stay at the cross, pleading for the new heart, until you are assured that you have it. Then plead for Him to live out His life in you through the Holy Spirit, to keep you in that new heart.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

A Love that Heals

6. Remember, It's Not Mine

I need to remember—it's not mine! This is a frequent challenge. We have been so accustomed to treating things and people and relationships as if they are ours when they actually belong to God. We frequently find ourselves in the situation where we are treating something or someone like it is ours—like it belongs to us—and we need to be reminded that it isn't ours, and to surrender the control of all things to God who does own it, so that He can work things out in His way. I simply need to trust Him in each and every situation that He will work out the best for me. I don't need to take things personally. I can be just like the UPS delivery guy, unhurt personally by what others say and do, because it's not about me. It's not mine!

For example, my struggle frequently revolves around my children not obeying or respecting my wife and me. When I get frustrated, it is because I have forgotten that they are not mine. I am frustrated because I see them as my children, and I believe they are defying my (or my wife's) authority. It is in times like this that I need to pause for a moment and remember, it's not mine! Yes, Lord. They are Your children. And any authority I have has only been delegated by You, so it is Your authority. So, Lord, how would You have me respond to Your children using Your authority?

When I gain this perspective, I no longer have the frustration and anxiety as before, because I am only a steward of His resources, not the owner. I am not the one offended, so I don't have to act offended. It is a liberating experience. But I frequently forget this truth, so I must frequently remember it again.

Love, Trust, and Protection

Now, let us consider love, trust, and protection. If I love God, I can trust Him, correct? And If I trust God, do I need to protect myself? No, I can trust Him to protect me as He sees fit.

In Luke 6:27-36 we read, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you."²⁶⁵ The old heart cannot do this. It is only the new heart, recreated by the love and grace of God, that can respond with love to those who hate you, curse you, and spitefully use you. Don't be mistaken, thinking that when you have love you will be loved by all.

Love—real love—is hated by many. Many will consider you their enemy. But you will not consider any of them as your enemy.

"To him who strikes you on the one cheek..."²⁶⁶ strike him back? Give him a good karate chop? Defend yourself? The natural response is to defend myself by striking back. It is only by the strength of God that I can endure someone taking advantage of me without retaliating. God surrounds me with His presence, and nothing can get through to harm me, unless He gives permission. So, if someone punches me in the face, the only way they can do it is if God allows it. And if God allows it, it is because He will work it out for good, and He will give me strength to endure.

I don't have to become the aggressor against my aggressors. I don't have to fear evil. I can trust in God to care for me because

²⁶⁵ Luke 6:27,28

²⁶⁶ Luke 6:29

He knows what is best. “To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.”²⁶⁷

“And from him who takes away your [house], do not withhold your [car] either.”²⁶⁸ A common scenario that I meet in my practice is bitterness over a divorce. The relationship has gone south, and both are at loss, so a divorce is filed. One wants to get as much as they can, to the detriment of the other. If you are in that situation, what does this text say to you? If your soon-to-be ex-spouse takes you to divorce court and takes the house away from you, give them the car also. In the first case, you are a victim. In the second, you are a donor. We are blessed by giving, not by losing. So, turn your loss into a gift, and you win more than good health.

“And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.”²⁶⁹ If you are taken to court and sued, even if it is wrongly, don’t go back and counter sue. Let them have it. It wasn’t yours anyway. It was God’s. And If He lets them have it, He can give you more when He knows the right time and circumstances are in place. Just trust yourself in God’s care. Paul tells us, “Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”²⁷⁰

“And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.”²⁷¹ This “Golden Rule” will be our every-day rule, when love rules in our hearts. We will be concerned about the other, not ourselves. We will do whatever we can to show them the love of God. Our yearning will be for them and their salvation, even if they are treating us terribly. This is the way love is.

²⁶⁷ Luke 6:29

²⁶⁸ Ibid.

²⁶⁹ Luke 6:30

²⁷⁰ Romans 12:19-21

²⁷¹ Luke 6:31

“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.”²⁷² Selfishness can mimic love—part of the time. But only love can be love all of the time. Selfishness can “love.” It can “do good.” It can lend cheerfully. But the motives are entirely different than true love.

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”²⁷³ That is the God we serve. He is love. And this is how love acts. What an awesome God we serve! I want to be like Him!

This is love, friends—real love. And it is impossible for us to generate this kind of love. Real love is divine, and I can only possess this love if Christ lives in my heart by faith.

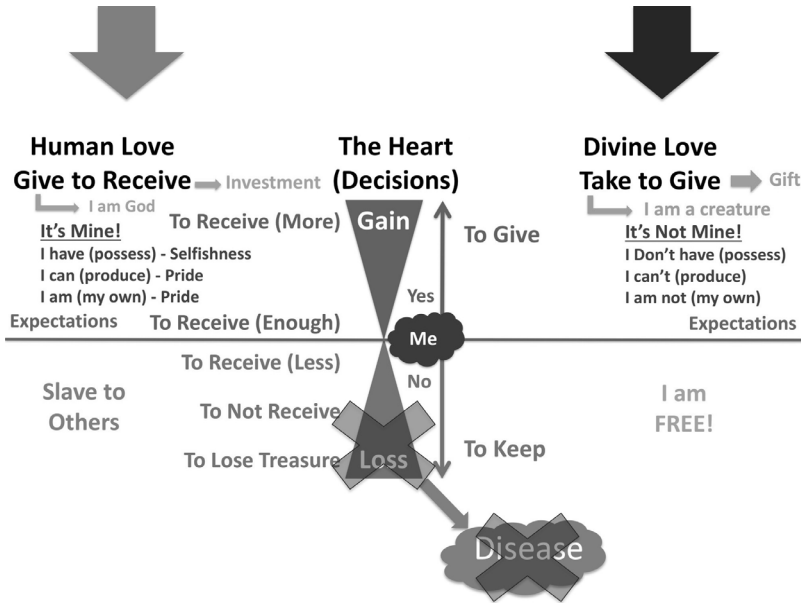
“...it is only the Spirit of God that gives love for hatred. To be kind to the unthankful and to the evil, to do good hoping for nothing again, is the insignia of the royalty of heaven, the sure token by which the children of the Highest reveal their high estate.”²⁷⁴ Do you want to know if you are really a child of God? The possession of love guarantees it!

²⁷² Luke 6:32-34

²⁷³ Luke 6:35,36

²⁷⁴ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 75). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

THE LAW OF LIFE



Love & Disease

Now that we have covered the topic of love more adequately, let us consider disease again. The Ministry of Healing, page 127, beautifully describes how we should understand and approach sickness. It says, “Disease is an effort of nature to free the system from conditions that result from a violation of the laws of health.”²⁷⁵ This tells me that disease is a good thing—it is the “effort of nature to free the system...” It is good to have my system free, so disease is on the good side of the equation. It is not disease that is bad, it is the violation of the laws of health that is bad. When the laws of health are violated, it causes conditions which the body tries to free itself from, and the effort of freeing itself from those conditions is called disease.

Next, we are told, “In the case of sickness, the cause should be ascertained.”²⁷⁶ So, when there is a case of sickness or disease,

²⁷⁵ White, E. G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (p 127). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

²⁷⁶ Ibid.

our first work is to find the cause. We have already learned that 90% of diseases have their foundation in the mind. And of those mind issues, personal loss is a large cause of disease.

If I live under the old heart of human love, giving to receive, I am constantly living in personal loss, because I didn't receive, I didn't receive enough, or my treasures were taken away. I can't control those losses, because I am dependent upon others to give me what I need, and I cannot control if someone rejects me or dies. That accumulated loss leads to physical disease over time. Sometimes the greater the perceived loss, the more rapid and serious the physical decline.

But if I live by God's heart, operating with divine love, which is taking to give, then my only loss is if I keep His love to myself. Otherwise, I am not at loss, and all of those things which had contributed to my physical degeneration no longer do so, for they are no longer part of the equation. So, if there is no more loss in the new heart, then there is no more contribution to disease from that source. And if the cause is removed...the effect must cease!

Which Heart Do I Have?

So, if my personal losses have so much to do with my physical health, and if my losses are dependent upon which heart I have, how do I know which heart I have? There are several things that differentiate the old heart from the new one.

The old heart gives to receive, while the new heart takes to give. The old heart *invests* in others, while the new heart *gives* to others. The old heart wins or gains by receiving from others, while the new heart wins or gains by giving. The old heart is at loss when it doesn't receive, when it doesn't receive enough, or when its treasure is taken away, while the new heart is only at loss if it keeps to itself what it took from God.

The old heart believes that it's mine, while the new heart believes that it's *NOT* mine. The old heart believes that I possess

it, while the new heart believes that I *DON'T* possess it. The old heart believes that I can produce it, while the new heart believes that I *CAN'T* produce it. The old heart believes that I am my own, while the old heart believes that I am *NOT* my own.

The old heart gets impatient and angry when someone does it wrong, while the new heart suffers long under persecution and is kind while it suffers. The old heart wants what others have, while the new heart does not envy. The old heart does things to be noticed by others, while the new heart does not parade itself and its supposed goodness. The old heart tries to make itself look better than it really is, while the new heart is not puffed up, recognizing that its goodness is only in Christ, not itself.

The old heart is rude to those who are rude to it, while the new heart doesn't behave rudely to anyone, regardless of how they treat it. The old heart always tries to protect its own rights, while the new heart does not seek its own rights. Rather, it seeks the rights of others. The old heart gets angry or frustrated when others do it wrong, while the new heart cannot be provoked. The old heart surmises or suspects evil of others, while the new heart thinks no evil of others. It assumes that others are doing what they are doing from the best of motives.

The old heart is happy when its enemies fall, because that makes self look better, while the new heart does not rejoice in iniquity or others' sins or faults. The old heart likes to hear and participate in rumors and gossip, while the new heart rejoices in the truth and rejoices when the truth sets others free.

The old heart can't stand it when _____ (you fill in the blank), while the new heart bears all things that come its way. The old heart just can't believe _____ (you fill in the blank), while the new heart believes all things God has said, regardless of what things you face.

The old heart feels hopeless about certain things from time to time, while the new heart hopes all things that have been

promised. The old heart is easily overcome by temptation and trial, while the new heart endures all things that happen to it.

The old heart loves those who love it and are nice to it. The new heart also loves...but it loves its enemies. The old heart does good to those who are good to it. The new heart also does good...but it does good to those that hate it. The old heart blesses those that bless it. The new heart also blesses...but it blesses those who curse it. The old heart prays for those who are kind to it and are loved by it. The new heart also prays...but it prays for those who spitefully use it and mistreat it.

The old heart turns and retaliates when it is attacked. The new heart also turns...but it turns the other cheek when taken advantage of. The old heart gives only what is demanded of it. The new heart also gives...but it gives more than is demanded. The old heart gives occasionally when asked. The new heart also gives...but it gives freely when the fulfillment of the request would be for good.

The old heart asks back everything that was wrongfully taken from it, and sometimes it asks for more. The new heart also asks back...but it asks back nothing that was wrongfully taken from it. The old heart does to others as it believes they deserve. The new heart also does to others...but the new heart does to others as it would have them to do it.

The old heart gives hoping for them to give back so it can receive. The new heart also gives...but the new heart gives without hoping for anything in return from them. It is a gift. The old heart is personally hurt when others don't treat it well, while the new heart is *NOT* personally hurt when others don't treat it well. The old heart is motivated by selfishness, while the new heart is motivated by love.

Love & Disease

Is disease only the result of a love problem? Of personal loss? No! But 90% of it is! Remember, we are told, “Sickness of the mind prevails everywhere. Nine tenths of the diseases from which men suffer have their foundation here.”²⁷⁷ So, if 90% of our illnesses have their foundation in the mind, and a lack of divine love is the source of those mind issues, then it makes sense to search for a cause for one’s disease or illness here first.

Not only are we to identify the cause of the disease, but we need to adopt a healthy lifestyle. The Ministry of Healing, p. 127 goes on to say, “Unhealthful conditions should be changed...”²⁷⁸

²⁷⁷ White, E. G. (1923) *Counsels on Health*. (p 324). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

²⁷⁸ White, E. G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (p 127). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

A Love that Obeys

7. Use Natural Remedies, Change My Lifestyle

You and I, in response to God's love for us, should use the means that God has placed in our stewardship to improve the health of our bodies. This includes using natural remedies and changing our lifestyle.

In doing so, we STAND for WELLNESS. Wellness stands for Water, Exercise, Live Temperately, Love, Nutrition, Environment, which includes Sunshine, our Thought life, Air, Nature, and Dress. Wellness also includes Sufficient rest and Simple trust in God. So, we STAND for WELLNESS!

The Ministry of Healing, p. 127 goes on to explain that "wrong habits [should be] corrected."²⁷⁹ We have wrong habits of dressing, thinking, eating, and drinking. And these habits need to be corrected. We need to develop right habits, one choice at a time.

Finally, The Ministry of Healing, p. 127 states, "Then nature is to be assisted in her effort to expel impurities and to re-establish right conditions in the system."²⁸⁰ We use hydrotherapy, herbs, good food, exercise, and other simple, natural remedies to assist in the healing process. We attempt to expel impurities, and we work at re-establishing the right conditions, as opposed to the wrong conditions that were the result of violating the laws of health. In the case of sickness, we do all of this.

²⁷⁹ White, E. G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (p 127). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

²⁸⁰ White, E. G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (p 127). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

And the Bible tells us something else that we should do in the case of sickness. This is outlined in James chapter 5, verses 14 through 16. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” Do not overlook this scriptural admonition in the case of sickness.

Disease & Lifestyle

Why do I adopt a healthy lifestyle? God loves me, and He purchased me at an infinite price. I love Him because He first loved me. And I take care of my body in proportion to the price He paid for it. I live as healthy as possible in order to preserve my body in the best condition possible, because my body is His temple.

We are reminded of this in 1 Corinthians 6:19,20, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.”

But why do I obey? Why am I looking for healing? What is my motive? Why I do what I do is at least as important as what I do. Do I obey in order to be healed? No! That is operating under the system of human love, giving to receive. I obey because I love God, and I want to give him the gift of service, in gratitude for what He has done for me. The latter response is living by divine love, which is taking to give.

When I take of God’s love, it transforms me. The desire of my heart, which is influenced by that love, is to obey the one I love. And that obedience includes taking care of my body for Christ.

Jesus tells us, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”²⁸¹ And He reminds us, “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me.”²⁸² True obedience is the fruit of love.

Cause & Effect

We can reason from cause to effect because there is a law that governs cause and effect. My disease must have a cause. The cause always comes before the disease develops. As long as the disease is present, the cause or its secondary causes are still present. If the cause is a love or sin issue, I can change my lifestyle or take medications, but if I don’t remove the love or sin issue, some other manifestation will come from that cause, and I will be worse off than when I started.

Yes, we are to adopt healthy lifestyles. Yes, we are to use simple, natural remedies. But most importantly, the cause must be identified and removed, because once the cause is removed, the effect will cease. In the meantime, I apply the lifestyle principles, I use the natural remedies, and I eliminate the toxins through various natural treatments.

Law of Function

We see that all laws that govern function are unchangeable. The laws of thermodynamics are unchangeable. The law of gravity is unchangeable. The law of body temperature, which governs what temperature range our bodies function at optimally, is unchangeable. I can’t just decide that I don’t like these laws and that they won’t apply to my life. I can’t just decide to act outside of the laws of thermodynamics or of gravity, or that I will live just fine with a body temperature of negative 30 degrees. It doesn’t matter how much I like or don’t like these laws or how much I want to abide by them or not. They are the laws that govern these functions.

²⁸¹ John 14:15

²⁸² John 14:21

So, what about the Law of Life? What about God's law? Is it just a moral law, or is it a law of function? It is a law of function. It is the law which governs the function of love.

I can't just decide I don't like it. I can't just decide that I will change it. I can't just decide that I won't abide by it or that it doesn't apply to me. No, the law is a functional law, and it cannot be changed. And if I break this law, whether deliberately or ignorantly, there will be consequences. But if I keep this law, by God's grace and with the heart that He gives me, there will be consequences as well—consequences of life, love, peace, and joy.

What do the commandments say? "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.

Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you. You

shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's."²⁸³

This is the law that governs the function of love—the taking love and the giving love. It is the law the reveals to us how love functions and shows how everything is to be ordered according to the character and likeness of God.

What is the relationship between Jesus and the law? Did Jesus come to the earth to do away with the law? No! He says, “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”²⁸⁴ Jesus didn't come to destroy the law. He came to fulfill it.

But what did He come to fulfill? If you break the law and run a red light and hit another car, causing damage to that other car, is there a penalty for breaking the law? Yes, there is. There is a penalty—a fine—that is attached to the breaking of the law. And someone must pay for the damage that was done to the other car. Who has to pay? The one who broke the law and caused the accident.

You and I, from Adam and Eve on down, have broken the law, which is sin (“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”²⁸⁵ “Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.”²⁸⁶), and the penalty for breaking the law is death (“For the wages of sin is death.”²⁸⁷).

²⁸³ Exodus 20:2-17

²⁸⁴ Matthew 5:17,18

²⁸⁵ Romans 3:23

²⁸⁶ 1 John 3:4 KJV

²⁸⁷ Romans 6:23

Jesus came, as we have already discussed, to live a perfect life in human flesh to be able to provide for us a perfect past (which the law requires). But He also came to pay for us the penalty of the broken law and the damage that the breaking of that law caused.

If God could have changed the law, then Jesus did not need to come to pay its penalty. The law could simply be changed to meet the circumstances, and Jesus would not have had to come and be tortured to death. But the fact that Jesus did come and suffer and die shows us that the law could not be changed. It is, remember, the law of love—the law that reveals what the character of God is like and how it is to be reflected in the lives of His creatures.

But the law was nailed to the cross, wasn't it? Paul says, "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross."²⁸⁸ What here is nailed to the cross? It is "the handwriting of requirements that was against us." What is Paul referring to? Is he referring to the law of God which reveals to us the character—the love—of God, the law that governs the function of love?

We find what Paul is referring to in Deuteronomy 31:24-26, where it says, "So it was, when Moses had completed writing the words of this law in a book, when they were finished, that Moses commanded the Levites, who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying: "Take this Book of the Law, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there as a witness against you." Here is a document which contained the handwriting of Moses which was specifically placed beside the ark "as a witness against you." What was Moses writing about? It was not the 10 commandments, the law of God, the law of love. He was

²⁸⁸ Colossians 2:13,14

writing about the ordinances or covenants with the associated curses for disobeying God.

The ten commandments were placed *inside* the ark of the covenant, not beside it. “He took the Testimony and put it into the ark, inserted the poles through the rings of the ark, and put the mercy seat on top of the ark.”²⁸⁹ “Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the Lord made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.”²⁹⁰

Paul expands upon this thought, “having abolished in His [Jesus] flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two [Jew & Gentile, circumcised & uncircumcised], thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.”²⁹¹

We see here that what was nailed to the cross in the person of Jesus was not the law of God, which is the law of love, but rather the ordinances of the ceremonial law which pointed forward to the coming Messiah and the sacrifice He would make. When Jesus lived a perfect life (the Lamb without spot or blemish) and died for our sin, He in reality fulfilled what the sacrificial system pointed to in symbol. That sacrificial system could no longer function to point people forward, by faith, to the sacrifice that the Messiah would make for their sin, because that sacrifice was already made. It was, therefore, nailed to the cross. The law of God—the law of love—however, could not be changed. It is a functional law.

Is there anyone here who has ever sinned? All of us? What is the definition of sin? It is the transgression of the law. If sin is the transgression of the law and you still sin, there must still be a law

²⁸⁹ Exodus 40:20

²⁹⁰ 1 Kings 8:9

²⁹¹ Ephesians 2:15,16

to transgress. Other translations say that sin is lawlessness. That is, sin is living or acting as if there is no law. It is living or acting without regard to the law. It is like speeding when there are clearly defined speed limits, running red lights or stop signs, and parking in handicapped spaces when you are not handicapped.

Did the life and death of Jesus somehow make it okay to have other gods before God? Did His life and death make it okay to worship idols/images? Did it make it okay to take God's name in vain? What about to dishonor your parents, murder others, commit adultery, steal, lie, and covet? Are all of those things all of a sudden okay because they were nailed to the cross with Jesus? No! That's ridiculous! The whole Christian world can see that these commands are still binding. But what about the one commandment that bids us remember, as if God knew we would forget?

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your male servant, nor your female servant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger who is within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it.”²⁹²

Does it matter to God what day is set aside for His worship? Does it matter to the groom which woman he marries? There is the bride and six bridesmaids. Why doesn't he just choose one of the bridesmaids and marry her and not the bride? Would it matter? Yes, it would matter! There are seven days in the week. Does it make a difference to God which day He has set apart? The day that God has chosen is important to Him, and it should be important to us.

²⁹² Exodus 20:8-11

Even at creation, God knew what was best for us, and in knowing what was best for us, He gave us the Sabbath—the seventh-day Sabbath. “And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made.”²⁹³ For more information on the topic, please visit www.sabbathtruth.com.

So, what if I keep nine of the ten commandments? Isn't that good enough? James makes it clear to us, “For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.”²⁹⁴ This means that if you and I are keeping nine of the ten commandments, but you are breaking one, you are still a law breaker. You are still living your own way regardless of the law. You are still sinning against God and His law.

Remember, sin is breaking the law—God's law, which has love as its foundation. And in many cases, disease is the result of a love problem. The world is sick because of sin, and it is our privilege to come to God, to be empowered by His Holy Spirit, that in us, Christ may overcome sin and set us free by His love. “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Genesis 2:2,3

²⁹⁴ James 2:10

²⁹⁵ John 1:29

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

A Love that Overcomes

8. Get (Back) Up

Our tenth and final point is to get up or get back up. To begin illustrating this point, let us go to John 5:2-8 and consider the story of the lame man by the pool of Bethesda. “Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed...Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, ‘Do you want to be made well?’...Jesus said to him, ‘Rise, take up your bed and walk.’ And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.”

Let us analyze, step by step, what happened in the healing of this man, because this act of healing is an example of how God wants to make us successful.

First of all, Jesus gave the man a command—to take up his bed and walk. The man was given definite instruction. He was told clearly what he was expected to do.

In order to take Jesus’ word, the man had to put his trust in Jesus. He had to believe in Him and what He said. He had to exercise faith in Jesus and His word.

The Bible tells us that faith works. So, when this man exercised his faith in Jesus, he then acted upon that faith to attempt to accomplish what Jesus had commanded him to do, even though he had no capacity in himself to accomplish the task.

Once the man believed in Jesus and initiated the attempt to comply with the command, he was given Divine power to actually be able to accomplish what the command specified. But it was only after faith acted upon the command that he was given the power to accomplish it. So the man was healed in the process of acting, by faith, upon the command of Jesus.

As we ponder this sequence of events, we discover why many of us have led unsuccessful lives, even in the spiritual realm. We have listened to lies ever since we were born, and we are used to believing these lies. So, when Jesus comes along and gives us a command that goes against these lies, we don't trust Him. We don't believe that it is possible to accomplish what He is asking of us. And if we don't believe, if we don't trust Him, if we don't exercise faith in His word, we will never overcome. I pray that the rest of what we have covered together in the Law of Life convinces you that you can and must trust God, and not yourself, your feelings, or other's opinions.

Another problem is that we want evidence of the power or healing before we act upon the command. When Jesus told the man to get up, if the man would have said, "Lord, make me well, and I will get up," what do you think would have happened? He wouldn't have been healed. He had to act by faith upon the command itself, and when he did so, the power and healing came. It is the same with us. If we wait until we feel strong enough or feel healed and whole before we begin to trust in and act upon God's commands and promises, we will never act upon them. And if we never act upon them, they will never do us any good. We will remain sick, powerless, and defeated.

So, getting up is an act of faith, responding to the command or promise of God, making the effort to accomplish what was commanded or promised, and being empowered by God in the very act to be able to accomplish what was commanded or promised.

Learning to Walk

So how do we understand falling down? Let's say that you have, by faith, gotten up from your sinful state and have stood for the right. But soon after that, you fall back down. What do you do next? Many of us, myself included, have been in the habit of wining, fussing, throwing an adult temper tantrum, staying on the ground, and refusing to get back up. But how does a baby learn how to walk?

Babies are very uncoordinated. About the age of 8 to 10 months of age, they begin to pull themselves up into a standing position next to furniture or other stable objects. Then as time progresses, they learn to scoot along, holding on to the furniture. But one day, they let go and look across the room at some desired object, and something momentous happens. They take a step! And what happens right after they take a step? They fall!

How do the parents respond? The parents are excited that their baby took its first step! Do they get angry at their baby and spank them and tell them how horrible they are because they fell? No, that is ridiculous. The parents know that the baby will fall many times in the process of learning how to walk. They are just excited that their baby is taking its first steps and learning how to walk!

But most of the time we think of God as an angry God. We believe He is watching for every opportunity to find fault in us so that He can condemn us. We believe that every time we fall, He is angry and disappointed with us. But that is not the case at all. He is like the parents that are excited about their baby learning to walk.

He is the Good Shepherd in search of the lost sheep. He is the woman sweeping the home for the lost coin. He is the father scanning the horizon every day, watching for the return of His prodigal child. And He knows that learning to walk always involves falling—always. It is not a problem for God that we fall. He already

paid the price for each fall on the cross. He already suffered the penalty for each sin. He already knew that each fall was going to come before it ever did, and He made provision for it.

We are told that “a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again.”²⁹⁶ Notice a couple things. It is a righteous man that falls. He falls multiple times. But in order to fall more than once, you have to get up and then fall again. So, a righteous man gets up, falls down, and gets back up again. The problem is not falling down. The problem is not getting back up.

You see, many times when we fall, we refuse to get back up again. It’s like we have a temper tantrum when we fall. We listen to the lies of the enemy telling us that we should “just give up. It doesn’t work anyway. You always were a failure, and you always will be. You can’t even go to God now, because you messed up and He won’t hear you. Just face it, you’ll never make it.” So, we believe the lies and we sit on the ground, unwilling and unable to get back up.

But God is there, trying to encourage you to get back up. Just as when He spoke to the man by the pool of Bethesda, Jesus speaks to you and me, saying, “Get back up.” And just like that man, we have a choice. We can either trust in Jesus and His command/promise, act upon that command, and be empowered to be able to accomplish the task, or we can trust the lies, distrust Jesus, and fail to act upon his command/promise. If the latter is our response, we will always stay on the ground, unable to get back up. But when we trust Jesus, believe His word, and act upon His command, He empowers us to be able to accomplish what He commands. A righteous man falls seven times and gets back up and keeps going. And I suspect it isn’t just seven times.

Jesus tells us, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.”²⁹⁷ How many times will you allow your

²⁹⁶ Proverbs 24:16

²⁹⁷ Matthew 18:22

child to fall in the process of learning to walk? Would you cut it off at 7 times? How about 490 times? I suspect neither. You would allow them to fall as many times as is necessary for them to learn to walk. The same is true of God. He will allow you as many times as it takes. So, stop beating yourself up. It only makes things worse.

Believe that God loves you. Believe that He has your best interests in mind. Believe that He is better to you than earthly parents ever could be. Believe that He has already forgiven your sin and made provision for you to get back up. Believe that He offers you, right now in the midst of your fall, the power to get back up and keep moving on toward victory.

Keep in mind that God's grace and forgiveness is not a license for sin. "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"²⁹⁸

God's grace is not there to make us unconcerned about falling and staying on the ground. It is not there to make us feel that we can just fall any time we purposely want to, and it's okay. When we see how much God loves us, when we see the sacrifice that He made for us on the cross, when we see how much of a treasure God is and how valuable we are to him, when we see that every sin wounds the heart of God and added to the pain that Jesus bore on the cross, when we see that sin separates us from the very One who loves us so much and the very One we love in return, then we constantly move away from that sin toward the righteousness of Christ. We grow in Christ so that we walk more and fall less.

Just like a child learning how to walk, we progress, improve, get up quicker, stay up longer, fall down less frequently, are more stable, are able to conquer more and more difficult terrain, and eventually we are able to "run and not be weary,"²⁹⁹ and "walk

²⁹⁸ Romans 6:1,2

²⁹⁹ Isaiah 40:31

and not faint.”³⁰⁰ We will be able to “mount up with wings like eagles,”³⁰¹ and we will become all that God created us to be.

In this Christian walk, you will fall. Expect it. But by His grace, you can get back up and continue the journey. Along the way, we become more and more like Jesus. And at the end of the road, there are blessings unimaginable.

“To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”³⁰² I don’t know if God has ever offered any other creature the ability to sit on His throne, but He promises that if we overcome—if we, by faith, keep getting back up—He will allow us to rule all of creation along with Him when He returns to take us with Him to heaven. I want to be there, don’t you?

Solution Summary

So, what is the solution to my problems?

1. Come & Take from God’s love

We must come to God and take from His love. “Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around.”³⁰³

Taking of that divine love makes us look like this.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

³⁰² Revelation 3:21

³⁰³ White, E. G. (1911). *The Acts of the Apostles*. (p 551). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

2. Accept A New Heart / New Love

I must accept a new heart, which brings to me a new love. This love does not give to receive. It takes to give. And taking to give restores me to proper function.

3. Accept the Divine Exchange at the Cross

I need to come to the cross and accept by faith the divine exchange made possible for me by God's grace, accepting the free gift of Jesus' perfect past in exchange for my sinful one, experiencing the brokenness and transformation of the amazing love of God, and being set free from being the perpetrator and the victim.

4. Surrender My Life Entirely to Him

I need to surrender my life entirely to Him. I need to let go of the rope, get into the wheelbarrow, and put 100% trust in Jesus to get me across to the land of victory.

"I am the Vine, ye are the branches,' Christ said to His disciples. Though He was about to be removed from them, their spiritual union with Him was to be unchanged. The connection of the branch with the vine, He said, represents the relation you are to sustain to Me. The scion is engrafted into the living vine, and fiber by fiber, vein by vein, it grows into the vine stock. The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. So the soul dead in trespasses and sins receives life through connection with Christ. By faith in Him as a personal Saviour the union is formed. The sinner unites his weakness to Christ's strength, his emptiness to Christ's fullness, his frailty to Christ's enduring might. Then he has the mind of Christ. The humanity of Christ has touched our humanity, and our humanity has touched divinity. Thus through the agency of the Holy Spirit man becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is accepted in the Beloved. This union with Christ, once formed, must be maintained. Christ said, 'Abide in Me, and I in

you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me.' This is no casual touch, no off-and-on connection. The branch becomes a part of the living vine. The communication of life, strength, and fruitfulness from the root to the branches is unobstructed and constant. Separated from the vine, the branch cannot live. No more, said Jesus, can you live apart from Me. The life you have received from Me can be preserved only by continual communion. Without Me you cannot overcome one sin, or resist one temptation.

'Abide in Me, and I in you.' Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character."³⁰⁴

In choosing Christ and putting our faith in Him, we are connected with the Vine, and His life becomes ours.

5. Search my heart

I search my heart to understand the motivation behind what I do, so that the deception of my heart dies in the light of God's love, and I can intelligently surrender the revealed defects of my heart to Christ that He may be able to overcome those defects and replace them with victory in and through His power.

6. Choose to Think Only Positively About Them

I think only good thoughts about others.

"The soul can be in a state of peace only by relying upon God, and by partaking of the divine nature through faith in the Son of

³⁰⁴ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 675-6). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

God. The Spirit of God produces a new life in the soul, bringing the thoughts and desires into obedience to the will of Christ, and the inward man is renewed in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things unto himself. As God works upon the heart by his Holy Spirit, man must co-operate with him. The thoughts must be bound about, restricted, withdrawn from branching out and contemplating things that will only weaken and defile the soul. The thoughts must be pure, the meditations of the heart must be clean, if the words of the mouth are to be words acceptable to Heaven, and helpful to your associates...In the sermon on the mount, Christ presented before his disciples the far-reaching principles of the law of God. He taught his hearers that the law was transgressed by the thoughts before the evil desire was carried out in actual commission. We are under obligation to control our thoughts, and to bring them into subjection to the law of God. The noble powers of the mind have been given to us by the Lord, that we may employ them in contemplating heavenly things.”³⁰⁵

By God’s grace I can think well of even those who hurt me.

7. Love Others

I have the privilege of giving to others the love that I took from God.

“When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance.”³⁰⁶

Love for God automatically springs forth in love to others.

³⁰⁵ White, E. G. The Renewing of the Mind. *The Review and Herald*. June 12, 1888, paragraph 3.

³⁰⁶ White, E. G. (1900) *Christ’s Object Lessons*. (p 384). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

8. Remember, It's Not Mine

I need to remind myself, "It's not mine!" I don't possess it. I can't produce it. I am not my own. I am just the delivery guy. It is all God's.

9. Use Natural Remedies, Change My Lifestyle

I use natural remedies, and I change my lifestyle to fit that which God delights in, because I love Him.

10. Get (Back) Up

I get up and get back up. I make the effort, and He provides the power.

If I would have given this 10-part prescription to you at the beginning of this book, would you have accepted it, or thrown it away? Would you have believed me that these points are vitally important to your physical health? Or would you have gone in search of a second opinion? I pray that you now see that these points are vitally important to your health and healing—of body, mind, and soul.

A number of years ago, I fell in love with the following quote. "When the gospel is received in its purity and power, it is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin."³⁰⁷ Which maladies originated in sin? Diabetes? Heart disease? Cancer? Obesity? Arthritis? Auto-immune diseases? All maladies originated in sin. And what is a cure for the maladies that originated in sin? The gospel received in its purity and power is that cure.

The Law of Life

So, what is the Law of Life? "...the principles of righteousness embodied in the Decalogue are as immutable as the eternal throne. Not one command has been annulled, not a jot or tittle has been changed. Those principles that were made known to man in

³⁰⁷ White, E. G. (1905) *The Ministry of Healing*. (p. 115) Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

Paradise as the great **law of life** will exist unchanged in Paradise restored. When Eden shall bloom on earth again, God's law of love will be obeyed by all beneath the sun."³⁰⁸ The Law of God is the law of life.

"God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is **the law of life** for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto."³⁰⁹ The Law of Life is self-renouncing love. And that love can only be found in God.

"Looking unto Jesus we see that it is the glory of our God to give. 'I do nothing of Myself,' said Christ...'I seek not Mine own glory,' but the glory of Him that sent Me. John 8:28; 6:57; 8:50; 7:18. In these words is set forth the great principle which is **the law of life** for the universe. All things Christ received from God, but **He took to give**. So in the heavenly courts, in His ministry for all created beings: through the beloved Son, the Father's life flows out to all; through the Son it returns, in praise and joyous service, a tide of love, to the great Source of all. And thus through Christ the circuit of beneficence is complete, representing the character of the great Giver, **the law of life**."³¹⁰

"All things both in heaven and in earth declare that the great **law of life** is a law of service. The infinite Father ministers to the

³⁰⁸ White, E. G. (1896) *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*. (p 50). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

³⁰⁹ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 19). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

³¹⁰ White, E. G. (1898) *The Desire of Ages*. (p 21). Review and Herald Publishing Association.

life of every living thing. Christ came to the earth ‘as He that serveth.’ The angels are ‘ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation.’ The same law of service is written upon all things in nature. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the trees of the forest, the leaves, the grass, and the flowers, the sun in the heavens and the stars of light—all have their ministry. Lake and ocean, river and water spring—**each takes to give.**”³¹¹ The Law of Life is the law of service, taking to give. And that Law of Life, applied to one’s life, brings health and life and love.

³¹¹ White, E. G. (1903) *Education*. (p 103). Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association.

FINAL SUMMARY

As we come to the end of this journey together, I want you to step back and consider the central truth that has been woven throughout every chapter of this book. The Law of Life is not merely a principle about health. It is not merely a principle about relationships. It is not merely a principle about overcoming negative thoughts, emotional wounds, or destructive habits. It is the principle upon which all life functions. It is the law of heaven itself.

The great issue before us is one of source. Every human being has legitimate needs. We need love, acceptance, belonging, security, understanding, forgiveness, peace, and hope. The question is not whether we need these things, but where we seek to obtain them. Much of human suffering begins when we look to people, possessions, accomplishments, pleasures, or circumstances to supply what only God can provide. We expect from created beings what only the Creator can give. As a result, we become disappointed, wounded, fearful, controlling, resentful, and sick.

The Law of Life points us back to God's original design. God never intended us to give in order to receive. He created us to take from Him in order to give. He alone is the Source. Everyone else is the recipient of what we receive from Him. When we reverse this order, dysfunction follows. When we restore this order, healing begins.

We have seen that the human heart is naturally governed by selfishness and pride. Left to itself, it cannot produce the love that God's law requires. This is why we need more than information; we need transformation. We need a new heart. Through the sacrifice of Christ, God offers a complete exchange. Jesus takes our guilt, our shame, our wounds, our failures, and our past. In return, He offers His righteousness, His peace, His victory, His

power, and His life. The cross is not merely forgiveness for what we have done; it is freedom from what has been done to us and freedom from what we have become.

We have also discovered that suffering need not be wasted. What the enemy intends for destruction, God can transform into a testimony, a ministry, and a blessing to others. We have learned that our thoughts matter, that our beliefs matter, that our treasure matters, and that health is inseparably connected to the principles of love and trust.

But none of these truths will change your life unless you act upon them.

So, I leave you with one final appeal.

Come to God as your only Source. Take from Him daily by faith through prayer, Scripture, and communion with Him. Accept the new heart He offers. Enter fully into the divine exchange made possible at the cross. Surrender your plans, your fears, your hurts, your rights, and your future into His hands. Leave your baggage behind. Forgive as you have been forgiven. Think well of others. Trust His promises. And live by the Law of Life—taking from God so that you may freely give to others.

If you do this, you will discover what every human heart longs for: freedom, peace, purpose, healing, and the joy of living in harmony with the God who is love. My prayer is that this will not simply be a book you have read, but a life you choose to live.

THE LAW OF LIFE

For more information and resources, including free consultations, please visit us npmin.org and thelawoflife.com and check out our YouTube channel @NewParadigmMinistries.

THE LAW OF *Life*

REVISED EDITION

Why do so many people struggle with broken relationships, emotional pain, destructive habits, and poor health despite their best efforts to change?

In *The Law of Life*, physician and teacher Dr. Mark Sandoval explores a powerful principle that lies at the root of true healing and lasting transformation. Through practical illustrations, biblical insights, personal testimony, and real-life stories, he invites readers to examine the connection between love, belief, health, forgiveness, and freedom.

Discover how unresolved hurts shape the mind, how the past can lose its power, and how learning to receive God's love can transform the way you think, live, and relate to others. Whether you are searching for physical healing, emotional restoration, spiritual growth, or deeper peace, *The Law of Life* offers a compelling path toward genuine freedom and abundant living.



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