

"We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God."

*Abraham Lincoln 1863  
(From Church and State in the United States  
New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950.)*

"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie..."

*Romans 1:25*

"Truth is so obscure in these times and falsehood so established that unless we love the truth, we cannot know it."

*Blaise Pascal (1623—1662)  
French Philosopher, Mathematician, and Scientist*

"A general dissolution of principles and manners will more surely overthrow the liberties of America than the whole force of the common enemy. While the people are virtuous they cannot be subdued; but when they lose their virtue they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader . . . If virtue and knowledge are diffused among the people, they will never be enslaved. This will be their great security."

*Samuel Adams  
Father of the American Revolution, instigator of  
the Boston Tea Party, signer of the Declaration of  
Independence, member of Congress*

# Embracing the Truth

*Understanding the Eight Keys to Christian Living*

*Publisher & Copyright*

**Campus Crusade for Christ**

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*Author:*

Jim and Barbara Grunseth  
Elkhorn, Wisconsin

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***Special Note: Embracing The Truth is not to take the place of professional counseling, medical care, or appropriate psychiatric outpatient or inpatient care.***

# INTRODUCTION

Lincoln's words ring loud and clear. We have forgotten God. Because of this, as the Apostle Paul declares, we have exchanged the truth of God for the lies of the devil. It is night in America. Darkness prevails. If we, as a people, do not turn back to God, beg His forgiveness, and, once again, embrace the truth, all will be lost.

**Embracing The Truth** is an eight lesson study that is designed for use in small groups or one to one (man to man or woman to woman) relationships. It is designed to bring hope, encouragement, and vision to others and to help them to embrace the truth.

Our nation is in crisis! People today are hurting and wounded in their personal lives. Many have simply lost all hope. Many are living in sin and refusing to acknowledge their iniquity before Almighty God. We live in a pagan land where barbaric values are replacing the godly, humble virtues that forged our country.

When a nation rejects God's truth, whoever is in power determines what is right. The ruling philosophy becomes:

## MIGHT DETERMINES RIGHT

This is what happened in Nazi Germany. Since Hitler had rejected God and had the power, he determined what was right. Millions lost their lives as a result!

America, as a nation, has rejected God. Politics has become a power struggle. The victor determines who and what is right. The victor also determines who and what is wrong. Christians who seek the truth found only in God's Word must embrace it and stand up for it. If we don't, who will?

We have been lied to and many of us are in bondage to these lies. This must stop.

Barbara and I hope and pray that **Embracing The Truth** will encourage and strengthen you in your walk with God and in your relationships in life. We pray, then, that you will make a difference in helping to restore our land back to Almighty God. He is the Victor and He determined long ago what *is* right and wrong.

If you are hurting, struggling, or in some sort of bondage, we pray that He who is the Truth will, indeed, set you free.

*Jim and Barbara Grunseth*

# EMBRACING THE TRUTH GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. Even though the Host person is the so called Leader, look to your time together as a time of mutual learning *and* growth. See yourselves not as "teacher to student(s)" but as "brother to brother(s)" or "sister to sister(s)." A small group or one to one (same sex) format will work best.
2. The Host: serves as a coach, facilitator, and participant in the group.
3. Spend an hour or preferably an hour and a half together each time.
4. As you meet, encourage warmth, openness, and trust.
5. Try attentive listening more than talking. Be understanding.
6. Be informal. Make this fun and enjoyable!
7. Go through each lesson and compare answers. You don't have to discuss every one—just the ones that are important to you and your friend(s). Be sure, however, to cover all questions where you are asked to **CIRCLE** something or **SIGN YOUR NAME**. These are very important! Remember: Caring, supportive relationships are more important than issuing information for people to absorb.

## GROUND RULES

- \* Be relaxed—be genuine—be the Real You.
- \* Assure each other of strict confidentiality.
- \* If the homework is not completed, **DO NOT MEET**.
- \* Only share what you feel safe to share.
- \* Pray for each other out loud at the end of each "get together."

## VERSE MEMORY

At the beginning of each of your **Embracing The Truth** get-togethers, take turns sharing the Key's memory verse. Remember, verse memory is good for your soul!

1. Expose the Lie ..... *7 Peter 5:8*
2. Present your Wounds..... *1 Peter 2:24*
3. Embrace the Truth..... *John 8:32*
4. Rejoice in Weakness ..... *Hebrews 4:15*
5. Be Authentic ..... *Psalms 62:8*
6. Commit to Character ..... *Psalms 25:21*
7. Pour Out, Release, and Praise ..... *Psalms 100:4*
8. Love the Lord..... *Mark 12:33*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Barbara and I want to express our deepest gratitude to Lorraine Broom for her outstanding editing work and godly insights. She, along with her husband, Al, who is the Director of Church Dynamics International, has served churches and Christians all over the world! It was through their vision that this material was developed.

We also wish to thank Dennis Rainey, National Director of FamilyLife, a ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ, and his wife Barbara. Their humility, integrity of heart, and their godly commitment to each other in their marriage, helped to forge some of the key concepts such as "honor\*", "accountability", "Ideal Self, etc. They, as well, have been such a blessing!

# AUTHORS

Jim Grunseth is a graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point and Trinity Evangelical Divinity School.

He and his wife, Barbara, are on staff with Campus Crusade for Christ Jim is a Biblical Counselor and Barbara teaches Kindergarten at Faith Christian School. They have seven children and six grandchildren.

Together, they have also written **Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage** and **Remember the Rowboats: Anchor your Marriage to Christ**. To order call: 1(800) 827-2788 or visit [www.marriageanchors.com](http://www.marriageanchors.com) .

# DEDICATION

Barbara and I would like to dedicate **Embracing The Truth** to all those courageous people who have counted the cost, refused to retreat, and have decided to pursue, mentor, and disciple hearts and homes for Christ. These godly patriots know darkness will prevail should the light not shine!

# OPENING THOUGHTS

FROM Jim

## WIMPY! WIMPY! WIMPY!

A long time ago, I was a Boy Scout at an "up north" camp. I asked the Eagle Scout who was over all of us to please stop doing a certain activity that not only was hurtful but totally unethical for an Eagle Scout.

## HE SIMPLY LAUGHED IN MY FACE!

I timidly warned him again. He ignored me, so I reported him to the Scout Master.

At age twelve **my life seemed to end**. For telling the truth, the other guys ganged up on me, encircled me, and beat me up. I was hurt physically and wounded emotionally.

## I CRIED.

From that point on, almost every one of the kids ridiculed me by calling me:

## WIMPY.

I grew to hate that name and myself. My **once loyal** friends would walk all over me, push me down, treat me like dirt, and wait to torment me in the school hallways by the lockers.

## I AVOIDED THE LOCKERS A LOT.

I had no one to turn to. I felt I couldn't unload to my parents because they wanted "the best" for me—and the misery I was going through was not the best! It was not what a "good boy" should be feeling!

I never seemed to defend myself. I felt I was so rotten and "wimpish" that I **didn't have the right** to defend myself. They were right! I was probably as milk-toasty as they made me out to be.

## I WAS EXPERIENCING A LIVING HELL.

The worst was when a very pretty and kind girl that I wanted to ask out, stepped up to me, and with the deepest sincerity, asked me,

## "HOW'S IT GOIN', WIMP?"

This curse of peer rejection **cut me deep** and I still feel twinges of pain now and then. Their biting sarcasm and name-calling lasted through my freshman year at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.

It began to stop after I was accepted to The U. S. Military Academy at West Point. You see, I guess they felt I performed my way out of being "Wimpy."

## I'LL SHOW THEM!

And I did! Little did I know that I merely buried my grief and my wounds. Although I became a Christian at age 18, for the next ten years I remained a:

## PEOPLE PLEASER.

It was **more important** for me to win and maintain approval from my bosses at work than it was "to rest" in the affirming approval from God.

Biblical truth was not nearly as important to me as how I felt or as getting my needs met.

I married Julie, my wife of twenty years, shortly after I graduated from the Academy. The last seven years of her life she fought a brave, yet difficult battle against breast cancer.

My heart and soul were devoted to getting strokes and "atta' boys" at work. Pleasing and seeking the Lord and meeting the emotional needs of my wife and children got the leftovers.

On the outside, we appeared as the happy, respectful Christian family. The community's and church's attitude toward us was:

## LOOK! A SOLID GODLY FAMILY

### SERVING IN CHURCH

### AND BEING AN EXAMPLE

### TO THE COMMUNITY.

Boy, was that a joke! My marriage to Julie became greatly strained back in the late 1970's over the tragic state of my priorities and the fact that I was still trying to get my needs met from my performance and how others in authority viewed ME.

I bought the devil's **lie** completely. Getting respect, getting ahead, getting nice things, and delving into sin for personal perks now and then were my goals in life. They almost cost me everything that I held dear to me.

## SATAN CAME SO CLOSE TO WINNING.

Apart from God's mercy and grace, I would have lost:

## THIS BATTLE.

There are many **great battles** raging throughout the universe. None are more significant than the following two:

1. The battle for **souls**.
2. The battle for **truth**.



If you dive into the first spiritual battle by **ignoring** or **rejecting** the free gift of Salvation (saved from the penalty and power of sin) offered through the amazing sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, Satan will have won and you will have **lost**. You will spend an eternity in Hell never to experience the joy of eternal life with Jesus in Heaven. **You will be paying for this foolish choice forever!**

If you receive Jesus Christ into your heart as Lord and Savior by faith, trusting only in His ability and authority to save you, immediately you will be given Eternal Life—life found in Jesus Christ alone.

## HOWEVER!

Even though you **commit** your life to the Lord and receive His Gracious Gift of Forgiveness and New Life. Satan will implement his "Battle Plan #2" to try to:

1. Deceive you.
2. Keep you deceived.
3. Teach and tempt you to compare yourself.
4. Lie to you that you have to **perform** in order to maintain your salvation and earn God's favor, approval, and acceptance.
5. **Discourage** you by convincing you Jesus has rejected you.
6. Keep you depressed and **self-focused** so you look deep and long into your past. (Some of this is fine and may be needed, but not to the point that you become self-absorbed, despairing over your own wretched heart, and stop focusing on your loving, caring Savior.)
7. Keep you **embarrassed** about sharing the Good News (the Gospel) of Jesus Christ since you believe He will **reject** you eventually and that you would be rude, arrogant, and narrow minded if you pushed your religious views on someone else. He will teach you to exemplify to others that being a good, law-abiding citizen—being kind and thoughtful to neighbors and others—is **all** one needs to be to get into heaven.
8. Urge you to be **isolated** from other Christians and to criticize them for their shortcomings. On the other hand, he will urge you to **tolerate** the destructive sin choices of others. He tells you that God would not want you to be judgmental or extreme. Those that choose to give in to homosexuality, pornography, alcoholism, abortion, adultery, or same sex marriages should be tolerated and, in some cases, encouraged to keep this up. You believe the lie that says God loves and makes room for such **alternate lifestyles**. You begin to believe that these people are simply born that way. The devil's lies will also keep you from serving others because that would detract from others serving you!
9. Help you to believe just how worthless, disgusting, and worm-like you *should* feel about yourself.
10. Convince you that to live in the grace-filled light of Jesus Christ is a "pie in the sky" fairy tale; that the best plan is to keep this foolishness of the Gospel to yourself and, hopefully then, you will work at **destroying** yourself. Satan is the Father of Lies. He has had centuries to become good at it. Really good!



# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Keep falsehood and lies far from me..." Proverbs 30:8*

*"All your words are true..." Psalm 119:160*

Key Number One

## EXPOSE THE LIE

### Think About This:

When we feel we have to measure up in order to win and maintain approval, our sinful pride kicks in. For a while, we feel good. But when the "approver" raises the requirements, we begin to tilt. A slow rotting death inside of us develops. Lies bring death. Truth brings life.

### MEMORY VERSE

*1 Peter 5:8*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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## **BRILLIANT!!!**

The devil is extremely intelligent. In fact he is brilliant! He wants you to limp around like a deflated air mattress in the water. He wants you to wallow in the mire of self pity and self-loathing like a wounded hippo writhing in the mud. *He wants you to value yourself so poorly that you feel:*

## **DESIGNED FOR DESTRUCTION**

**Satan's plan for you**

**is personalized**

**and well thought-through.**

**It is utterly inescapable**

**apart from God's grace.**

*"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert*

*Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion,  
seeking someone to devour."*

IPeter 5:8 (NASB)

Barbara and I are convinced that Satan has a specifically designed **battle plan** to slowly and subtly destroy you spiritually, morally, emotionally, physically, relationally, and socially.

He hates the word "trust". It sounds too much like "truth". He knows that if you know the Truth, the Truth will set you free.

He **trembles** even at the thought of truth. As long as you allow him to deceive you, he will ensnare you in discouragement, compromise, and sin.

If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, the devil cannot rob you of the Lord's gift to you of Eternal Life.

### **HOWEVER!**

He most certainly will attempt to deceive you regarding your forgiven, secure, and beloved relationship with Jesus. He possesses a ravenous passion to enslave you and hinder your witness for the Lord. Many, foolishly, are giving him **permission** to do this.

The bottom line is he hates you—he wants you miserable—he will go to any lengths to ruin your reputation—he wants you in **bondage** to guilt, shame, and sin—he wants you dead!

### **HE WILL BLIND YOU TO THE TRUTH**

#### **WITH LIES**

#### **THE WORLD OFFERS.**

Satan's Plan for deceiving, discouraging, and destroying you is based on his tempting:

#### **LIE OF COMPARISON**

This Satanic lie states that God determines your precious value to Him according to three comparison-oriented measurements:

1. PERFORMANCE
2. APPEARANCE
- 3.. POSSESSIONS

As you look at this lie, remember that:

### **COMPARISON IS A ROOT OF INFERIORITY.**

#### **1. PERFORMANCE**

- a. We base our significance on how well we perform for others. We begin to crave their approval (from parents, teachers, bosses, peers, churches, etc.) based on accomplishments as well as attitudes. Sometimes, we even try to compare our intelligence to that of others.
- b. We become frustrated because we are not able to **please** them all. We just can't seem to reach and maintain their high, high standards.

- c. Sometimes even some churches will impose external measuring standards to *keep you in line* and to coerce you into trying to measure up to their idea of piety when, in reality, they have slipped into a legalistic, performance-oriented religion that makes people tired, weary, guilty (false guilt), and depressed.

The unwritten, or even written, rules might include:

- \* We don't allow non-conservative women's attire, viewing certain TV shows, attending parties, etc. Any "breaking of these rules" will not only be looked down upon but may lead to disciplinary action.  
  
(Putting hard and fast legalistic do's and don'ts on the backs of church members and voiding their need to love and abide in the Lord and seek their guidance from His Word only cripples the hearts of believers.)
- \* We really don't tolerate anyone offering us constructive feedback. We call that slanderous criticism!
- \* We expect you to attend Sunday morning, Sunday night, and Wednesday night services! This may come in the form of polite requests, yet the underlying motive is to get you to meet their needs and requirements.
- \* You will be considered "more godly and acceptable" if you "measure up" to our "religious" rules and standards.

NOTE: One dear Elder of a well-meaning church involved himself five nights a week in church activities and meetings. He felt better because he thought he was pleasing God, but, instead, he was simply **performing better!** By the way, his marriage and family suffered greatly.

- d. Satan has a good grip on us when we begin to **COMPARE** our performance with others. Since we find someone better than us, we despair and either drive ourselves toward the bottomless pit of workaholism or we quit the rat race and just give up (nervous breakdown, laziness, bitterness, social dropout, gross sin, etc.)
- e. This performance trap stems from the lie we embrace that declares God's love for His children is conditional and has to be earned and maintained.

## 2. APPEARANCE

- a. We base our significance on how well we look physically. What a bummer! If we're in the "IN" group, we fret over keeping in it. If we're not in the "IN" group, we either put on an emotional mask and become somebody we're not so we can be accepted OR we worry about how awful others **must** think of us, and then we enter despair.
- b. We also base our personal value on how we appear socially. The above mentioned "IN" group fakery and paranoia applies here as well. If we feel we look like losers, then most likely we will begin to act, appear, and respond like losers.
- c. Unfortunately, sometimes churches and Christian organizations want you to go through the externals of "appearing godly." Dress well, go to church with a smile on your face, and when they ask you how you're doing, always say—"fine" and then smile some more—even though you may be despairing, hurting, or lonely, with tears ready to burst forth.

If you just keep appearing godly, they feel, then you are godly, happy, and all your needs must have been met! These unwritten attitudes cripple and stifle Christians and drive non-Christians away.

### 3. POSSESSIONS

- a. We base our significance on Material Possessions. Perhaps if we owned a bigger home, had a nicer car, or possessed a thousand other **things** that the media tries to convince us we nicer, then we'd feel better, more fulfilled.

Sometimes, as strange as this sounds, we Christians base our value within the church on how **pious** and **poor** we can be. We adopt the attitude that less is better than **more**. True—we are to care for the needs of others and to give cheerfully, sacrificially, and abundantly to the Lord and His work. However, being poor is not a prerequisite for being godly.

If you are in full-time vocational Christian service, the above tensions can be particularly troublesome. One such honest and broken pastor told me in confidence his Elder Board's attitude toward providing financially for his family was this: "God will keep you humble and we will keep you broke!"

- b. We place hope in how much **power** we gain, maintain, or lose. Titles, rank, position, degrees, office size and location, promotions, number of staff answering to us, perks, awards, etc.,—all these and more help us assess just how much "external" power we possess." The status rat race can be a real crippler!
- c. Some of us put stock in how much internal or personal power we think we possess or that others tell us we possess. The truth is that God gives different people different personalities. Some are energetic and assertive. Others are quiet, gentle, and approachable. With the power of the Holy Spirit, each personality is to serve others in order to **build up** the Body of Believers in Christ. Every person and his/her role are of equal value and importance to the Lord.
- d. We determine our ability to be happy and content based on the **memories** we possess.
1. **Memories that enable:** Fond memories of special holidays, fun with mom or dad, good times with friends, victories, campfires, fishing trips, "mountain top" experiences, etc.
  2. **Memories that disable:** Being raised in an alcoholic home, experiencing trauma such as sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, living through a "broken" home, having mom or dad sick, injured, die, or simply losing a job, moving to a new location and school, being picked on, labeled, or nick-named, experiencing a pregnancy outside of marriage, having a miscarriage, having one or more abortions, giving birth to a handicapped child, experiencing infidelity in marriage, etc.

### SATAN'S PLAN IS FOR YOU TO BELIEVE THAT GOD LOVES YOU ACCORDING TO YOUR PERFORMANCE, APPEARANCE, AND POSSESSIONS

The lie states: If you are **winning** in these areas, God's love for you will be great. If you are **losing** in these areas, God's love for you will be **small**.

Take a moment and jot down at least three personal and specific examples from your own life and past when you felt you were losing or **not measuring up** in reference to these three measurements:

**PERFORMANCE**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**APPEARANCE**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**POSSESSIONS**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

Now assume you have a possible total of **ten points** to assign to these three measurements. Assign the number of points to each of them based on their importance to you in determining your significance. (Example: 4-Performance, 5-Appearance, 1-Possessions)

**POINTS ASSIGNED**

\_\_\_\_\_ **PERFORMANCE**

\_\_\_\_\_ **APPEARANCE**

\_\_\_\_\_ **POSSESSIONS**

NOTE: Why did the measurement that was assigned the most points, receive them? Be specific. Use a personal example.



To draw out a deeper understanding concerning the present condition of how you really feel about yourself, please be as **honest** and **vulnerable** as you can and write down:

**THREE MEMORIES FROM YOUR PAST THAT ENABLE YOU TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF TODAY.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**THREE MEMORIES FROM YOUR PAST THAT DISABLE YOU AND KEEP YOU FROM FEELING GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**CIRCLE ONE OF THOSE SIX MEMORIES THAT AFFECTS YOU THE MOST.**

PLEASE EXPLAIN WHY: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Would you say your past memories enable you or disable you more?

(circle one)

**Enable More**

**Disable More**

WHY? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

For many people, the memories that seem to now and then slap us in the face and **shame** us are those that **remind us** of how we have failed, let others down, sinned, made foolish choices, did not live up to our potential, etc. God never does this. Satan is a master of this!

The Lord says in Isaiah 43:18-19,25:

*"Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!... I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more."*

On the other hand, Satan loves to drudge up these disabling memories or failures in an attempt to **accuse** us and **enslave** us. **He wants us to remember!** Because we have all sinned and failed, many agree with the devil. We begin to believe we should be condemned, punished, and discarded.

Then we agree that we should be discouraged and that **isolating** ourselves is best for all. This way, others won't **discover** the failing wretch we know we are. Also, by isolating ourselves, we won't have to risk allowing others the chance to hurt, reject, or misunderstand us again.

## **WE NEED TO LEARN TO SILENCE HIM!**

In properly exposing this worldly, satanic lie, it is vital to understand Satan's:

### **TEN STEPS TO DESTRUCTION**

- Step 1. We first compare ourselves to others.
- Step 2. We don't measure up. We fall short. We envy or we feel guilty.
- Step 3. What's worse is that we then compare ourselves to ourselves. We create our **IDEAL SELF**: that self-created idol of how we would really like to be or how we would like others to view us.

This dangerous idol (Ideal Self) has many attributes—like:

- a. He weighs 15 pounds less!
- b. She has no gray hair or stretch marks!
- c. He has more hair, more respect, and more success!
- d. She is the perfect wife and mother.
- e. He never wrestles with insecurity or fears. He balances all of his priorities and is looked up to in his community. He never stumbles. He probably does not need Jesus.
- f. She comes home from her "outside the home" employment at night, full of love and energy. She can do it all! She can make a wonderful supper, spend quality and quantity time with each child, pick up the house, bake bread as gifts for all the neighbors, and have a life-changing quiet time with the Lord.
- g. He runs three miles and easily does 100 sit ups before his quiet time and before work. He loves his job, his boss, and he is the "apple of his boss's eye." He is always in demand.
- h. She never gets angry and never compares herself to other women! She never gets depressed! Her nylons never snag!
- i. He has the next higher degree, has written three books, and has a better car and a bigger house!
- j. She shops in nothing but those quaint designer shops and has a wardrobe and hairdo that are the envy of all who know her. All of her clothes in her vast "walk-in" closet either fit or are just comfortably too big. Yes!
- k. They both grew up in stable, loving, and affirming homes. The Little House On The Prairie, The Brady Bunch, and Dr. Quinn, could have not done better!
- l. His wife always feels loved by him. Her husband always feels respected by her. Each always measures up to the other's performance expectations.

- m. There is no blemish on their track record like divorce, abortion, being fired, being unemployed, being sexually abused, losing virginity before marriage, not getting great grades, a police record, or remaining unmarried....
- n. There are never any financial problems; the check book always balances and it never seems to "rain on their parade!"
- o. There is never any conflict or interference from—in-laws! Their 2.5 children are respectful, honest, always clean their rooms, and, look for ways to help at home.
- p. He and she have the unconditional approval and admiration of their respective fathers and mothers. They always have!<sup>2</sup>

**ISN'T THE IDEAL SELF ENOUGH TO MAKE YOU SICK?**

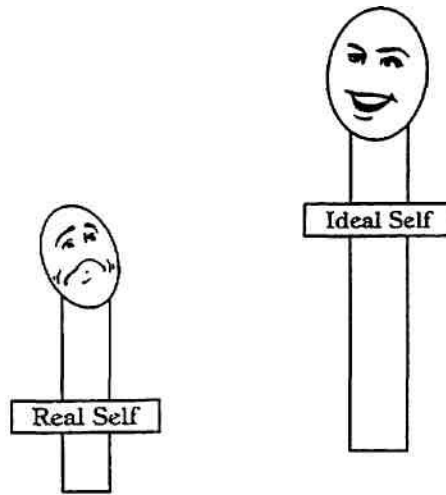
**CAN YOU SEE WHY GOD HATES AND FORBIDS AN IDOL**

**LIKE YOUR IDEAL SELF?**

**THE PROBLEM IS THAT IN CREATING YOUR IDEAL SELF**

**YOU DEVISE IMPOSSIBLE STANDARDS TO LIVE UP TO!**

**Read II Corinthians 10:12**  
**Consider the visual aid below:**



Take an honest moment and try to accurately describe your IDEAL SELF.

Go ahead! Be real! Let your hair down here (if you have any left!)

Come up with at least five.

**MY IDEAL SELF:**

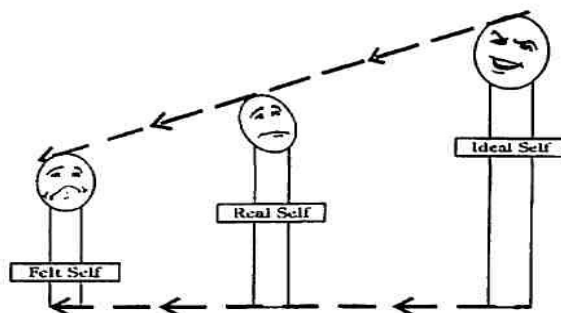
- (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- (2) \_\_\_\_\_
- (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- (5) \_\_\_\_\_

Step 4. Once you create your ideal self (idol), this guilt and shame-producing monster turns on you (your REAL SELF) and you condemn yourself for not measuring up. (Satan sits in the bleachers cheering you on!)

Step 5. You buy this satanic deception: "I'd be happy, fulfilled, and content only if... if I could be like my IDEAL SELF").

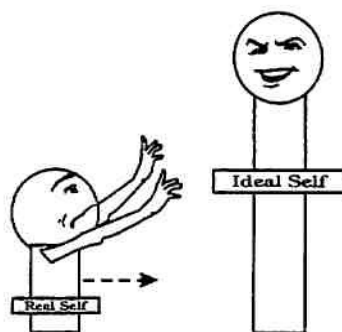
Step 6. You see yourself not as you really are: You don't see yourself as God's wonderful, beloved handiwork (Psalm 139:14), or His chosen, treasure possession (Deuteronomy 7:6), or His precious, honored, and loved child (Isaiah 43:4). Instead, you end up seeing your FELT SELF. This tempting reflection is simply how you feel about yourself as the hideous IDEAL SELF looks down on and condemns your REAL SELF. Jesus loves you, the Real You. The one that is not perfect. The one He's not finished with yet.

Consider the more complete visual aid below

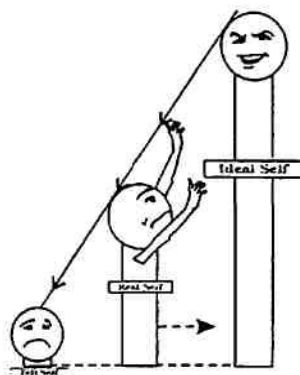


Step 7. Trapped in Satan's web of deception, you are frantic to try to somehow attain some qualities of your IDEAL SELF so you can experience significance and value.

View it now.



This leads to a more dismal, hopeless "Felt" Self.



- Step 8. But as you desperately speed closer toward this idol, this self-created god, you are crushed by guilt, defeat and despair. You believe God can only consider you precious, favored, and acceptable if you deserve it through **merit**. What happens is that your IDEAL SELF has become more impossible to attain. The idea of God enjoying your company seems ridiculous!
- Step 9. The tempting reflection (your FELT SELF: what you feel about yourself and how you see yourself) thus becomes more insignificant, more hopeless, more ugly, more worthless, and more undesirable.

Because your Felt Self feels so lacking, you experience deep emptiness. You may attempt to fill this void with rebellion—or attempt to cover up your emotional pain with trying to be good, taking prescription or illegal drugs, abusing alcohol, escaping through affairs, or by overeating. Or you may try to fill your Felt Self emptiness with envying others, pornography, soap operas, working long hours, or struggling for recognition and approval. Yet none of these satisfy.

You then seek to **isolate** yourself from others. You would not want to disappoint them more than you feel they already are! You would not want to be discovered! You do not want them to find out the real truth about you!

Rejection by others would only hurt you further. So you erect elaborate barriers, wear masks of fakery and plastic, artificial smiles, speak "Christianese" and put on the so-called "**Christian Show**."

When asked at church, "How are you doing?"

**you smile and say,**

**"Fine."**

- Step 10. Satan has you immobilized and isolated when you swallow his deception and believe his vicious lies.

The despair and emotional pain of never measuring up to your IDEAL SELF usually leads to sin and, thus, further guilt

Satan then has won. He has neutralized you, making your Christian witness ineffective—shallow, with a broken chain of confusing relationships and a hate for or a rejection of God. Bitterness and depression set in to cool your once warm soul.

You end up blaming God for all this. You feel He must have long ago forgotten you. You feel He must be "ashamed" of you—just like you are ashamed of you.

You seal yourself in lonely isolation—in quiet desperation your **soul screams within**—and then:

**DESTRUCTION!**

You may even complete Satan's plan by contemplating self-induced murder—SUICIDE. This always brings a grin to the devil's face.

**IN FURTHER EXPOSING SATAN'S LIE,  
YOU MUST UNDERSTAND THAT  
ALL OF THE ABOVE STEPS ARE A PART  
OF THE DEVIL'S DESIGN.**

**TO HIM, YOU  
ARE DESIGNED  
FOR DESTRUCTION!**

**Take another honest moment and:**

1. **Go back and circle** any of those Ten Steps To Destruction that you could relate to.
2. Which Step is the **most significant** or **pertinent** to you and your present view of yourself?

**STEP#** \_\_\_\_\_

Why is it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Like the exercise where you described your IDEAL SELF, please take **a** moment and **describe your FELT SELF**. Remember: It does not have to be accurate or perfect. Just take a stab at it. This is your tempting reflection. It, too, is a lie and just as horrible as the IDEAL SELF. **This is not how God sees you. It** is how you, day in and day out, warts and all, really feel about yourself—things that drag you down.

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_



Right now, in prayer, ask the Lord to help you slay your IDEAL SELF and, as a result, your FELT SELF.

Ask Him to help you to experience his secure, everlasting love and favor in such a way that you can begin to relax, breathe deeper, and enjoy the real you—the one Jesus loves—the one who does not have it all together! No more comparing! Just receive His unconditional LOVE!

You choose to do this by faith.

We invite you to pray to God if this chapter meant something to you.

*Dear God,*

*I give You free access to all areas of my life. Please not only expose all of Satan's lies in my life, but also help slay my Ideal Self that has haunted and taunted me all these years.*

*Help me to begin to experience Your secure, everlasting love and favor for me right now. Use this material and the weeks ahead to bring healing, freedom, and joy into my life.*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*

## NOTES

1. Jeff Van Vonderen, Tired of Trying to Measure Up. (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), pp. 64-66.
2. Dennis and Barbara Rainey, Building Your Mate's Self-Esteem. (San Bernardino: Here's Life Publishers, 1986), pp. 33-40.

# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Jesus answered, I am the way and the truth and the life..." John 14:6*

Key Number Two

## PRESENT YOUR WOUNDS

### Think About This:

A wound not presented to God is an evil that will fester, spread, darken, and destroy.

**MEMORY VERSE**      *1 Peter 2:24*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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**You are wounded, hurting**

**and broken...**

**You are lonely,**

**shamed**

**and kneeling...**

**You are weeping...**

**Oh my dear, dear child,**

**I hear your cry**

**and I will come!**

## **TWO TYPES OF WOUNDS**

There are two types of wounds that we will deal with in this material:

**WOUNDS TO THE SOUL  
WOUNDS TO THE HEART**

## WOUNDS TO THE SOUL

There is only one kind of wound to the soul:

### THE FATAL WOUND!

The universal tragedy known as sin entered the human race when Adam and Eve **disobeyed** God and decided to trust and obey the **deceptive lies of the devil. Because of this, when you were born**, you possessed a very **lethal sin nature. You could not help but sin.**

But also know that since you were created in God's image you are His special, beloved wonder (Psalm 139:13-16). He cherished and prized you then as He does right now.

But you see, this wretched problem of sin (an archery term which means "missing the bull's eye or missing the perfect mark") fatally wounded you! Your sin separated you from God.

It, in the form of your own selfish, prideful, and stubborn self will, did more than cripple you regarding your relationship with God. Your precious God-created and God-loved soul was dealt a death blow.

### The Bible says:

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

Romans 3:23 (NASB)

It is not that God hates you. He does not! He dearly loves you but His sinlessness cannot be in the same fellowshiping presence with complete, total, and utter sin-"full"-ness.

He is Holy and Pure. He grieves because you are not. He so desires you to have Eternal Life, Forgiveness of Sin, and the perfect Righteousness of Jesus.

But you are dead spiritually and miserably separated from God's love and protection.

Trying to reach God, Heaven, and Eternal Life by going to church, being a "good" person and hoping for the best is another lie of Satan!

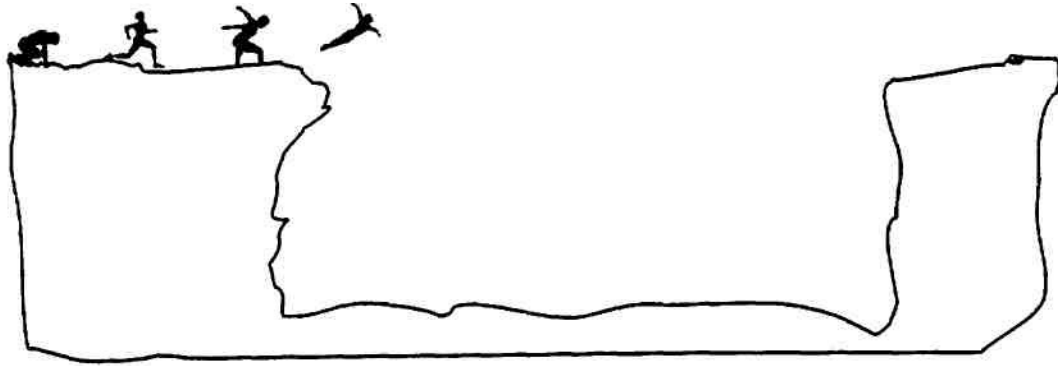
### DON'T BUY IT!

### YOU CANNOT PERFORM

### YOUR WAY INTO HEAVEN!

If you don't have a relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, you don't have anything! Your chances of getting to heaven are as good as if you tried to:

### JUMP ACROSS THE GRAND CANYON!



Do you think you could make it? **YES** **NO** (circle one). You would **fall short** of the other side just like you would fall miserably short of the Glory of God!

**The Bible says:**

*"For the wages of sin is death..."*

**(spiritual separation from God)**

Romans 6:23 (NASB)

In a tomb, a dead person is unable to bring life back and rise up from that cold, cement slab. That body is not gravely ill, unconscious, or in a coma....

**IT IS DEAD!**

**forever!**

**unless a miracle happens!**

Likewise, unless your dead, sin-riddled soul, wounded fatally and eternally, is given **New Life** by the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, you (your soul) will remain dead under the direction and ownership of the Devil.

You will be forever in Hell (Isaiah 1:28) (a terrible "place" of torment, despair and isolation) and you will be separated eternally from God. You will beg to be in heaven with Jesus but it will be:

**TOO LATE!**

Jesus doesn't desire for anyone to remain fatally wounded (spiritually dead). (See 2 Peter 3:9.) But those who actively, through rebellion, or quietly, through indifference, choose to reject His "free" offer of Forgiveness. New Life, and Love will be cast into hell.

Jesus will one day say to them:

*"Depart from Me, you who are cursed,  
into the eternal fire prepared  
for the devil and his angels."*

Matthew 25:41

**CURSED?  
Yes, Cursed.**

They will go into Hell cursed with sin's fatal wound, cursed because they refused God's free Gift of Eternal Life and Forgiveness.

*"...They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved."*

II Thessalonians 2:10

They will not have listened to the words of Jesus which say:

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;  
no one comes to the Father,  
but through Me."*

John 14:6 (NASB)

They will remain conscious, wailing over their foolish choice, always regretting their eternal status:

**A SPIRITUAL CORPSE WITH PAIN—  
WITH FEELINGS OF REMORSE-  
BEING SURROUNDED BY THE EMPTINESS  
OF HELL.  
NO ONE TO COMFORT OR CONSOLE THEM.**

The Lord Jesus loves you! He is His Father's only provision for you and your dilemma.

The Bible says:

*"For God so loved the world, that He gave  
His only begotten Son, that whoever  
believes in Him should not perish,  
but have eternal life."*

John 3:16 (NASB)

### PUT YOUR TRUST IN—

Jesus and what He did for you on the cross. He willingly died on that cross for you. His shed blood cleanses you from all sin. He paid the price for your entrance into heaven.

### DO NOT TRUST IN—

your **miserable attempt** to perform your way into heaven. You cannot get there without Jesus. Only He saves.

If you are trying to become acceptable to God based on your **own** merits, good deeds, and performance, God wants you to know that:

*all of your "...righteous acts  
are like filthy rags..."*

Isaiah 64:6

He wants you to trust **only** in Jesus and His ability to forgive you and save you from your sin-fullness (totally depraved status of every aspect of your being) and your sins (thoughts, attitudes, and deeds, or the lack of them, that don't measure up to God's perfect standard of righteousness).

Be encouraged by the comforting and assuring Word of God.

*"But as many as received Him, to them  
He gave the right to become children of God,  
even to those who believe in His name."*

John 1:12 (NASB)

NOTE: In John 3:16, God gave His only Son as a "once and for all" sacrifice for us.

In John 1:12, God gave us the right, the privilege, the (impossible for us to accomplish on our own) ability to become His children. Just to intellectually know these truths will get you nowhere. Satan knows them. The bottom line is what you decide to do with them....



**DECIDE TO INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE  
(GLADLY WELCOME) JESUS CHRIST  
AS YOUR SAVIOR AND LORD.**

**Have you already received Him?**

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

**If not, will you choose to receive him?**

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

**OUR GOD IS A GIVING GOD, ISN'T HE?  
RECEIVING HIS GIFT (JESUS) IS OUR CHOICE.**

When we receive Jesus, we are to do so—

**BY FAITH.**

Feelings are valuable, yet we are not to depend on them. All too often, they let us down. Our faith is to be only in Jesus and what God's Word says—

**NOTHING MORE — NOTHING LESS!**

**HIS WORD SAYS:**

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith;  
and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;  
not as a result of works, that no one should boast."*

Ephesians 2:8,9 (NASB)

When you receive Jesus Christ into your life, you defeat Satan's plan to keep you spiritually dead—to keep you—

### **FATALLY WOUNDED!**

Jesus urgently wants you—

### **FOREVER ALIVE WITH HIM!**

In Revelation 3:20, Jesus is offering you His personal invitation to be rescued from your fatal wound. He is speaking:

*"Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him..." (NASB)*

Right now, will you choose to receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord?

If so, I ask you to pray this simple prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I need You. I confess I'm a sinner, and without Your forgiveness and New Life I will remain Fatally Wounded. I trust that only You can save me.*

*Right now, I choose to receive You into my life. Come in, Lord. Thank You for forgiving all my sin—past, present, and future.*

*Make me the kind of person You want me to be.*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(Signature)*

Now that we have talked about wounds to the soul in the form of:

### **FATAL WOUNDS**

Let us now talk about the second type of wound that you need to present to your Lord:

### **WOUNDS TO THE HEART**

Barbara and I want you to know that not only are we not perfect, we are far from it! We both have experienced a number of difficult wounds to our hearts. The pain was both catastrophic and overwhelming.

We both love the Lord with all our hearts but we are still very much in process. Thank heavens, He is not finished with us yet. We are so grateful that He does not give up on us.

Quite frankly, if it was up to us, we would have given up on ourselves a long time ago. Jesus is strong, faithful, and forgiving. He never gives up on us!

## **JIM'S STORY**

My first wife, Julie, and I would have been married for twenty years, missing our anniversary by only seven days. We were blessed with four children and were serving the Lord full time. Our oldest daughter, Sara, now an adult, was born with a complete, congenital heart block forcing her to have numerous surgeries and pacemakers.

Although I became a Christian at 18, I did not really get serious about the Lord until I was 30. My family suffered because I was carnal and double minded. I wanted to follow God but I also craved the respect and approval of people. My priorities were out of balance and sin had it's hold on me. We were all fairly miserable. I regret those sins and those years.

Five years after I began to put the Lord first and when obeying and honoring Him became my passion. my best friend from high school and his children were tragically killed in an auto accident. This shocked me! How could this have happened!

That year, we moved to Illinois so I could attend seminary. The moving van that we hired to transport all of our belongings went up in flames during some repair work. We were lied to and cheated by this moving company. It took three years to get it settled. This crisis took up much of my time during my first year of seminary.

At the beginning of my final year of school, Julie was diagnosed with lupus, sojgrens syndrome, and, worst of all, advanced breast cancer. It was as if our hopes, plans, and dreams, were crystal figurines being smashed by a brutal sledge hammer. No matter how you look at it, cancer is an awful and sadistic disease. It not only eats away at the person it is ravaging, but it also eats away at the whole family. Relationships are strained. Emotions become wooden and empty. Anger and fear become the norm. Exhaustion is standard.

Through eight surgeries, four regimens of chemotherapy, three separate hair losses, months in hospitals. a frightening bone marrow transplant, and five unsuccessful trips to Bethesda, Maryland (National Cancer Institute), Julie fought her disease with courage maintaining her faith in God. Many were strengthened by her bravery. The chemotherapy helped to extend her life but it was devastating to her and to the rest of us.

She suffered from severe depression at times and experienced terrible mood swings that made living in our home difficult. Frequently, our home was filled with chaos, tension, and anger outbursts. One minute she would be stable and the next she would fall apart. The four kids and I, along with Julie, were on one big roller coaster!

On top of all this, I felt so utterly helpless. I was with Julie almost constantly for seven years during this battle, but I could not help her. I could not heal her. The Lord knows I tried just about everything known to man. The suspense of not knowing when the cancer would strike again or take her life was like swimming in dark waters with that shark from "Jaws" near us.

We never knew when the cancer would attack. We could never escape it's presence or it's influence. I once described living with long term cancer in our family as living with a sadistic, Nazi torturer holding all of us hostage. Even when we went on vacation, "it" came with us. It tended to control the life of our family. It was a cruel and terrifying time.

We put our trust in the Lord but the stress of seeing my wife and the mother of my children slowly melt away like a popsicle on a hot day, gnawed at me relentlessly. I developed severe migraine headaches that lasted 24 hours a day for two years. The pain wrestled me to the floor many times. I became depressed and exhausted, weary beyond words. My heart became like wood. Life to me had the taste of saw dust. I felt old. I got hooked on prescription pain killers. It was like I could not get through the continuous headache pain without them. I prayed and prayed but they would not go away.

I had bottled up so much agony within me. You see, I was the husband and father and I felt it was my responsibility to protect my family. I could not stop the cancer. During this time, Brittney, our four year old at the time, almost died of a toxic E-coli bacterial infection and a large tree fell on our house during a sever wind storm.

I sought the Lord and asked several men to meet with me regularly to encourage me, pray with me, and hold me accountable. This was of great help! I confess that several times during the cancer battle, I lost hope. Seven years is a long time. Several times, I felt that God had abandoned me. Thank heavens, I knew this not to be true since Jesus promised to never leave nor forsake me. I was able to put my trust in "what is written" in the Word of God instead of my emotions or my experience.

Julie died at home where she wanted to be with all of her family with her. She could no longer breathe since the cancer had invaded her lungs. The morphine and oxygen weren't helping anymore. She told me she wanted to go home to be with Jesus. And on that mid June afternoon, she did.

She loved roses and wanted her rose bush just outside our kitchen window to bloom. The day she went to heaven, those rose buds burst forth and bloomed with such beauty and color. She was finally free.

As time passed on, I began to beg God for mercy. Being alone was excruciating for me. Tim, my prayer/accountability partner, woke up one night and sensed clearly from God that he should encourage me to call Barbara, whom I had never met. I made the phone call. God is merciful and faithful!

## **BARBARA'S STORY**

My heart skipped a beat as a surge of adrenaline was released into my system. My husband and I had gone to a company pool party with our three, young children. I was in the living room attending to our four month old, Sarah. I walked into the kitchen to get some water and was met with a crushing blow. My husband and another woman were at the refrigerator locked in a passionate embrace.

My flesh and the Holy Spirit began to war determining the reaction I would exhibit I felt rage, shame, betrayal, disbelief, fear, and gut wrenching pain. I turned and walked out in order to sort through all the emotion.

Could it be my marriage of almost ten years was a target of our arch enemy, Satan? I recalled the wife of a co-worker warning me to get my husband out of this company before it was too late. Was it now too late?

I prayed for wisdom and strength for battle. I confronted my husband that night in the privacy of our own home. He could not pray with me. His eyes lacked life. They were like deep, dark, cesspools. I cried out, "Abba Father," as I held on to his limp hands. I felt ripped in half as I cried deep convulsive sobs. I pleaded with God to restore our marriage. Over the next three months I began searching for help. I tried a marriage counselor, but my husband refused to go in to see him, insisting it was all my fault.

I tried new clothes, new feminine manipulations, and pretended to be interested in all my husband's worldly interests. I was exhausted!

During my quiet times with Jesus, His still small voice kept saying, "Let him go." I was so caught up in performing in order to please my husband that I ignored the voice of my Lord. Finally, His words to me were confirmed by two pastors from different states both sharing 1 Corinthians 5:4-5:

*"When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."*

I asked my husband to forgive me for not being the wife he thought he needed and again pledged my commitment to him and to our Lord. My husband chose to divorce not only his wife and three children, but everything and everybody involved with Jesus.

He took all the money out of the bank and turned off all utilities in the house. I prayed prostrate on the floor for God's leading. He provided me with a child care job for some wealthy people. God was always faithful to supply all our needs.

I saw thirty four marriages dissolved that memorable day in court, all due to the Devil's ultimate lie: **irreconcilable differences**. God was merciful to me and answered my prayer to remove me from the city and state we were living in. I could not bear to watch my husband in the clutches of the enemy.

The children and I set up house keeping near my family in Wisconsin. I was physically drained, emotionally rent in half, and spiritually exhausted from the battle. I determined to batten down the hatches and pull my children close to ward off any further destruction of our family unit.

Jesus became my husband. I ran to His arms daily for answers through prayer and His Word. I had a lot of fear at first. All responsibility seemed to rest on me. But I knew my enemy and I knew how to use the Word of God as a weapon. When I had panic attacks at the grocery store or driving a car, I would set my mind on specific scriptures. My favorite one is Isaiah 26:3:

*"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."*

Another one I learned was Romans 12:2:

*"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."*

I prayed that I would not have to work at a job outside the home until my one year old was in first grade. I loved being an at home mom. He honored my heart's cry by allowing me enough in savings and child support to care for our needs. After Sarah's fifth birthday, I was offered three teaching jobs, one of which was at a Christian school. My children and I have been there for eleven years.

We were forced to move a few years ago due to high property taxes. Funny. I felt this **tug** to look in Elkhorn for a house or an apartment but never found quite the right place. Then one night, while up :o my ears in storage and moving boxes, I received a call from Jim whom I had never met.

I told the Lord long ago, that I would never again go out "looking" for a man to marry. If He wanted me to marry again, He would have to bring a faithful, Christian man across my path. We would both need to sense God's irrevocable calling to marriage and would need to compliment each other's ministry in unity to advance the Kingdom of God. Same calling, same mission.

Our first date was at Pizza Hut with four of our children. It was hilarious! It felt good to laugh. Jim is God's answer to my prayer. I am convinced the reason I felt that tug toward Elkhorn was because this was where Jim and his four children lived! He had been praying to God begging for mercy every night for weeks. God used his prayers to draw me closer to where he was. God is able!

Jim keeps saying, "God gave me what I prayed and begged for: Mercy." In fact, since my new initials are now B. E. G., he fondly refers to me as "Beg" or "Beggy" instead of Barbara. Now our greatest joy is when Jim and I can minister to others together. God is good!

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## THE WOUNDED HEART

Wounds to the heart can **inflict damage** on your emotional well-being, your ability to embrace and enjoy life, your physical health, and energy levels. Pain from these wounds can even create the tendency for you to be deceived so that your faith might waiver if is not grounded in God's truth found in the Scriptures.

Let's uncover and hopefully **present to the Lord** the major wounds to your heart. These terrible wounds, especially if left uncovered and not presented, can cause deep, lasting, emotional, and even spiritual scars. Its quite possible, as well, for demonic spirits to capitalize on these wounds of yours in order to ensnare or enslave you into sin patterns that can destroy families and even your children's families.

## REMEMBER!

If Satan cannot prevent you from receiving Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, he will attempt to deceive, discourage, isolate, and enslave you.

Your decision to ignore God's truth and allow Satan's destructive lies and your sin to control you will hinder the Holy Spirit's work and character-building process in your life. This will greatly limit your fruitfulness in being a radiant witness for Jesus Christ.

### A. Wounds from the home you grew up in.

(This is more important to consider than most realize!)

1. Perhaps you grew up in an **alcoholic** home—a terror that no child should ever have to face. If so, **expectations** were placed on you and wounding experiences were dealt to you that hurt deeply.

If so, you probably think you feel **different** from everyone else. You may be struggling with what "normal" is. You may be overly responsible or irresponsible. You probably judge yourself without mercy when you sin, fail, make a mistake, or simply forget something. You may struggle with outbursts of temper and holding grudges. In essence, you're hurting!

2. Perhaps your home was **unrestful** in some other obvious way. Perhaps:
  - a. You were sexually abused by a family member and their guilt-producing, hideous, private sin is still "in the closet." Worse yet, you probably feel partly responsible. You may feel dirty. (You were not responsible. You were the recipient of evil action. Crimes were done to you just as if you had been robbed, stabbed, or shot! This can easily affect intimacy with a marriage partner.)
  - b. Your mother or father were **absent** often or perhaps they never hugged you or affirmed you (took precious time to talk with, listen to, and respect you).

Perhaps you felt that you had to **perform** and win their love and acceptance.

- c. You were physically or emotionally abused and a terrorizing, sickening feeling came over you when the abusive person came near you. How painful this must have been for you.

You could not count on this person to express a consistent, pleasant mood. You were on the receiving end of their hurtful mood swings.

Anger and tenseness lived in your home. You chose to "walk on egg shells" to keep from setting off someone's "anger" time bomb. There may have been certain secrets or "things" that no one was supposed to **talk about**—better to keep quiet and just deny problems exist. The "no talk" rule was well in place and if you broke this rule, you paid for it dearly.

- d. You grew up in a permissive (do whatever you want) home. If true, you probably have much anger and bitterness because it seemed like your parents just didn't care for you enough to hold you accountable, provide boundaries, treat you with respect, and support and affirm you.
- e. You grew up in a dictatorial or **over-controlling** home where your parents promoted your immaturity and robbed you of responsibility by making most of your decisions, making your bed even as a teen, directing almost every step you took. They literally controlled you so you became overly dependent on them for guidance, approval, and money.

The problem now is that you may **crave** other people's approval (like your boss) and you also may be easily addicted to pornography, food, Internet, television, or even **church** (you become so committed to serving that you actually have an affair with church activities to the detriment of your marriage, family, and relationship with God.)

Your job may also be possessing you! Drugs, legal or not, may be controlling you. The reason it is so easy to become addicted if you grew up in an over-controlling (probably very nice) family is that now, as an adult, you simply replace your parents' control with being controlled by other people, substances, or things.

- f. You grew up where your parents tried to motivate, manipulate, and punish you by shaming you and making you feel guilty. You had to continually perform or look good to help them keep feeling like they were good, respectable parents.

You were a loving pawn to feed their insecure egos. They loved you—but with hooks and strings attached.

**SHAME ON YOU!**

**YOU'RE NAUGHTY!**

**YOU'RE BAD—WORTHLESS!**

**WHY CAN'T YOU DO AS WELL AS YOUR BROTHER OR SISTER!**

**NICE TRIPLE!**

**IF YOU HAD RUN A LITTLE FASTER,**

**YOU COULD HAVE MADE A HOME RUN!**

If any of these strike a cord of deep pain in your heart, or disabling memories surface, then chances are you grew up in a **shaming family**. This caused deep wounds to your heart. You were being properly prepared by the devil to be enslaved by his lies. Even as a forgiven Christian, you feel guilty, worthless, and flawed. His deception is powerful!

- g. You grew up in a **broken home** (divorce) and your whole world of safety, love and acceptance came crashing down. What a terrible thing to happen to any child! It was not your fault and you are not to blame for it!
- h. You were the oldest child and more was expected or demanded of you than you were able to give. Maybe you were the **scapegoat** for your mother or father's rage or sarcasm. Perhaps you felt less favored than your siblings.
- L Perhaps you were forced to grow up too fast—make-up, dating, "the wrong crowd"—you may never have had the chance to fully experience the joy and innocence of childhood. We hurt for and with you!

Perhaps you are angry because of this. Perhaps you feel robbed!—cheated!—wounded!

- j. Maybe a member of your family either died, suffered from a chronic illness, was physically, emotionally, or mentally disabled, or maybe YOU were that "sick" or disabled person.

How painful for you!

Either all of life seemed to center or revolve around one member in your family or maybe it centered around you—your medications, your limitations, your pain, your wheelchair, your moodiness.

- k. Other that was not mentioned: \_\_\_\_\_

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Please **circle** one or more of the previous numbers or letters that were significant or important to you.

Please share why: \_\_\_\_\_

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**B. Wounds from your own sins, mistakes, and poor judgments.**

DO NOT FEEL THAT YOU HAVE TO SHARE ANY

OF THESE KINDS OF THINGS.

THEY ARE BETWEEN YOU AND GOD.

THERE WILL BE NO PRESSURE

CIRCLE ANY OF THE BELOW WOUNDS

THAT ARE SIGNIFICANT TO YOU.

1. Perhaps you started to live a "private life" and you started to sneak pornography. Now it seems to have dominion over you. Perhaps you are in bondage to homosexuality.
2. Perhaps you had sex before marriage. Perhaps you got pregnant or got someone else pregnant. Maybe you had an abortion or two. My heart grieves with yours.
3. Maybe you rebelled against your imperfect parents, your school, or whoever was in authority. (They didn't measure up to your standards.)
4. Perhaps you succumbed to peer pressure and put illegal substances (drugs) into your body and now you are paying the consequences.
5. Perhaps you got in trouble with the police and now your reputation is following you.
6. Perhaps you got fired and are struggling with keeping a job.
7. Maybe you're married and now in the midst of an "affair" or adultery.
8. What about bad financial decisions or investments?
9. Maybe you have rejected religion with all its so-called hypocrisy. Maybe you've been "burned" by church.
10. Maybe you've slandered, gossiped about, broken confidence with, lied to, or been disloyal toward a family member, friend, or coworker.
11. Perhaps you were involved in **Satanic or Occult Practices**, Dungeons and Dragons, Transcendental Meditations, New Age movement, Channeling, Fortune Telling, Zodiac Calendars, Horoscopes, Ouija Boards, or horror, violent, or sensual movies, videos, or literature. Perhaps you were a member of a religious cult. Perhaps you experienced ritualistic sexual abuse. Perhaps you had contact with some form of witchcraft, chanting into mirrors, occult candle services, spirit guides, pentagrams, or cutting signs into your arms. Perhaps you celebrated Halloween with Jack-o'-lanterns and trick-or-treating. (**Circle which ones**)

12. Other that was not mentioned:

In general terms, how would you describe how someone might feel having endured any two of the above-stated "personal" wounds:

**First Wound:** (name the wound) \_\_\_\_\_

This person would probably still feel: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Second wound:** (name the wound) \_\_\_\_\_

This person would probably still feel: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**CAN YOU NOW UNDERSTAND HOW THESE PERSONAL WOUNDS  
CAN AFFECT A PERSON'S LIFE?**

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

Why do you think so? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**C. Wounds from external difficulties and setbacks.**

1. You perhaps had a series of job changes, a promotion, or a demotion.
2. Maybe you or loved ones experienced the tragedy of a fire or an accident and you are still reeling from the emotional blow.
3. You maybe have tremendous medical bills that seem to haunt you when you go to the mail box!
4. Maybe you've had a personality conflict with someone in your church or at work.
5. Maybe a loved one died and you are still grieving your loss.
6. Perhaps there is someone ill that's close to you and no matter what you do, they just don't seem to improve.
7. Maybe your own physical or emotional health is declining and you feel a sense of helplessness and anger over it.
8. Maybe you are struggling in school and the grades just don't seem to be high enough.
9. You may feel that people have not forgiven you (released you from their judgment) for something that happened in the past
10. Maybe you've got struggles of your own and just when you think you can't handle anymore. one of your children gets into trouble, fails at school, or lets you down in a big way. It seems too much to handle. You seem overwhelmed!
11. Perhaps you wrestle with the impact of troubles, the **unfairness** of circumstances, the "brutally of life"—and you are depressed, overwhelmed, anxious, and feeling like giving up! We've been there! IT HURTS! AND VERY FEW PEOPLE UNDERSTAND!

You may think it is unchristian or shameful to feel any of the feelings mentioned in the above paragraph (#11), but let me assure you that it is not.

Read about Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane in Mark 14:33-34 and Luke 22:44. Also read about King David in Psalm 13, Psalm 102:1-11, and Psalm 107:13-14 and about Job in Job 3:1-5.

What did you learn about those who are going through tough times and experiencing depression, anxiety, and despair?

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12. Other that was not mentioned: \_\_\_\_\_

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**BEING AS OPEN AND HONEST AS YOU CAN,  
PLEASE CIRCLE THE TWO WOUNDS FROM ONE THROUGH TWELVE  
THAT YOU RELATE TO THE MOST.**

How do you feel these wounds have affected your life and the quality of your relationships?

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**NOW!...**

If you are willing, and we trust that you are, we want to invite you to present your:

**WOUNDS TO THE HEART  
TO  
JESUS  
THE HEALER OF WOUNDED HEARTS.**

You don't have to, but if you feel safe, please write down the three wounds to your heart that have hurt you and are hurting you the most right now:

1. 

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2. 

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3. 

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I invite you to pray a simple, earnest, and humble prayer, such as:

*Lord, I need You. I'm hurting, dear Lord. You know my pain. I know that You understand. You were wounded deeply. Thank You for loving me and receiving me just the way I am.*

*Lord, right now I surrender all my wounds to You. I ask You to heal them. Please help me. I renounce the devil, his works, and all his ways. I resist him and now fully submit to You in every area of my life.*

*I ask you to break any strongholds that demonic spirits may have on me, or my extended family. I ask you to cleanse me and release me and my loved ones from any form of bondage or evil that is trying to keep us in darkness. May your Light expose it! I plead the shed and cleansing blood of Jesus.*

*Lord, please fully restore me so that I can walk in freedom, joy, and truth. Please work through me greatly to spread Your love to other hurting people who are wounded, enslaved, and in need.*

*I LOVE YOU, LORD!*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*



# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"I tell you the truth..."* Matthew 5:18

*"The Lord is near to all who call on Him, to all  
who call on him in truth."* Psalm 145:18

Key Number Three

## EMBRACE THE TRUTH

### Think About This:

When we begin to understand what God is trying to say to us about His Love, His Truth, His Grace, and His Rest, we will experience freedom, lightheartedness, and, quite possibly, we might just leap for joy!

### MEMORY VERSE      *John 8:32*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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**NOT ENOUGH!**

Identifying the truth is not enough! Satan identifies the truth but rejects and twists it. You must desire the truth more than anything. You must embrace the truth!

**WE'RE STUBBORN!**

Oh how difficult it seems to be for us to release the burden of Satan's lies! It's almost like we agree with him by insisting that God's degree of loving us is measured by how well we perform, how good we appear, and how much we possess as Christians.

**WHAT BONDAGE!**

Satan's plan for your life is:

**DESTRUCTION!**

God's plan for your life is:

**LOVE!**

**LET THIS SINK IN!**

It is our prayer that by God's grace, after this week's study, you will be able to:

***EMBRACE THE TRUTH:***

***GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH***

***GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT***

***AND***

***GOD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU REST***

Oh how desperately we desire this for you and our wonderful Lord desires this even more.

"The dentist peered intensely into the mouth of his very first patient. Yes! His first task as a brand new dentist was to extract one of this man's wisdom teeth.

He was dedicated to his work. He would not get sidetracked! He looked at his patient and blurted out, "I will pull it out!" The man in the chair, who really didn't want to be there in the first place, mumbled, "Are you sure this needs to be done? I mean—do you really have to pull it out?"



The young dentist looked directly into the man's eyes and declared with deep conviction, "Yes! Yes! I want the tooth, the whole tooth, and nothing but the tooth!"

**DO YOU WANT THE TRUTH  
AS BADLY AS HE WANTED THE TOOTH?**

If so, keep on reading.

**I. GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR LIFE IS LOVE.**

A. God loves you! He made you in His image.

1. Then God said, *"Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." So God created man (meaning men and women) in His own image..."* (Genesis 1:26,27)
2. Quoting Francis Schaeffer:

**"MAN IS SINFUL BUT HE IS NOT JUNK."**

- a. Read Psalm 139:13-16, written by David.

Does he think of himself as "**JUNK**"?

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

How does David **view himself** in light of God's creation?

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- b. What does God think about His creation of Man? Read Genesis 1:31.

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B. God loves you! He died for you. (Romans 5:8)

1. If your own child was drowning in a lake, I have no doubt that you would jump off the pier, and plunge in to save him or her from certain death.
2. You would do this because you love your child. No sacrifice on your part would be too great.

3. I think you would even be willing to die so your child could live.
4. God loves you so much He sent Jesus, His only Son, to this earth. Jesus voluntarily died for you because you weren't just drowning in sin—you were dead in sin.
5. He died for you and rose from the dead that you might live a new life. (Romans 6:4)

C. God loves you! He loves you much more than the sparrow.

His love for His children is not temporary. It is **everlasting**. It is not conditional. It is **unconditional**. His blessings depend on your heart of surrender and your obedience, but, His love for you will never diminish. His is a **boundless** love!

Read Matthew 10:29-31.

What do you think the Lord is trying to tell you regarding being valuable in His eyes?

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**NOTE:** Isn't it wonderful we are infinitely loved by Him?

**IT MAKES ME WANT TO FALL DOWN  
ON MY KNEES  
IN HUMILITY AND THANKFULNESS  
LIFTING MY HANDS TO  
MY GOD—  
WHO IS PROUD OF ME,  
WHO LOVES AND RECEIVES ME  
JUST THE WAY I AM!**

## **II. WILL YOU EMBRACE THE TRUTH?**

### ***GOD'S WORD IS TRUTH***

**NOTE:** "Embrace" as used here means to "gladly welcome" or "desire with fervor and zeal".

Remember! Jesus says:

*"I am the way, and the truth, and the life;  
no one comes to the Father, but through Me."*  
John 14:6 (NASB)

*"...and you shall know the truth  
and the truth shall make you free."*  
John 8:32 (NASB)

*"If therefore the Son shall make you free,  
you shall be free indeed."*  
John 8:36 (NASB)

God's Word, the Bible, is truth—it is inspired, without error, and incapable of leading you astray. When the devil tempted Jesus in the "wilderness," Jesus didn't rely on His hunches, His feelings, or His needs. Instead He relied only on what was written in the Holy Scriptures.

When Satan tempted Him or twisted the truth of Scripture, simply in return Jesus would say:

**"IT IS WRITTEN..."**

**(Chapter four of both Matthew and Luke)**

Let us learn to rely on the Truth (God's Word) in the same way.

**OH BELOVED, FORTUNATE CHRISTIAN—**

Please, never forget it is written that:

1. You are God's own daughter or son. John 1:12
2. You are a fellow heir with Jesus. Romans 8:17
3. In Jesus, you are a brand new creature. 2 Corinthians 5:17
4. You ARE RIGHT NOW a Saint! Ephesians 1:1
5. You are Heaven's citizen—not Earth's. Philippians 3:20
6. You are made righteous. You didn't earn it! What relief! 2 Corinthians 5:21
7. Jesus will NEVER leave or forsake you. Hebrews 13:5
8. You are redeemed and forgiven forever! Colossians 1:14
9. You are not really living! Jesus is living in and through you! Galatians 2:20
10. You can never be condemned again! NEVER! Romans 8:1

PLEASE CIRCLE THREE FROM THE PREVIOUS PAGE THAT ENCOURAGED YOU THE MOST. WHICH OF THE THREE IS YOUR FAVORITE ? # \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

For more on who you are in Christ, please read Neil Anderson's book, **The Bondage Breaker**—the "Who am I?" list on page 229.'

### III. WILL YOU EMBRACE THE TRUTH?

#### *GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT*

If **MERCY** is defined as:

God withholding that punishment and condemnation that we deserve because of our fatal sin condition—(Jesus was, of course, our full, once and for all, replacement sacrifice who removed ALL our sins and painfully took them as His own even though He never personally sinned. Sin separates and requires punishment. Jesus went to the cross for us so we could freely benefit from God's mercy. Romans 5:9)

Then **GRACE** is defined as:

God sacrificially giving us that which we do not deserve because He created us and loves us. Unmerited favor!

His loving Grace **cost** Him his Son.

*"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."*  
 Hebrews 4:16

*"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast."*  
 Ephesians 2:8,9 (NASB)

**WORKS!**

**WHY IS IT SO MANY OF US CHRISTIANS WANT TO COMPLICATE GOD'S  
FREE GIFT OF SALVATION AND LOVE BY FEELING WE HAVE TO:**

**PERFORM TO EARN IT**

**OR**

**MAINTAIN IT!**

**This is a cancer of Christianity!**

To trust in our efforts or performance to keep us saved is pure folly! But, how do faith and works relate? James 2:26, says:

*"As the body without the Spirit is dead,  
so faith without deeds (works) is dead."*

**Heart action (faith) breeds life.**

**Genuine faith will produce genuine works.**

I believe that, in applying James 2:26, genuine faith (trusting **only in Jesus**, His life, His Word, His righteousness, and His transforming power) will open the door to your heart and life so that the Holy Spirit **can begin to produce fruit and deeds** in you and through you that, quite honestly, seem foreign and odd to what would be expected of you apart from Christ!

If you are only trusting in yourself and what "**you**" can do, then only the deeds of the flesh will result. (Galatians 5:19-21)

But as you, moment by moment, yield to the authority and Lordship of Jesus today, He will prompt you into heart-attitudes and heart-deeds that please God.

A Christ-initiated, Christ-directed, and Christ-controlled life produces His **works** as you are continually transformed by His power. Find your **rest** in Jesus, not in your circumstances.

**THESE GOD-ORIGINATED ATTITUDES**

**AND DEEDS (WORKS)**

**VALIDATE, PROVE, OR AUTHENTICATE**

**YOUR GENUINE FAITH.**

**(The Real McCoy versus dead lip service.)**

YOU do not have the power or the ability to accomplish Christ-pleasing deeds or works,

**BUT CHRIST IN YOU, THE HOPE OF GLORY, DOES!**

**King David, in Psalm 25:4-5, cries out,**

*"Show me your ways, O Lord, teach me your paths;  
guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior,  
and my hope is in you all day long."*

If you are not looking to Jesus as your only source of hope, will others characterize you as:

☐ Patient, Content, and at Peace,

or

☐ Impatient, Discontent, and Anxious?

Check the appropriate box.

What **benefit** is there to you if you were to embrace the truth of Psalm 25:4-5?

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What benefit is there to others on the receiving end such as your mate (if married), your children, friends, coworkers, church members, etc.?

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1. Make sure your heart is clean, forgiven, and yielded before Jesus.
  - a. Ask the Lord to examine your heart to reveal any sin or problem.
  - b. Confess your sins. (1 John 1:9)
2. Invite The Holy Spirit, already eternally residing in you (if you have received Christ), to live and love through you today (to have unhindered **control** of your life). Do this by faith. Don't wait for some mystical feeling. If God grants you a "feeling"—well—fine. But just know that faith is not a feeling, it's a choice. (Read Ney Bailey's book: **Faith Is Not A Feeling.**)
3. As you listen to the Lord through Scripture and prayer:

**MAKE A CHOICE TO OBEY HIM.**

You have to choose.  
He, in you, is the source of power.

If you do not choose to obey His Word or His prompting, you block His power from working in you.  
You will be in charge again. It's time to yield to Him! Let Him take over!

4. "Leave the timing, the quantity, and the quality of all results up to God."  
(words from Loren Lillstrand)

Note: If you sin or blow it, repeat steps 1 through 4 and move on in the light of His Glory and Grace!

## **THE KEY IS WANTING WHAT JESUS WANTS MORE THAN WHAT YOU WANT.**

Wherever you find Jesus, you will find TRUTH—and wherever you find GRACE, you will find Jesus!

### **Truth and Grace are Partners.**

*"For the law was given to Moses;  
grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."*

John 1:17

*"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.  
We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only,  
who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

John 1:14

### **Remember The Duck!**

In Max Lucado's book, **In The Grip of Grace**, he writes the following:

"Sometime ago I read a story of a youngster who was shooting rocks with a slingshot. He could never hit his target. As he returned to Grandma's backyard, he spied her pet duck. On impulse he took aim and let fly. The stone hit, and the duck was dead. The boy panicked and hid the bird in the woodpile. only to look up and see his sister watching.

After lunch that day, Grandma told Sally to help with the dishes. Sally responded, 'Johnny told me he wanted to help in the kitchen today. Didn't you Johnny?' And she whispered to him, 'Remember the duck!' So. Johnny did the dishes.

What choice did he have? For the next several weeks he was at the sink often. Sometimes for his duty, sometimes for his sin. 'Remember the duck' Sally'd whisper when he objected. So weary of the chore, he decided that any punishment would be better than washing more dishes, so he confessed to killing the duck. I know Johnny,' his grandma said, giving him a hug. I was standing at the

window and saw the whole thing. Because I love you, I forgave you. I wondered how long you would let Sally make a slave out of you.'

He'd been pardoned, but thought he was guilty. Why? He had listened to the words of his accuser.

**Please look up** the following verses and write down what you think Jesus is trying to get across to you regarding grace and, consequently, forgiveness:

Romans 3:22-24 (emphasizing 24) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 6:13-14 (emphasizing 14) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 11:5-6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Hebrew 8:12 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I John 1:9 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**CIRCLE WHICH PASSAGE FROM ABOVE  
IS THE MOST MEANINGFUL TO YOU.**



In light of your wounds, your sin, and perhaps in light of your struggles in trying to win God's love, acceptance, and approval by your performance in the past, please share **why** that circled passage is the **most meaningful**. Be as open and honest as you can:

#### IV. WILL YOU EMBRACE THE TRUTH?

##### *GOD HIMSELF WILL GIVE YOU REST*

Are you **anxious** and **frustrated** that life has not gone the way you expected?

Do you sense that somehow, deep within, you just don't **measure up**?

Jeff Van Vonderen, author of **Tired Of Trying To Measure Up**, points out that many Christians have been wounded by shame and guilt because they could never quite "measure up" to everyone else's demands and expectations (parents, teachers, peers, even—churches!).

Because of this, they are very, very tired! Maybe you are tired too! He believes that Christians who don't rest in "the fullness of Jesus Christ," spend most of their time:

##### **TRYING HARD!**

And when they get "tired" of trying hard in their own power to keep on doing lots of "goooooooood things", they just:

##### **GIVE UP!**

After they stay in this rut of defeatist misery for a while, they will probably:

##### **TRY HARDER**

**again...**

**This is a tiring, vicious cycle!**<sup>3</sup>

Do you ever find yourself in this cycle?

(circle one)

**YES**

**NO**

What we need to do is to stop trying harder and stop giving up. Instead, we who are weary and tired should enter into:

##### **HIS REST**

We need to embrace the truth that resting in the affirming, freeing, and never-ending Grace of the Lord Jesus is the best place to be—

**IT'S THE ONLY PLACE TO BE!**

Jim writes:

"I guess I grew up knowing in my head that Jesus loves me for the Bible tells me so—and I believe that totally! Yet it seems that some of the time, I feel like God is against me.

My fleshly inclinations, the devil, our culture, and many other sources have taught me to focus on Td better do better than I'm doing before I can feel better about myself.'

I just naturally assumed that my Heavenly Father must have the same attitude about me!

**WHAT A BUMMER!**

Even though He loves me—

**HE MUST BE AGAINST ME!**

After all, I'm such a klutz, I'm never good enough, and I just can't seem to measure up to God's perfect standards!

**SO HE MUST BE LOVING ME**

**WITH A SCORNFUL,**

**DISAPPROVING,**

**'YOU'D BETTER DO BETTER'**

**FROWN."**

**THIS IS SATAN'S LIE TO KEEP US TIRED, WEARY**

**AND CRIPPLED SPIRITUALLY SO THERE WILL BE NO JOY, NO FREEDOM,**

**AND NO MOTIVATION TO SERVE AND WITNESS FOR GOD.**

It's kind of like being a blind and crippled beggar  
being told he has to climb Mount Everest  
in a subzero blizzard.

He must perform well and do it  
in order for his false god to accept and favor him.  
Even though he knows he will fail,  
he will try to win his false god's love and affection.

**MANY OF US THINK OUR HEAVENLY FATHER**

**IS LIKE THAT.**

**WE ARE WRONG!**

Who wants to witness for or serve this kind of **performance** oriented, never-able-to-please, satanically twisted god?

This may be one of the worst idols that man has ever invented—it's probably much worse than:

**THE GOLDEN CALF!**

Let us begin our **rest** by resting peacefully in the utter trustworthiness of God and His Word.

Consider King David. He writes in the first verse of the twenty third psalm:

*"The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want."*

If you are "in want", you are **unsatisfied, discontent, and anxious**. Is it possible that you misread what is written? Maybe you thought it reads this way.

*"The Lord is not my shepherd, therefore I shall be in want."*

If you embrace the correct translation, then your Shepherd, Jesus, will provide for you. You will begin to experience satisfaction, contentment, joy, and calm. Don't let any other false shepherds try to lead you astray.

Now **Look up Romans 8:31**. I believe this verse helps God's hurting and imperfect, but beloved children to know what His unwavering, never-ending stand is regarding us.

What compels you to enter into His rest based on this wonderful verse?

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Maybe it's because we feel so worthless and undesirable that we create that awful god-idol that is out to zap us and whip us into performing better. What a bitter cup this is.

### NO MORE!

Let us worship, love, and obey the loving God of the Bible.

Look up Romans **8:1-2**. How do these encouraging verses help motivate you to enter cheerfully into the Lord's rest?

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**Notice it does not say...  
"for those who are perfect  
or really doing much better  
than others."**

**Look up Colossians 3:12.** We are free to live as beloved, because in God's magnificent eyes, we are holy and dearly beloved.

We don't have to perform to earn or maintain this status as most cults and even some churches teach.

He loves us and approves of us and declares us holy and dearly beloved and His Spirit in us will motivate us to want to serve our wonderful Lord and Savior.

What does this verse mean to you? \_\_\_\_\_

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**Look up each of these verses.** How is the Lord encouraging you to get off the performance treadmill and rejoice through entering into His nonperformance-based rest? **Remember**, sheep need to rest. The Shepherd needs to lead. You can trust Him as your Shepherd. He's the best there is!

Psalm 62:1.5 \_\_\_\_\_

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Exodus 33:14 \_\_\_\_\_

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Isaiah 41:10 \_\_\_\_\_

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Psalm 91:1,4 (Performance is not a requirement!) \_\_\_\_\_

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Matthew 11:28-30 \_\_\_\_\_

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**CIRCLE THE VERSES THAT MEAN THE MOST TO YOU PERSONALLY.**

Please tell why: \_\_\_\_\_

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Be thankful you belong to Jesus!  
In Him alone there is rest!  
Rest peacefully as you read the words  
to a favorite lullaby.

REST AND RELAX.  
JESUS IS HOLDING YOU. JUST CLOSE YOUR EYES.  
HE'S IN CONTROL. BREATHE DEEP AND SIGH.  
YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY. REST AND RELAX.  
THE LORD WILL WORK IT OUT.

Yes! The Lord will work all things out. He loves those whom He has chosen. He holds fast those who belong to Him.

Embracing the Truth of the Bible means that your Lord loves you with a "boundless" Love. The sketch below shows how you no longer have to look to your awful Ideal Self or your pitiful Felt Self. Because of His amazing love, He delivers you safely into His hand of perfect righteousness.



*"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me.  
I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them  
out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all;  
no one can snatch them out of my Father's hand."*

John 10:27-29

You simply need to "rest and relax" in the secure palm of God's safe hand. You (your Real Self) are safe, holy, and beloved in God's eyes. You are under His "Umbrella" of Never-Ending affection and care.

Just rest and relax and let this magnificent truth sink in and take root.

**YOU CAN ACTUALLY START REJOICING NOW!**

As you, maybe for the first time, begin to embrace these biblical truths, sit back, get comfortable, and simply enjoy reading the following:

**Because I belong to Jesus...**

I am chosen

I am preferred

I am sought after

I am ordained

I am redeemed

I am eternally secure

I am favored

I am loved

I am liked

I am smiled upon

I am sheltered

I am worth everything to God

I am saved

I am forgiven

I am helped

I am welcomed

I am received

I am led

I am upheld

I am comforted

I am protected

I am accepted

I am uncondemnable

I am precious

I am family

I am His forever!



**PLEASE GO BACK AND CIRCLE THREE OF THOSE BLESSINGS  
THAT ENCOURAGED YOU THE MOST.**

Which of these three is your favorite? \_\_\_\_\_

WHY? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Will you now choose to return love to God by receiving and trusting His Word and His promises?

(circle one)

**YES**

**NO**

Will you choose to:

**EMBRACE THE TRUTH THAT GOD LOVES YOU  
WITHOUT HAVING TO PERFORM TO EARN IT?**

(circle one)

**YES**

**NO**

I invite you to pray this prayer from your heart:

*Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You that You love me. Thank You that you care for me. Thank You that You favor me.*

*Thank You that I don't have to perform to earn anything anymore! Thank You that I'm safe in Your care—that You saved me, and that You will keep me.*

*I confess I'm not sure I know how to handle such loving, restful freedom as this. But I praise You that You love and favor me in this manner!*

*Because You love me with no strings attached, I want to love You in return. I am grateful! Please enable me to be directed and empowered by Your Holy Spirit, to serve You, to love and forgive others, and to stay resting in Your Unwavering, Uncondemning Love.*

*In Jesus' name,*

---

*(date)*

---

*(signature)*

**TAKE    H E A R T    !**

*...be "confident of this,  
that He who began a good work in  
you will carry it on to completion  
until the day of Christ Jesus."*

Philippians 1:6

**GOD    B L E S S    YOU    !**

## NOTES

1. Neil T. Anderson, The Bondage Breaker, (Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 1990), pp. 229-234
2. Max Lucado, In The Grip of Grace, (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1996), p. 176, taken from Steve Cole, "Forgiveness," *Leadership Magazine*, 1983, 86.
3. Jeff Van Vonderen, Tired of Trying to Measure Up, (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1989), p. 73



# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Turn my eyes away from worthless things..." Psalm 119:37*

*"I have chosen the way of truth;..." Psalm 119:30*

## Key Number Four

# REJOICE IN WEAKNESS

### Think About This:

The weaknesses in your life need not depress you.  
They point you to your constant need of the Lord Jesus Christ.

### MEMORY VERSE

*Hebrews 4:15*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your  
**EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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## WEAKNESS IS SO DEPRESSING!

"I wish I were not so weak! I wish I were stronger than I really am."

Do you ever feel this way?

## A GODLY RESPONSE TO WEAKNESS

**Weakness** is a term in the Bible used to refer to different things. In some places, weakness refers to the helpless, the poor, the defenseless—those who have no strength or power in the eyes of worldly people.

In I Corinthians 1:27b, the "weak things of the world" refers to dying on a cross and the Gospel, which are considered as weakness and foolishness to worldly people.

II Corinthians 12:9 and 10 refer to the many infirmities, insults, hardships, persecutions, perplexities and distresses that the Apostle Paul endured as he preached the gospel (II Corinthians 11:23-33). If we adopt a proper attitude toward such tribulations and difficulties, we indeed can enter into the process of becoming content no matter what happens (Philippians 4:11).

Our godly response will honor the Lord. When we realize just how weak we are, the Lord can manifest His strength and enabling power through us as we **surrender our lives** to Him. This attitude of yielding will enhance our ability to experience the benefits of our secure position in Christ.

## OUR FOCUS HERE

The definition of weakness that Barbara and I will emphasize refers to those aspects of our personalities, temperaments, emotions, and physical bodies that are not even close to being perfect.

I'm talking about our physical **infirmities**, our emotional **frailties**, our **cripplings** and **propensities** and **inclinations** to fall into sin. I believe that Hebrews 4:15, our memory verse, most closely refers to this kind of weakness.

## WHAT IS YOUR STRUGGLE?

Maybe you struggle with **depression**—the kind that comes from enduring the pain, the stresses, the crushing losses and setbacks of this life. Or perhaps you experience feelings of despair, hopelessness, fatigue, moodiness, and a sense of being overwhelmed. (This sometimes stems not from a lack of faith but from other causes, such as a chemical imbalance in the brain that can be hereditary.)

Maybe you become easily **addicted** to drugs (alcohol, medications...). Maybe your temperament is such that you have inclinations toward being very impatient or angry at the drop of a hat. Maybe you are extremely vulnerable—easily tempted to giving in to anything even remotely related to sensual stimulation.

Maybe you don't have the slightest clue as to what "**normal**" is since you grew up in an abnormal home atmosphere where shaming, yelling, manipulation, abuse, and confusion over family roles were the way of life.

Maybe you struggle with being too **introspective** or too **negative**. Maybe you are physically or mentally disabled in a body that won't perform. Maybe your mind won't think the way you want it to.

### **BEWARE OF THE ENEMY'S LIES!**

**Satan is crafty.** As you know, his plan for your life is **DESTRUCTION**. One of the devil's most vicious accusations concerning you is that because you are really weak (and you are!), you are not as strong as you **should** be.

Then he deceives you into believing that God would like you better if you were stronger—better—with less flaws and quirks.

The question is not whether you will become stronger (trusting in yourself to perform better and actually doing so.) The question is whether you will become:

### **WISE IN YOUR WEAKNESS**

so the power of Jesus will be given free reign in you to form character: pure living, patience, gentleness, integrity, mercy, tenderheartedness, etc. The Lord wants to encourage you. He knows every detail of your life, every flaw—every sin—and, you know what?

He loves and accepts you right now—today—**just as you are!** Satan's message from every sector of our society is that weakness is really unacceptable to God, and because of your weaknesses, you **should** feel:

### **GUILTY! ASHAMED! AND SCORNE!**

Satan whispers, "Come on! Quit trying to put on the facade to others that you are a strong, stable Christian! Admit it! You're just a weak, worthless fool. You can't live for God! God helps those who help:

### **THEMSELVES!**

"Who would ever want to listen to what you have to say. Shut up and give up!"

**"KEEP ON IN YOUR SIN!"**

Have you ever felt Satan's attacks like these? I have. Remember—he probably won't attack you unless you pose a threat to his kingdom work, which is:

**THE DESTRUCTION OF SOULS**

**AND**

**THE ISOLATING**

**AND**

**CRIPPLING OF GOD'S SAINTS—US.**

## **REJOICE IN WEAKNESS**

As a result of our life's experiences, we have had the painful privilege of learning about weakness. In the strength of the Lord, we can finally say, without regret, that **WE ARE WEAK!**

The weaknesses Barbara and I possess seemed to be **magnified** through the trials and hardships that each of us has faced. Waging war against cancer and dealing with the heart breaking rejection and betrayal of divorce took its toll on each of us respectively.

We are learning, however, that God's grace is sufficient, and that His strength is perfected in our weakness.

The more weak and weary we become, the more we must seek the Lord Jesus and depend fully on Him. It is through our utter dependence upon Him that He strengthens us to persevere.

The good news is that although suffering, hardship, and loss will come, the Lord will **carry** you through it. He wants you to trust Him and not yourself. **Remember:** You are weak. He is strong!

A few years ago in a counseling session, a doctor stated he was struggling. In the middle of our discussion, I (Jim) stopped and asked him a simple question. "John, are you strong or weak?" He paused for a moment and then said, "Well, I guess I'm weak—unfortunately." I told him he was right on being weak, but I suggested to him that over the years, he had adopted the wrong perspective concerning being weak.

In II Corinthians 12:9,10, Paul said not only is the Lord's power perfected in his weaknesses but also he would rather boast about his weaknesses! He knew that when he surrendered his will to the Lord, then he was truly strong—the Lord's power could work through him to achieve godly ends. God's grace is sufficient!

As I shared, this kind doctor listened attentively, soaking up this biblical perspective. He said these thoughts both refreshed and challenged him.



**GOD DESPISES SIN. HE DOES NOT DESPISE WEAKNESS.**

I began studying weaknesses in the context of God's grace and mercy toward us and sharing some of what I was learning with other people I had counseled. I talked with one couple concerning strengths, weaknesses, and the worldly, destructive lies that we often embrace instead of the truth. They both agreed most Christians believe they would be more pleasing to God if they had more strengths and less weaknesses. I told them that this worldly, unbiblical attitude was a **major factor** in personal defeat. They agreed. It is important to make it clear that **sin** (missing the mark, falling short of God's glory and divine perfection) is **not** weakness. Yes, due to the Fall (Original Sin) of Adam and Eve, we *all* are born sinners, and sin has tainted every fiber of our being and personality.

God made us in His image, but that image was marred by sin. Because of this, we, as a race, became weak and helpless.

God loves you. He understands you are weak. He is ready and able to shed His grace and mercy on you. He wants you to count on Him for this (Psalm 103:13,14).

**HE WILL HELP!**

Rejoice in knowing that you are weak and needy. Then in your "poor in spirit" condition, the Lord can be all powerful, all enabling, all guiding, all comforting, all protecting, and all sufficient for you. God valued you so much that He sent His only beloved Son, Jesus, to die for you—to pay the supreme, mandatory penalty for all of your sins (past, present and future).

God loves and cherishes what He creates and redeems. He will form Christ likeness in us as we surrender ourselves, weaknesses included, to be used as wise instruments of righteousness.

**I'VE GOT TO MAKE IT ON MY OWN!**

Mary was taught that only being a strong "I can do it on my own" person was acceptable and that knowing she possessed weaknesses should be denied or covered up.

She revealed to me that she was deathly afraid of being discovered—people finding out that she was really weak and that she did **not have it all together**. She also said she even tried to hide her frailties from God.

One of the reasons many of us are limping around like this is that we have swallowed another of Satan's lies. This tempting and subtle lie states that God will love us and bless us more if we let everyone think:

**WE HAVE OUR ACT TOGETHER!**

It is because of this that we find ourselves fearful and exhausted much of the time. We run ourselves ragged trying to present an image of ourselves that is better than we really are. In essence, we exhaust ourselves trying to be:

**FAKE!**

We need to realize that the Lord's grace is sufficient for us. Hebrews 4:15,16 is so encouraging! We need to know that not only has the Lord saved, redeemed, and rescued us, but He sympathizes with us and understands us fully in our weaknesses. Jesus was tempted "in all things as we are, yet without sin." It is comforting to know that the Lord wants us to draw near (verse 16):

*"Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace,  
that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need."*

If we embrace Satan's lie and reject our sense of complete neediness, then how can the Lord, who loves to help, help us? I urged Mary to cling to the truth in these verses and begin to rejoice in her weakness, allowing the Holy Spirit to direct and strengthen her.

### **HER WEAKNESSES DROVE HIM NUTS!**

Tom felt that his wife was his **enemy**. He could not stand her weaknesses." They drive me nuts!" he said." If she could only improve, be a better Christian wife, then I could receive her unconditionally and we'd be happy then." Tom was clearly sinning against God "focusing on the provision"—his wife. I let him know that if he continued to make his love dependent on his wife's performance, his marriage would sink and die a slow and subtle death.

I suggested to Tom that his only hope was to confess this as sin to God, repent (change his mind and agree with God), and refocus on the Provider. Any "fixing" or changing of a mate would then be:

### **LEFT UP TO GOD.**

If Tom rejected his wife and eventually broke his vows and bailed out of the marriage, he would be missing out on many wonderful plans and blessings—blessings that God intended to accomplish through their marriage. Godly character never comes cheap. There is always a great price—commitment, sacrifice, faith in the Provider. There are other alternatives, but they won't stand the tests of time and eternity.

### **IN CONTEMPT OF COURT? ME?**

I told him I believed if Adam had rejected Eve as God's right choice for him, he would have been in contempt of court. Adam would, in effect, be questioning the very authority, ability, and integrity of God by saying that His perfect provision, Eve, was unacceptable. I suggested to Tom that he quickly change his mind if he wanted God to honor him in his life and marriage.

Where is your focus today? Are you looking to God, thanking Him for providing you with YOU? Do you want what God wants for your life or what you want? Are you acceptable to yourself even with all your weaknesses? Will you not accept what God accepts? What about your mate, or your child, or your parent—or that person at church or at work? Will you receive them, without condition? Or will you reject them?

### **GOD'S LOVING GRACE AND ACCEPTANCE—**

### **THIS IS WHAT IS GREAT!**

You might be asking, "How can God possibly be glorified and honored by my weaknesses? How can He use them as instruments of righteousness?" I have come to the conclusion that when we humble ourselves through all our pride, give up trying to exalt our sagging egos, and long for the gentle hand of the Lord, then we can enter into true joy, contentment, and peace—the kind that only Jesus gives. It is here, resting thankfully at His feet, surrendering our will, our dreams, our personality, our emotional wounds, and our weaknesses to Him, that we experience His loving grace and acceptance.

He receives us with open arms just the way we are—that's good news! In His presence, we can bask in His light. His love, and His strength as we literally rejoice in our utter weakness.

### HE IS YOUR STRENGTH.

You have no power, no strength, and nothing to offer God in and of yourself. Rejoice! He is ready to show His strength and power through you if you let Him. When you rest in these truths you can truly praise the Lord because then He can be "all God" in your life. He then can empower, direct, and use you for His glory. You **consecrate** yourself to Him daily. He then **positions** you where He wants you.

### WALLOW OR WISE UP?

The dictionary defines "wallow" as "to roll oneself about as in mire; to flounder; as the elephants wallowed in the river."

I believe we have a **choice**. In our weaknesses, our troubles, and our emotional wounds (from the harshness of our lives), it is very tempting to give in to the pain and despair of it all. We can literally choose to wallow in the mire of our lives. We can admit that we are weak, but then do nothing about it. I think God wants us to understand that our weaknesses must be surrendered to Him. He can minister through us when we allow Him to lead and direct.

We can choose to "wise up" in our weakness. We need to fully receive the healing grace of the Lord. He desires to be merciful and gracious to each of us. Some of you reading this have been deeply wounded or abused emotionally, spiritually, or physically. My heart goes out to you. The Lord Jesus wants to comfort and help you. King David, in Psalm 34:18-19, says:

*"...The Lord is near to the brokenhearted,  
and saves those who are crushed in spirit.  
Many are the afflictions of the righteous;  
But the Lord delivers him out of them all..."*

**Come to Him.** Come just the way you are. Come with weaknesses, hurts, temptations, and wounds. Come with your pain and despair. Let Him cradle you in His arms. Pour out your heart to Him. Tell Him everything. Confide your deepest sorrow, rage, fear, private sin. Give to Him everything that has been holding, hindering, and harassing you—especially the things you are most ashamed of. Psalm 34:22 says:

*"...none of those who take refuge in Him will be condemned."*

I am convinced the Lord wants to minister to you and through you, out of your need, out of your pain—out of your weakness. Sometimes I feel like I don't want to be used of God until I'm feeling good or when my weaknesses go away. I am thankful that the Apostle Paul thought otherwise. With ever-present weaknesses, dangers, and discouragement, he pressed on. With shipwrecks, stonings, and death threats, he kept his focus. Was he weary? Yes! Was he frustrated? Yes! Did he take time to rest and gather strength? Yes! Did he minister? Yes!

### WATCH OUT FOR DANGER—THIN ICE!

Remember, be wise in your weakness, instead of foolish! Because the devil is crafty, he'll plot ingenious schemes to coax you into the delights of sin. If you are a threat to his kingdom, he will plot to destroy you—a favorite way is to RUIN YOUR REPUTATION through moral failure. Christians "fall" every day.

Be wise in your weakness. Seek one-to-one mutual accountability (by a trusted friend of the same sex). Born out of a growing informal relationship, meet at least every two weeks and check on, build up, and pray for one another in five important areas of your life. (In Key #6 there will be further help concerning this kind of relationship.) Ask each other (and answer now) questions like:

1. How is your relationship with the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How is your relationship with your mate (or friends, if single)? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. How are you really doing in the area of moral purity? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. What are you doing to have fun, to take care of yourself and avoid burnout? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. How can I pray for you? \_\_\_\_\_

The devil hates this because this fights his plan for isolating and compromising you. **BE WISE! BE ACCOUNTABLE!**

### WILL YOUR WEAKNESS PREVENT YOU OR PROPEL YOU?

Some of you are **inclined** toward addiction (drugs, alcohol, pornography, gambling, TV, workaholism, etc). Some easily panic and fear people, crowds, or situations. Some are angered easily and have a tough time asking for forgiveness. Some of you are broken by tragedy, loss, sickness, abuse, failure, poverty, sin, misunderstanding, or rejection.

Some of you, like Martin Luther and Abraham Lincoln, wrestle with horrible, chronic depression—so bad sometimes that you despair of life itself. If you struggle with depression, you may feel like you are being stalked by a panther in the night.

Some of you are so confused, and downtrodden that you don't know what to believe or which end is up. Some of you have cried until the tears stop coming—divorce, miscarriage, abortion, sexual or physical abuse, absent or unloving parents, being fired, losing a child or mate—and much, much more. As a result of these hurts you are left weary **and weak**. Jesus hurts with you but He will do more than that. If you ask Him, He will strengthen, uplift, and encourage you, and if you let Him, He will touch other lives through you—you become a wounded soldier of the Cross coming to the aid of others in need.

Do not settle for allowing your weaknesses to **prevent** you from ministering to others. Act on what you know and ask the Lord to PROPEL you into service. Seek godly counseling or a support group or one-to-one accountability. Whatever you do, get the help you need, but don't forget that God can still use you to minister to others.

**Rejoice in your weakness.** Will you ask the Lord to strengthen and use you to help others who are weak?

*"...God has chosen the weak things of the world  
to shame the things which are strong..."*

*...that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men  
but on the power of God."*

I Corinthians 1:27(b), 2:5 (NASB)

1. Were you taught that weakness was to be tolerated or not tolerated in yourself and others?

(circle one)

**TOLERATED**

**NOT TOLERATED**

2. How does what you circled line up with the **truth** that your Heavenly Father loves, understands, and favors you as His wonderful, precious child and that He not only tolerates you but upholds you?
3. Do you **think poorly** of yourself (down on yourself) because of lies you have believed regarding your weaknesses? Many people do.

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

4. Be honest with yourself.

Please take a moment and, as best as you can, list your top three (3) strengths, gifts, abilities, or positive qualities as a person?

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. Now list your three (3) most prominent weaknesses, foibles, stumbling areas, or things about yourself that really:

### BUG YOU!

Note: If some are deeply personal, just abbreviate or put the first initial of that particular "crippling" or weakness so that just you will know. Only share what you feel safe in sharing. Your Partners) should respect this.

Those (3) weaknesses that give me the most personal grief are:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

6. Does it relieve or comfort you to know that the Lord Jesus understands your struggles with an everlasting, affirming love that will never cease and that He knows what you are going through? (Hebrews 4:15,16)

(circle one)

**YES      MAYBE      NO**

7. Will you embrace the truth that God loves you even though you possess undesirable traits and make mistakes?

(circle one)

**YES      MAYBE      NO**

8. Look up the following verses on **WEAKNESS** and write down what you think the Lord is trying to say to you about His view of weakness:

Psalms 72:12-13 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I Corinthians 1:27(b) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I Corinthians 12:21-25 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I Corinthians 15:43-44 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

II Corinthians 11:30 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

II Corinthians 12:9,10 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:26(a) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE CIRCLE THE ONE VERSE ABOVE  
THAT ENCOURAGES YOU THE MOST.**

Why does it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**9. Remember!**

Weakness, as we are using it here, is not referring to foolishness, disobedience, sin, or carnality. Instead, it refers to those crippling or propensities that, left unyielded to the power and wise management of the Lord, would bring great dishonor and harm.

**THEY PRESS US INTO  
DEPENDING UPON HIM.**

If we resist this "pressing in" process, then we will:

1. Deny we are weak and depend on ourselves.
2. Realize we are weak, but hide it.
3. Sadly admit we are weak, guessing that God hopefully loves us in spite of our weaknesses. We then feel He must sort of put up with us.

**NONE OF THESE WILL WORK!!**

What we must do is:

1. Fully admit that we are weak.
2. Remove everything from our lives that could cause us to stumble and to sin.
3. Look to the Lord for His strength and help.
4. Rejoice in our weakness, knowing that God:

**UNDERSTANDS OUR WEAKNESS.**

**GOD LOVES US.**

In the words of Bible teacher Charles Stanley, God will sometimes **engineer your failures** so you can come to the end of yourself. He knows your tendency is to try to live and reach goals by your own strength, ingenuity, creativity, and ability.

God wants you to **die** to all this. When you try to reach goals on your own, it is based on your plans, your strength, and your need for glory.

**HE WANTS YOU TO DIE TO SELF**

**AND LIVE UNTO CHRIST!**

He wants you to not only depend on His strength but on His saving, leading, comforting life within us! He is quite able to lead, empower, and guide you to His goals and His service!

Someone once cried:

**LIFE HAS TOO MUCH PRESSURE!**

When I think of my weaknesses, I know I seem to be tested more when "pressures" enter my life.



Hudson Taylor wrote: "It doesn't matter how great the pressure is. What really matters is where the pressure lies—whether it comes between you and God, or whether it presses you nearer His heart." Weakness—Pressure. Kind of like bookends!

The question is—what will we do with them? As we surrender to Him out of our love, respect, and adoration for Him, He alone can strengthen us and use us to bring light to this ungodly, dark world.

### TOM

Tom is a special friend who also happens to be an alcoholic. Whenever he would drink he found that he could not stop. He was out of control.

He foolishly would give in to just one more drink—thus leading to the sin of drunkenness. Unrighteousness and destruction resulted.

His family suffered greatly. His denial that he had a problem was almost unbearable for them to live with. When anyone tried to lovingly confront him, he would get the pressure off himself by making it appear the problem was the person confronting him.

BUT! When he decided to yield to God and become wise in his weakness, God began using him as an instrument of godliness, righteousness, and service.

He received Biblical counseling and also joined Alcoholics Anonymous. He became active in his church's singles fellowship. He began to share how God's grace and love were working in his life and began to coach and encourage others who were in the midst of struggling with the drug alcohol.

### TED

Ted became a Christian in his teens. Outwardly, he seemed an ideal example of a growing Christian. He was kind, people-centered, generous, and went to Bible studies.

What the outside world did not know was that most of his life—his private life—he wrestled with a sin-addiction:

### PORNOGRAPHY

Seldom did he ever go out and buy magazines. Instead, in college, he would maintain his public good Christian track record by secretly going into his friends' dorm rooms when they were in class. He would open their drawers, discover the porn magazines, and pour over them with an uncommon intensity. Afterwards, he would be crushed by guilt only to find himself back in the same friends' rooms the next day, or when life became stressful. **Pressure.**

After he was married, he would occasionally sneak to a sexually explicit movie or rent videos and view them alone on his own VCR. Other times, he would stay up, after everyone else in his family went to bed, in order to "read." Instead, he would find himself drifting over to the cable TV and flipping through the late night off color movies.

The magazines began to have less impact on his life but what remained was an addiction to cable television and the Internet. The adventure, the escape from pressures, the shows, the commercials, and the Web surfing would inflame his sinful desires....He refused to allow his wife to have sole control of the security password.

## HE WAS UTTERLY WEAK!

Ted finally decided that his love for God was more important than his pride or his private life (his addictions to lust, TV, and the Internet).

He canceled the Internet and pledged to his family that he would no longer allow cable or satellite TV into his home. He now realized as many people do that he had an addictive personality. He had to adjust his life because of this.

Before, when the Internet was accessible or he would walk past the TV room, he would actually feel a tug or emotional drawing toward the computer or the TV—as if something inside him just had to see what was on there that he was missing! He and his family got rid of all questionable magazines. (Even Sears catalogs, Lady's Home Journal, or anything that might trigger the mental, neuro-hormonal surge that would inflame those old fires of lust and private "**hunting**" for smut—anything to relieve that nasty addictive tension.)

He replaced that emptiness with more family times, time for reading to the kids, time for walks, playing games, going for ice cream cones....

He spent **focused, uninterrupted time** with the Lord and really started talking honestly and sincerely with Him knowing that the Lord receives him unconditionally.

He entered into an encouragement-accountability relationship with another man (a Man of Honor relationship where they could build one another up in the Lord).

Gradually He became wise **in his** weakness, humbly sincere in his faith, and steadfast in his love and adoration for Jesus. He will forever be weak in the areas of sensual visual stimuli, but now the strength of the Lord predominates through Him, and others are being strengthened by his new stand. He, although far from perfect, now brings honor to Christ in his private AND public life. It takes time. Growth, wisdom, and healing take time.

## THEY LEARNED.

### WILL YOU?

They learned that the only way to bring **honor to God** in their weakness was to:

- a. Realize they were helpless in certain areas of their lives.
- b. Break through all forms of denial that would minimize or even promote problems.
- c. Flee from all stimuli that would spark the return of addictive urges. Shun evil.
- d. Depend totally on the love, grace, and strength of the Lord Jesus to keep them wise and honorable.
- e. Seek and insist on regular accountability. (Without this, a, b, c, and d, simply will not last very long.)

*"...humility comes before honor." Proverbs 15:33*

They took seriously God's Word in Psalm 119:133.

*"Direct my footsteps according to your word; let no sin rule over me."*

10. Zechariah 4:6 says:

*"Not by might  
nor by power,  
but by my Spirit,'  
says the Lord Almighty."*

Barbara writes: "It is **not** by your efforts or attempts to manage your weaknesses, but by calling on and leaning on the enabling, guiding, and comforting power of the Holy Spirit who lives within you. He is the Spirit of Christ, your Helper, your Life, your Strength, your Lord. You must depend on Him and His power if your weaknesses and your life are to be used to glorify the Him."

Will you trust in the Lord's ability to help and strengthen you in the areas of your life in which you struggle?

You will always be weak, but if you continually desire to love God and live wisely so as to please Him and allow His Spirit to control you:

**HE WILL ENABLE YOU IN YOUR WEAKNESSES  
TO PROVIDE HOPE AND LIGHT  
TO THE DARK WORLD AROUND YOU!**

Do you think now you will be able to begin the grace-oriented process of:

**REJOICING IN YOUR WEAKNESS?**

(circle one)

**YES      MAYBE      NO**

**PRACTICE OBEYING GOD'S COMMAND**

*"Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing."*

I Thessalonians 5:11

Learning to rejoice in weakness is not an easy thing to do. The Lord working in our lives simply takes time. Barbara and I have found that one thing that helps us to rejoice in weakness is giving and receiving genuine encouragement. Discouragement is one of the greatest emotional cripples among Christians today. Next to spreading the Gospel and training others to love God, His Word, and people, we need to be about the ministry of spreading encouragement.

Take a few moments and write down **three qualities** that you **admire** about each other person in your group. When you meet, take turns sharing all of the qualities listed for one person at a time. Then encourage and build up the next person in your group in the same focused manner.

**THREE QUALITIES I ADMIRE ABOUT MY PARTNER(S)**

1st Person's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Person's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

3rd Person's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

4th Person's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** If someone who is imperfect thinks this highly of you, know that Jesus, who loves you perfectly, thinks even higher of you. Just let Him fill your empty tank with much needed genuine encouragement. He favors, prefers, and applauds YOU!!!!!!

If there is the slightest possibility that you would desire to rejoice in ALL of your weaknesses, let me. a

weak person like you, invite you to pray this earnest, simple prayer:

*Lord Jesus, I need You right now. I admit that I am weak I now surrender all areas of my life to You and ask You to help me to be "wise in my weakness."*

*Lord. I've been down and troubled over it all. I feel so helpless and guilty at times.*

*I'm tired and I'm weary of struggling. You know just how I feel.*

*Help me to rejoice in my weakness.*

*Thanks for loving me just the way I am. I love You too.*

In Jesus' name,

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(date)

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(signature)

*" 'For I know the plans I have for you,'  
declares the Lord,  
'plans to prosper  
you and not to harm you,  
plans to give you a hope and a future.'"*

Jeremiah 29:11

*"Do not grieve,  
(meaning don't weep or mourn or  
continue feeling guilty anymore!)  
for the joy of the Lord is your strength."*

Nehemiah 8:10

# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Do not withhold your mercy from me, O Lord;  
may your love and your truth always protect me." Psalm 40:11*

Key Number Five

## BE AUTHENTIC

### Think About This:

Next to the Word of God, the best way to share the Gospel is to live it.  
Don't be fake. Don't live to please people.  
Just be genuine—be yourself.  
Risk being authentic so that God's love and power can shine through to others.

### MEMORY VERSE     *Psalm 62:8*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your  
**EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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**HEED THE SIGN**

In front of a small church in Tennessee, stands a sign that reads:

**"BE KIND.**

**EACH OF US IS FACING**

**A MAJOR BATTLE."**

Authenticity is such a struggle! We could all learn from Tevia, the beloved father in **Fiddler on the Roof**. In one scene, when life seemed a bit overwhelming, he cried out: "Lord, I know we are the chosen people, but couldn't you choose somebody else?" He was not rebelling. He was confiding.

A. Now if we all would lower our guards a little and remove our masks of how we want others (especially Christians) to see us, we would discover that each of us is:

1. Facing a struggle, a difficulty, or a hardship of some kind.
2. Needy—really in need of the Lord's compassion, understanding, and protection.
3. Desperate for others to listen to us, empathize with us, and encourage us.

B. Empathy is:

1. Entering into someone else's world of pain, hurting with the person, valuing unconditionally with a heart of mercy and warmth.
2. Putting your agenda on "hold" and taking up what is of importance to the needy person in front of you.

C. Empathy is not:

1. Preaching at them.
2. Hammering them with verses.
3. Giving advice: Telling them what they **ought** to do.
4. Trying to lift their spirits by either ignoring or minimizing their pain—or by sharing that "Aunt Tilly had this problem or disease and is now doing JUST FINE!" (This will drive most people away from you.)

- D. Satan fears that those who are loved by and forever belong to God (Christians) will begin to:

**TAKE THE RISK—  
of being real and genuine with others.**

He knows that the gracious and loving power of God will begin to flow through and radiate from those believers to others in need.

- E. If he can get us to buy his lies, then:

1. We will fake the Christian life by trying to convince others that we:
  - a. Are always joyful.
  - b. Seldom have struggles or insecurities.
  - c. Seem to have it all together.
  - d. Are the blemish-free examples of Christianity.
  - e. Are almost always on track and almost never wrestle with temptation and sin.
2. We will actually believe that Jesus is glorified best this way!

The problem is that we are fake and speak Christianese. ("Oh yes!, Praise the Lord!, AMEN! I am always feeling sooooo blessed!")

**NOTE—God hates hypocrisy:** Going through a bunch of external people-pleasing actions and surface attitudes that make us look good while the heart remains cold or hurting. **God** loves sincerity: From a contrite, thankful, and sincere heart, actions and attitudes that demonstrate your deep love, adoration, and reverence for your heavenly Father.

When we wear a surface, candy-coated, pious-like smile and we project that we have **everything in order** in our Christian life, we end up:

**DRIVING OTHERS AWAY FROM US!**

They can't relate to someone who is closed, perfect, or never struggling. People relate to us as well as they relate to a **blast furnace**. They don't want to hang around too long!

Let us learn from our Lord, the greatest **empathizer** who ever lived!

*"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin."*

Hebrews 4:15



3. If we don't learn from our compassionate Savior (who "...did not come to judge the world, but to save the world." John 12:47):

**OTHERS WON'T FEEL LOVED.  
THEY WILL FEEL JUDGED.**

Jesus came to us from heaven to relate to us, to receive us, to forgive and save us, to give us life, to be open, and to struggle in His humanity so that we'd know:  
**HE IS CLOSER THAN A BROTHER.**

- F. Don't you think it's high time we stop pretending to ourselves and to others that we have no needs—that everything is just rosy?

**You know—that everything is:  
JUST FINE?**

- G. It is time to be:

**A U T H E N T I C .  
GO AHEAD. TAKE THE RISK!**

Self-righteous or fake people won't like you if you are **real**. But like the Velveteen Rabbit and the Skin Horse, earnest and humble hearts will be drawn to you. Sincere people were drawn to Jesus as well. Instead of a blast furnace, you'll be like a warm and cozy fire place in a lodge during a snow storm. People will want to come inside, grab their hot cocoa, and draw near to you. As you commit to **authenticity** in your walk with God and with people, others will be drawn to Jesus as they see the growing contentment within you (Jesus residing in your heart).

Chuck Swindoll defines **contentment** as this:

"Feeling comfortable and secure with where  
you are and who you are. Not having to  
'be better' or 'go further\*' or 'own more'  
or 'prove to the world' or 'reach the top.'"

Go ahead! Take risks! Enter into His rest! Be authentic!

- H. One of the reasons people were drawn and attracted to Jesus was that He was gentle, empathetic, and:

**APPROACHABLE.**

They came to Him if they had a sincere, searching, and thirsting heart.

It takes courage to be authentic, for doing so requires that we, to some degree, reveal our needy imperfect state to others who might try to use this against us.

I. If you want your God to help others through you, then:

Ask the Lord to enable you to be:

1. Vulnerable.
2. Honest.
3. Transparent. (Be careful with whom you are transparent.)
4. Empathetic.
5. Genuine. (The **real** you, with Christ's love **directing** you.)

*"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow  
for each other and for everyone else,  
just as ours does for you."*

I Thessalonians 3:12

J. Based on what God is teaching our family, Barbara and I have a hunch that you are facing some sort of battle or struggle.

That's just a part of life. Someone jokingly said:

"Either the storm is just over,  
you're in the storm,  
or there's one brewing."

I would guess that maybe your heart has been hurting at times—maybe even heavy now and then—

**PERHAPS MORE NOW THAN THEN!**

Part of learning the freedom to be authentic is to know that growth is a struggle. The Lord transforming us:

**IS A PROCESS.**

Whatever struggles you're facing will take time to heal and work through.

In ministry, Barbara and I make an attempt at being **authentic**. By no means have we arrived! We hope you will be encouraged to be authentic as well!

Continue on only after you have finished reading **JIM'S STORY** and **BARBARA'S STORY** located at the back of **Key #2: Present Your Wounds**.

## WHERE WAS GOD?

**Jim** writes: "Sometimes during the cancer battle, God seemed far away—sometimes contradictory, sometimes confusing. Sometimes it seemed like He didn't make sense at all—like He wasn't even hearing our prayers. Once, I actually felt forsaken—abandoned. Much of the time during these trials I felt spiritually and emotionally wooden—like I was basically empty inside. Our home was filled with heavy hearts."

**Barbara** writes: "When my husband left me with three small children, I was devastated. I cried often. A number of our church friends no longer would have anything to do with me. Sometimes I felt really alone. I found myself tired, really tired at times. My heart had been betrayed, then ripped in half. There were few who came to my aid. Those that did were sent from God! Even though my hopes and dreams for my marriage were murdered, I clung to Jesus. He was always there for me. He became my life!"

Those experiences and feelings were real. We're convinced that if you are going through a difficult time right now, you are experiencing similar exhausting, anxious feelings, emotions and symptoms. If you are committed to the Lord no matter what, and even though you aren't perfect (only one Person was!), I believe the above emotions have little to do with being a strong Christian.

We believe, in most cases, the above emotions are simply reflecting your suffering and your authentic human experience. By the way, the Lord Jesus has suffered all of these and of course much more. He can relate. He understands. He knows of your groanings, your weaknesses, your failures, and oh, how He loves you!

**Where was God?** He was right there with us in the trenches, in the pain, in the gloom. Even when we felt despair and hopelessness, He cared for and watched over us. Let's assume you are quietly suffering. It almost goes unnoticed—unnoticed except by One. God, rich in mercy, knows of your pain and He is a lifter of your countenance.

## FORGOTTEN, SLANDERED, REJECTED?

David in Psalm 31:9,10 says, *"Be merciful to me, Oh Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. My life is consumed with anguish and my years with groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak."*

Does it seem like you've been **groaning** in misery or sadness for years? Barbara and I certainly have felt this way at times.

Are you hurting? Do you have a home filled with heavy hearts? Does your woeful countenance need lifting? Come to the Lord Jesus just the way you are. Come humbly—come broken—on your knees. **Cry out to Him. Pour your heart out to your God.** He will not cast you away. He will embrace you and lift you up!

## HE IS GOD. WE ARE NOT.

Through pain, grieving, isolation, and deep fatigue (all quite normal when you hurt or suffer), **Barbara** and I have chosen by faith to surrender control of our lives and our destiny to Him. Looking at all this from human eyes, it would seem that ministry is being hindered or prevented due to all of these setbacks. However, God's eyes see differently! Even though we want to serve Him, we realize and are thankful that advancing His kingdom does not depend upon us. It is up to God.

We have long since stopped trying to figure it all out—such a waste of time! Better to give it all, including our despair, our anger, our dashed dreams, our fears, our bitterness, and our resentments to the Lord. He will receive us with open arms.

Through our pain we are coming to the conclusion that when we're going through difficulties and trials we may feel emotions that seem like God is for us and at other times like God is against us. Can you relate? We have found that we don't have to trust our feelings. They are shifting sand instead of solid rock.

Because of God's Word, we can always know that **God is for us** (if you have received Christ into your heart and belong to Him), working out His plan for His glory and ultimately for our benefit—even if that benefit can't be realized on this side of Heaven.

Will you trust God even when He seems deaf to your prayers?—even when life does not seem to make sense?—even with a heavy heart? We are the clay. He is the potter. He calls the shots. We don't. He is God. We are not. Thank the Lord!

**HE IS WITH YOU.**

**HE KNOWS. HE UNDERSTANDS.**

The Lord knows well your disappointments and injustices. You may have suffered brutally from sickness, disablement, emotional, physical or sexual abuse, or a damaging home life. You may have deep wounds and scars from alcohol or substance abuse in your family. Maybe you've been divorced, abandoned, had an abortion, endured combat, or faced some other tragedy. Maybe you have AIDS or know a loved one who does. Maybe you struggle with the sin of homosexuality. Perhaps you struggle against cancer....

Maybe you suffer from depression like Abraham Lincoln and Martin Luther did. Maybe you are imprisoned by anxiety and fear. Maybe you are addicted to pornography. Perhaps you fear relationships. Maybe you are lonely beyond imagination! Maybe your marriage is in trouble. In some way maybe you are broken, hurting, and needy. You don't know who to turn to.

**The Lord weeps with you.** He will strengthen your feeble heart. He will wipe your tears away. He does that you know. If there is sin in your life, repent of it and receive His mercy and forgiveness. He can hardly wait to restore and strengthen you.

God's plans for you and for us are simply too grand for us to grasp. We are called as Job was—to yield and surrender. Barbara and I have determined that we want what God wants for our lives and family. We are expendable. We are available for His service. We want people to see Christ through us. We want to serve Him.

We want Him to minister through our pain—out of our need—in light of our suffering. We pray that you will entrust your whole life and destiny to the Lord Jesus—yield to Him and completely trust in Him as your Lord and Savior—**NO MATTER WHAT!**

**A strong Savior awaits you.**

## NINE HELPS FOR THE HURTING

(If you are a family of one, apply what applies.)

### 1. Surrender all of you—your past, present, and future—to the Lord.

Entrust to Him your illness, your mistakes, your suffering—your heavy heart. Let Him bless and work through you and your family as He sees fit. Be totally available to Him. Revolve your life around God's plans. Pour out your heavy heart to Him as often as you desire.

### ICED LEMON WATER?

Think of your heart as a pitcher of iced lemon water with all the ice at the top and the seeds and rinds resting somewhere hidden and deep on the bottom. Most of the time hurting Christians will pour out only part of their heart to God. They only pour off the obvious surface problems, needs, praises, etc.—the ice cubes and maybe half the pitcher of water.

We tend to want to hold back on pouring it all out—our deep wounds, our hateful resentments, our lustful cravings, our unrighteous, self-centered.” Poor me! Don't I have it rough” feelings. We don't want to do this because we feel this is an offense to God.

The truth is He already knows our hearts—every buried seed, rind—you name it! How can we expect God to heal our deepest wounds, hurts, scars, fears, and frustrations if we are not willing to “expose” them to God.

**Go ahead!** Take time perhaps now to pour out the whole pitcher, rinds, seeds, and every last drop. Your Heavenly Father, who receives you just the way you are, wants you to confide in Him. He won't strike you down with lightning. He won't crush you to dust. Pour your heart out. Once you have done so, you might feel that you have nothing to hide from Him.

Know that He understands you. Ask Him to forgive you if needed. Ask Him to comfort and restore you if appropriate. You can know that He will. Lean into Psalm 62:8:

*“Trust in Him at all times, O people;  
pour out your hearts to Him,  
for God is our refuge.”*

### THE SLOW PROCESS OF HEALING

Allow yourself time to heal. Healing or restoring is a process that takes time. You may need to take time to talk with your pastor or a Christian counselor. You may have stuffed and buried tragic, painful memories that need to be surfaced and released. The Lord can use these caring people to assist you in surrendering more fully.

### HOW NEEDY ARE YOU?

**REMEMBER THIS:** Utter need—utter surrender. The crucial connection is this: Utter surrender requires admitting to God that you are completely needy and that you are unable to meet **ANY** of your needs. You get down, depressed, anxious, and frenzied when you try to work your struggles out as if it were up to you. That would be like playing God and I found out that "playing God" is an awful game!

Recently in my own life, I (Jim) was struggling with surrendering to God. I told Him that I wanted He wants for my life. I no longer wanted my plans fulfilled—only His. But I still felt miserable and was far from experiencing any peace from God.

While searching a few scriptural passages, I was confronted with David's 28th Psalm and fell to my knees. Verse 7 says, *"The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in Him. My heart leaps for joy and I will give thanks to Him in song."*

### BUT I WANT TO CARRY...!

Verse 9 says, *"Save your people and bless your inheritance; BE THEIR SHEPHERD AND CARRY THEMFOREVER."* It was here that I realized that although I was surrendered to God (wanting His and desires for me), I was not broken in humility by deeply admitting my need for Him to meet every toe of my needs— including peace, rest, provision, and direction. I could not strive to attain rest. **I** had to cease **from striving** and let the Lord give me His rest.

Somehow in my pride, I really wanted to be a big help to Jesus by attempting to meet some of my own needs. I think I wanted to do some of the carrying of my burdens...my worries...my life. I sensed freedom and release as I learned and believed that it is Jesus' responsibility to "carry" me—not mine. What a relief!

In Matthew 11:28, Jesus says to you, *"Come to Me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."* (NASB) Oh how I need to hear those words often! **I forget so easily.** I cannot produce any of the rest. My anxious pride tells me that I'd like to, but I simply am unable, inept, and bankrupt. John 15:5 is true. Jesus says to you, *"for apart from Me, you can do nothing."* (NASB)

When you first grasp this, your prideful, self sufficient feathers get ruffled But as you spend devoted, regular, focused, uninterrupted time with Jesus, you begin to enter into deep joy and gratitude—a thankful rest—assured that Jesus has **everything under control.** There's just no need to worry any more, even when your world seems to be falling apart. We all need to embrace this truth.

### POOR, WEAK, BLIND.

In Mark 10:47, we find blind Bartimaeus, the poor, weak, and simple beggar. Not only was he utterly needy, but he also had nothing to offer Jesus. He knew he could not meet any of his own needs. Sitting by the dusty roadside he heard that Jesus was walking by. Humble, meek, poor and needy, this ragged old man began to cry out, *"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"* (NASB)

Yes! This is the cry Jesus loves to hear from you. Jesus quickly showed loving, attentive mercy toward Bartimaeus because of his surrendered and utterly needy heart attitude. Are you broken and desperate enough to **cry out** to Jesus for mercy too?

## 2. Define your purpose as a family.

In 15 words or less, prayerfully compose your family purpose statement. If you have children, get them involved. Make it simple enough for a four-year-old to memorize and recite. Say it or sing it at meal times. Filter your priorities and plans through it. Ours is: **"To be a Restoring Lighthouse for Christ."** God often uses your suffering to guide your purpose.

Seneca, the Roman Philosopher, once said, "A ship cannot set its sails in the right direction until it knows what port it is headed toward." Have you chosen what direction your life—your family is headed in? Is it unwavering or is it wishy-washy like the waves of the sea? It is time, now, to make up your mind. What do you stand for? Who are you committed to?

If you are married or engaged, Barbara and I want to encourage you to order several copies of **Home to Home: Passing on Five Cornerstones of Christian Marriage**. This is our six week couple to couple discipling and friendship building material for two or more couples to strengthen each other's marriage and become great friends. **Remember the Rowboats – Anchor your Marriage to Christ** is our new marriage book. To order, call New Life Resources at 1-800-827-2788. You can **Google** them as well.

## 3. Review and reset your expectations and priorities.

If you have a home where there has been suffering, disappointment, and loss, no doubt you feel that you are not meeting everyone's expectations. This may be a tough one for you! Live up to God's expectations of you—not your church's or your in-laws'.

### BUT WHAT WILL PEOPLE THINK?

**Jim writes:** You might need to decrease the demands placed upon you for a while—or perhaps for a long time. For a while, we didn't make it to church, Bible studies, or in-law get-togethers because Julie's energy simply wasn't there in her battle against cancer. This is not a time to feel guilty. No way! Commitment to your local church is essential, yet sometimes health problems make it difficult to attend consistently.

Many poor excuses are used to justify staying home Sunday morning, but in some difficult situations I am convinced it is wise not to push yourself. If you are suffering seriously like we were, being with large crowds of people was **just too much!** Call your Pastor or Elders. Perhaps they can come over, send tapes, and line you up with people who can meet needs.

A healthy person may have six bullets of energy to fire in a day. An unhealthy or distressed person might only have one or two bullets. When they are spent, **THEY'RE SPENT!** Being with a lot of people can drain you quickly.

Stop worrying about what people think. Consider lowering your expectations for a season so that you can handle life and not burn out.

### HOW MANY BULLETS HAS GOD GIVEN YOU?

If you were used to getting five things done in a given day, you may have to settle for only getting one thing done. Remember: God gives you enough energy to get **WHAT HE WANTS** done in a given day. Don't try to outdo God. **MAKE YOUR BULLETS COUNT!**

## DO YOUR PRIORITIES INCLUDE CABLE, SATELLITE TV, OR THE INTERNET?

**Be extremely careful here.** Anyway the Devil can get his **Trojan Horse** of values and lies into your home, he will! If these entertainment advances could cause your family members to stumble into sin bondage due to the easy access to smut and godless values, consider getting these **influences under tight control** or out of your home. You might just rest easier! ([www.covenanteyes.com](http://www.covenanteyes.com))

### 4. Be authentic!

If you want to minister, don't be fake. Be yourself. Be real. Don't be afraid to share the reality of your pain or suffering. Be gracious, but, if asked, it's OK to relate that you're having a bad day. In the love and power of the Lord, it is your genuineness that God will use. Others are turned off by Super Christians. They're drawn to transparent "not so perfect" Christians who are depending on a strong Savior. They will think—"Now that is someone I can relate to!"

Be sure to build into your schedule time to unwind, have fun, enjoy a hobby, go shopping, fishing, bowling, or do gardening...(and don't feel guilty about it). Do things to get your mind off of work.

### 5. Receive needed help.

Don't try to be a martyr. If you need help, receive it, ask for it. Sometimes people and churches will want to help **too much**. Be balanced. Tell them honestly and graciously what you need. Don't try to make it on your own. God intended for the Body of Christ to function.

If you are able and have the energy, it would be very wise to join a church "home-care" group and experience the benefits of fellowship, prayer and encouragement. There is strength in numbers! If you have an illness that keeps you from attending regularly, don't feel guilty.

Do what you can do. Kindly let your group leader know if you cannot attend regularly. These wonderful groups usually meet in private homes once a week or twice a month. In fact, these are the backbone of many thriving, loving, and Christ-centered churches. Last year, we were not able to join one. This year to our joy, we were able to. What a difference this fellowship, prayer, and Bible study is making in our lives!

Also, seek biblical counseling or other prayer / accountability groups if you need to. Don't let your pride get in the way. Pride is a killer! If there is a chronic illness in your family or if there has been abuse in your past, you will have a lot of anger to talk out and release appropriately. You can't typically do this alone.

## BE GRACIOUS, BUT HONEST.

**Jim writes:** During the cancer years while Julie was on chemotherapy, we had meals delivered every other night for six months. Yet, during radiation we had a need to retain as much control over our personal lives as possible so we declined the gracious offers.

If possible, humbly ask that meals be brought in **disposable containers** so as to avoid the horror of returning **all those dishes**—that's an energy drain that you do not need. Instead of trying to write individual "thank yous", consider putting one in the Church bulletin, mailer, or community newspaper.



## NO LIFE OF YOUR OWN?

### ADDICTED TO ANOTHER PERSON'S PAIN, SIN, OR PROBLEM?

You may feel as if you have no life of your own. Your life may have revolved around your mate's struggles, your children's disabilities, or your in-laws' selfish over-control. It is OK to graciously and honestly share with them that you must take time for yourself—time for fun—time just for you—time for you to get and keep healthy! If you don't, you will bum out and will end up contributing to the pain in your home.

If you are overly dependent on someone, some of the symptoms will be that you don't have a life of your own. You will be dependent on their moods, commands, threats, insults, and accusations. This is a particular problem if a family member is sinning with alcohol, or is destructive or abusive. You will **jump** when they **blink**. You are to have no feelings or needs. You are to revolve around **this other person and their problem**.

If you start to get some of your needs met or if you begin to question your mate that he or she may have a serious problem, they will usually resent that. They will quickly enter into denial. They will twist the focus around and then make you the **PROBLEM**. You may actually believe your mate is right when he or she says, "**You are the problem!!!!**"

If you are suffering any of the above symptoms, get help from a qualified pastor or biblical counselor. If they are unavailable, get the help and encouragement you need from a strong, grace-oriented, godly friend of the same sex and pour your heart out to the person and pray together.

#### 6. Love each other in an understanding way.

Depend on Christ to enable you to receive your mate or your child unconditionally—as God's perfect provision for you. If someone is ill or is experiencing chronic pain, this can literally affect change in personality. When you want to tell them off, STOP, and be merciful. Always speak the truth in love. Truth delivered without love is like daggers of death in the heart. If someone is hurting in your family, stop and provide an atmosphere for them to feel safe and talk. Listen to them as they share their pain and frustrations. Cancer and divorce, for instance, affect the whole family. So love each other in a forgiving, considerate, and merciful way.

### PLANNED HOPE?

If married, have Planned Hope. Schedule ten to 15 minute debrief times after work or after the kids are in bed (at least two of these a week). This is where you debrief one another about your day. Minister mainly with your ears...and not your mouth. If you must use your mouth, use it in a reassuring, forgiving, and fully-accepting way.

Also be sure to **pray out loud** with your mate at bed time preferably when you are holding each other. This is the highest intimacy a couple can achieve. It paves the way for all other intimacies in the marriage and family. **Somewhere around ninety percent of Christian couples do not pray regularly together.** Is it any wonder the Devil is getting his wretched foot in the door of so many Christian marriages!

Planned Hope also means going on dates at least every two weeks (ideally every week—go inexpensive—cheesecake and tea maybe). The key is to get out of the house and away from the kids—they need space from you, too!

Planned Hope is scheduling weekend "getaways" (one or two a year—at least two nights away just be you and your mate.) These "get-a-ways" are essential in our hectic culture so that we can plan, dream, have fun, and regain a fresh perspective. Planned Hope also is scheduling vacations for the family.

By the way—if you are single, have "Planned Hope" for YOU!

### **SPEND TIME WITH YOUR KIDS. BUILD THEM UP. DON'T TEAR THEM DOWN.**

Perhaps you can spend some time with each child now and then so they can begin to open up and share any anger, confusion, or hurt they may have. At first they may not be able to do this with you. This is OK. You take them on individual dates where you just talk or do fun, lighthearted things. This soothes their souls.

If you have heavy hearts at home, your children might wet the bed or spill their milk more. Ignore the bed wetting. It's a normal way to express stress. Assure them that you believe in them and that you are proud of them. Counsel with their teacher if they have troubles at school. Break up their schedule. Let **them know you are on their team.**

Encourage open and nonjudgmental communication. Take them to a favorite place where you can sit and talk. Let them know you care through your frequent hugs (several a day), eye to eye contact, kisses, and focused, attentive listening. Be open about your feelings. Take a few timely risks and share some of your failures, mistakes, and stumblings when you were younger. They need to know that you had and still have **feet of clay** too!

Tell them that you love them, that you are proud of them, and that Jesus will help and protect them. If you have only one bullet of energy, demonstrate in just one of the above ways that you think that they are "wonderful" and in no way the cause of your pain or suffering.

If you have offended them, which may unfortunately happen more often if you are going through a difficult time, focus on coming to them humbly (kneel down if it will help) and telling them you are sorry and asking them to forgive you. The magic words—"**Will you please forgive me?**" are words of healing indeed.

### **DEMONSTRATE LOVE**

If you are serious about loving in understanding ways, it will be like writing with your left hand if you are right handed—it will go against your nature. Most of the time, we show love to our mate or children by the way **we feel** they would want to be loved. What we are actually doing is loving them the way they want to be loved. This type of selfish love is usually not well received.

Loving them in an understanding way requires us to love them with the Love that Christ has to offer. It requires you to show love to the other person in such a way they would clearly **feel loved**. Ask your mate, "Honey, when do you feel the most loved by me?" Their answer will teach you much!

## CONSIDER THIS SITUATION

Joe's idea of loving his wife, Jan, is to take her out to the movies!—because he loves good movies. The problem is this does not communicate love to her. He asked her one time, "Jan, when do you feel the most loved by me?" His question caught her off guard but she finally answered, "Well, I feel the most loved by you when you take the time to really listen to my deepest needs and frustrations—when you don't preach at me or judge me—when you don't offer me solutions—but just listen with care and focused attention. I also experience your love when you take the risk and share with me what's really going on inside of you. You know, your deepest fears, hopes, dreams."

She also said, "I also feel loved when you help around the house like doing a load of laundry and actually folding it without being asked—or when you take extra special time to read to the children or spend quality time with them at bedtime—or when you surprise me with a well-thought-out gift or card when I'm not expecting one—or when you take me out for a light lunch on Saturday followed by some delightful shopping."

## SHOOOOOOOOPPPPPPIIINNNGGGG!!!!

Now she knew this is the activity Joe detested even more than folding laundry! It does truly take the Love of Christ to do this!

Joe still has much to learn, but he is slowly catching on as to how to communicate love that can be experienced by Jan. Perhaps this may help you to love in an understanding way.

### 7. Gradually regain lost ground.

Chances are if you are suffering, you feel flat, wooden, hollow, depressed, or overwhelmed—and you may have a reduced number of energy bullets. This is fairly normal if you have endured or are enduring great trials, letdowns, or difficulties. However, there is one big danger! Do not be a victim by letting your circumstances control and eventually **isolate** you.

This is one of the few **quicksands** of suffering that you **MUST** avoid at all cost! If you just sort of give- in to your circumstances, you will lose your ability to fight back. You will continue to lose ground. You will become more depressed, sullen, withdrawn, and woeful. What an awful pit to be in!

## ISOLATION CRIPPLES!

The grueling feelings of isolation are crippling! Isolation can cause you to lose all concept of what it means to embrace the wonder of life. Be wise. Seek fellowship with other Christians.

## GUILT'S DOORSTEP

**Feel guilty only** if God's Holy Spirit is convicting you of unconfessed and unrepentant sin. If so, confess and repent, and then stop feeling guilty! Remove yourself from guilt's doorstep. The blood of Christ has washed you clean! If you have lost ground in your personal life, please do not invest personal energy in feeling guilty. That would be foolish. Instead, prayerfully ask the Lord to **order your steps** away from false guilt and toward where He desires you to go. Then ask Him to enable you to get back on track with life—to once again engage life with vigor and purpose—to **embrace the wonder of life!**

Also do not try to integrate positive action steps (regaining "lost ground") all at once if you are recovering or are being restored from difficult times. You'll burn out! Proceed in the Grace of God and attempt one thing at a time—and remember—you are not Superman or the Bionic Woman. If you fail, turn to Jesus. Call on Him and He will help you!

**The key to regaining lost ground is gradual progress.** It does not have to be much—Just constant. Finally, do not compare yourself to anyone else! That will cripple your motivation.

The recovery or regaining of your lost ground is between you and God. The rate and extent of regaining will depend on your particular situation. Do not let your lost ground depress you. Just take one day at a time and let the Lord enable and direct you for that day. Tomorrow will be an entirely new day!

## 8. Yoke up with a loyal friend.

It is **essential** that you meet regularly (at least every two weeks) with a trusted, loyal Christian friend who will listen to and encourage you—someone of the same sex to hold you accountable and so pray with—someone to cry with....

The devil would love to ruin your reputation through moral failure. Ask your friend to hold you accountable in your relationship with the Lord, with your mate, and with your family; also hold you accountable in your moral purity, your "burn out" factor (how well you are taking care of yourself), and your prayer needs.

## 9. Minister through your suffering.

As painful as this may sound, God may be calling you, at least for now, to suffer. For some, it is a short time. For others—well—He may be calling you to the high privilege of suffering for His name's sake. He loves you enough to allow you to "be a beacon of light" for Him.

Is it awful and humiliating at times? Oh yes! Do you hurt deep within your soul with groanings too deep for the human heart to comprehend? Do you want to honor the Lord Jesus at all cost to you?

## THE HUMBLE PATH

**The path is always humility.** Here lies the road of godly character formation—it is pockmarked with tears—crushed dreams—pain—insignificance—misunderstanding—suffering.... Barbara knew this well when her husband walked out on them over a 14 years ago.

If you have **absolutely surrendered** all rights to your life to God, He will begin touching others through your life and witness. You may be less in the public than you used to be. You may have less energy. But God will touch others because of your steadfast commitment to Him.

If people do not understand your situation or they judge you because of it, forgive and trust that God understands. Simply choose not to be offended. Release them into God's care.

**MINISTER TO OTHERS OUT OF YOUR NEED—OUT OF YOUR PAIN.**

Do you hurt? Do you want to minister? The **wounded soldier** serves, leads, and understands best. Someone needs to be lifted up out there....out there in the trenches!

**Go after them. They need you!**

As you put feet to your faith, the Lord will minister to you and through you. Please ask Him to. God loves and cares for you and so do we. God bless you!

*"I waited patiently for the Lord;  
And He inclined to me, and heard my cry.  
He brought me up out of the pit of destruction, out of the miry clay;  
And He set my feet upon a rock making my footsteps firm.  
And He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God;  
Many will see and fear,  
And will trust in the Lord."*

Psalm 40:1-3 (NASB)

**ACTION STEPS FOR THE HURTING**

As you talk to the Lord, ask Him to help you identify one realistic and achievable action step for **at least two** of these nine Helps.

Feel free to do more or even all. Keeping things simple, try to focus your energy on the two that are the most helpful to you.

**\*Circle the numbers of those two helps that are the most encouraging.**

**\*Write your thought or action step in the space below each "Help" that you choose.**

1. Surrender all of you—your past, present and future—to the Lord.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Define your purpose as a family (or person, if just you.)  
(Write it out in 15 words or less for easy memory.)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Review and reset your expectations and priorities.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. Be authentic!
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Receive needed help.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Love each other in an understanding way.

7. Gradually regain lost ground.

8. Yoke up with a loyal friend.

9. Minister through your suffering.

K. In closing, as best as you can, how would you describe yourself if you were going to be authentic with God, others, and yourself? (Just take a stab at it.)

Please read your description to your EMBRACING THE TRUTH Partner(s).

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- L. Let me invite you to pray the following prayer should you want to "Be Authentic." Don't pray this unless you mean business.

*Dear Lord,*

*I need You! I now understand that I need to just be myself Help me be the real me. I'm not sure I know how on my own.*

*Help me to be honest and merciful with others.  
Help me to be appropriately vulnerable and approachable so that other needy people like me can feel safe with me and can be drawn to You.*

*Help me to be an instrument of Your merciful love, acceptance, and understanding.*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*

**GOD LOVES YOU!**



# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." Psalm 119:105*

Key Number Six

## COMMIT TO CHARACTER

### Think About This:

Because God loves you, He desires the best for you in your relationships, your career, and your personal interests. The means by which He will achieve His goals in these areas of your life will be through developing your character.

### MEMORY VERSE      *Psalm 25:21*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your **EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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As you read the following stories, please remember:

### CHARACTER DETERMINES

1. Relationships
2. Career
3. Ministry
4. Success

The following story is fictitious but similar destruction of good families occurs regularly in America. The Devil is the enemy of our soul and he seeks to determine the outcome of your character and your witness for Christ. **Be on the alert!**

### BATTLE CASUALTY

Pastor Dave was a good man. He loved Lynn, his wife, very much. He also loved their two children, Mike and Kelly. He pastored a small church and for the most part, the church people got along well.

In addition to preaching and teaching, he also counseled a growing number of people at church. He knew from the condition of our culture that many people were hurting and struggling with many issues and problems. **Both he and his wife cared deeply for them.** Because of the needs and demands of ministry, Dave found himself working longer hours. In fact, with meetings, discipleship and evening counseling, he found himself only having two nights a week home alone with his family. Because he was a pastor and because he cared, he felt that he needed to be **"on call"** even during his nights off. He grew to hate the phone.

Lynn, his wife, began to resent all the meetings that took her husband and the kid's father away all the time. She began to wonder if Dave was married to the church more than to her,

They did not talk much about it. When they did find time to talk, they were both so tired that the tension between them was never properly dealt with. They buried their anger.

**Even though they wore their "smiles" at church, at home their jaws tightened.** Dave and Lynn began to isolate themselves. They really had no one to pour their hearts out to. Who can a pastor and his wife go to anyway?

Everybody in their home, especially the kids found themselves **walking on egg shells. The invisible tension was growing.** Yet, it was as if there was some kind of unwritten rule that stated:

"We are hurting. But because we are a pastor's family and are to set a good example, we will not talk about our problems. We will ignore the tension. We'll rise above it. It will go away someday."

Both Lynn and Dave tried to **cover up or medicate their pain** by getting more involved in the church and other people's lives. After all, isn't that what Jesus wants? Satan and his legion of dark angels assigned to bringing down this family unit crouched in the corner of the church- plotting, planning, grinning, eyes wide open. One particularly intelligent and crafty demon turned to his master and softly whispered:

"Oh Prince of Darkness, we praise you for your ability to blind and destroy. This miserable pastor's family is slowly falling. Soon they will be ours. Much damage. Much pain. Look! Ha! No one is praying for them. No one is looking out for them. They are busy, tired, isolated. There is much tension, denial. Yes! No accountability! No encouragement! They've lost perspective. This married couple is not praying out loud regularly together. Now, in for the kill!"

Karen, an attractive and gifted divorced mother of three small children visited Dave's church today. After the service, Dave introduced himself to her and welcomed her. She was gracious and stated that she was looking for a good church home. She also inquired if she could help further develop a children's church program.

**Dave thought he had died and gone to heaven!**

"Yes!", he said, fumbling for the right words. They set up a meeting for Tuesday at noon at the church to discuss these possibilities. Dave found himself rather looking forward to this meeting. He wasn't sure why. When Tuesday noon arrived, he and Karen met in his office with the door closed. The part time church secretary had left for lunch.

All was innocent. Plans were made for children's church. **They closed reverently in prayer.** Dave suddenly found himself not quite as depressed as before. **He felt hope again.** Ministry was no longer the drag that it had been.

They met weekly at Tuesday noon at church—alone. All was innocent. Intentions were good and godly. Good plans and prayer developed. But more than that developed. At the end of their fourth Tuesday noon meeting, Karen, looking a little needy, asked pastor Dave, **"Do you have a minute, Pastor?"**

**"Sure!", Dave said.**

She went on cautiously but kindly. She began to open up about the struggles she was having with her youngest daughter. She said that she valued his wisdom. Dave felt good. He felt respected, appreciated.

He listened to her. After she shared, for some strange reason, he felt the urge to share with her how-tired and busy he has been lately. He even shared that he thought he needed to cut back on some of his ministry to preserve his family and his sanity.

**She listened intently.** She fully agreed with him. She smiled at him and told him how blessed the church was to have him for a pastor. He soaked this up!

Over the next few months, not much changed. Dave and Lynn were cordial but found themselves squabbling more and more over the littlest things.

On one Tuesday, Dave called Karen at her work office and said, "Hey, Karen,...what do you say we hit that new restaurant over on Third Avenue instead of meeting here in this stuffy office?"

"Good idea!", she laughed. 'I'll see ya there at noon." Good intentions. Harmless. Ought to be run. A nice break from the office.

Dave and Karen met for lunch at least once a month. Dave never bothered to tell his wife about it. Intentions were good. No crime there. Heart's pure.

Six months later, Karen met him at the restaurant. When she sat down, she started to cry quietly. Dave's heart went out to her. His loving compassion swelled. With God's love, he calmly reached over and held her hand.

**"What's wrong, Karen?"**

She poured her heart out and told him that she just got word that her father had past away.

After lunch, they went back to his office and prayed and talked some more. Much more.

After an hour, as Karen got up to leave, she looked into her beloved friend's eyes and asked, **"Could I just give you a hug—in the Lord?"**

**"Sure." Dave said gently.**

They calmly embraced. Funny. How could something as spiritual as this feel so good? He held her for a rather long time, comforting her in her grief. She felt good and safe in his arms. Her pastor's loving arms. Almost like Jesus holding her.

A month later they began holding hands regularly at prayer times. They were on the same ministry sheet of music. Lynn was not. What was wrong with Lynn anyway?

"Lord, thank you for Karen, What a fine sister", Dave thought.

At the end of one of their brother-sister hugs, Karen gave Dave a tender, loving kiss on the cheek...in Christ of course.

**Dave never felt so good, so manly, so needed.** Deep in his heart, he almost wished that his wife could be more like Karen.

One Tuesday when Lynn was visiting her parents one hundred miles away, Pastor Dave invited Karen over to his home for coffee and prayer.

That day was bright and sunny. A cool breeze filtered the air. Dave could not get over how nice she looked. Her perfume was just right. They looked at each other with a long look. It just seemed so right. They embraced each other, kissed, then tenderly and expectantly walked toward the bedroom...

**God was forgotten for a while.**

They met secretly like this three more times over the next few weeks.

**Being with Karen felt so good! Yet the guilt became crushing.** Dave began to wish that he would die in a car crash or that lightning would somehow strike him. He felt dead inside. He felt tortured by his sin. How could he have let Lynn, his wonderful children, and the Lord down?

This was inexcusable! He felt he was worthy of death! He would confess this to God, break it off with Karen, and then put it behind him.

**Didn't work.**

Two weeks later, Lynn received an anonymous phone call. She learned of the betrayal. She could not believe it. Her life would be destroyed. "No, it is not true.", she cried.

She gently, firmly confronted Dave that night with tears forming in her eyes. Dave at first denied it, his eyes glancing quickly to the right. Then about an hour later, he could no longer live with himself. He broke down and confessed his sin. He cried and cried. Lynn felt raped by his sin. She felt dead inside. Perhaps she could forgive him but she just knew their marriage was over.

**Counseling did not work.** The church asked Dave to leave. Lynn and Dave got a divorce. It was worse than death. The children were devastated. They felt to blame. Three months later, Dave was working two part time jobs: 25 hours at a hardware store, and 25 hours at a grocery store. The house sold. Lynn and the kids moved into a very small apartment. Dave had already moved into one a while back. They were broke. Someone from church gave her a job as a receptionist for a small company.

Both Dave, with alimony payments, and Lynn, with her meager salary, could barely make ends meet. Some helped Lynn. Few helped Dave. **God forgives. People often do not.** The divorce cost \$8,000 dollars. No more savings. No more piano lessons. Forget vacations. The dog had to go. The apartments would not take dogs.

The children cry often. Their rage grows...

Pastor Dave did not win. He lost. A lot of people lost with him.

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**The following are true stories: A few things have been changed to protect confidentiality.**

### **\*BOB\***

Bob was a good friend and a decent, hard working man in his early thirties. As a father of five and as an elder in his church, he professed a strong and growing faith in the Lord.

He was very successful at work and was climbing the promotional ladder rapidly. He and his wife contributed finances and volunteered services to both church and civic functions.

Bob and his wife, Kim, were so committed to Christ and godly families that they almost decided to step out in faith, raise their financial support, and enter the mission field in the area of Christian marriage and family.

Then I got a call from Kim—

She sobbed for 30 minutes. She said that Bob told her recently that he couldn't fake loving her anymore—she no longer **measured up!**

He told her that life had more to offer him elsewhere. He said he was sorry if this hurt the kids but—

### **LIFE WAS TOUGH AND THEY'D GET OVER IT.**

Soon thereafter, he drove up to their home in a new sports car with a younger, attractive woman sitting in the front passenger seat. He came up to the front door of the house, said good-bye to Kim, then drove off with his new "love"....

**\*AMY AND JEFF\***

Amy was hired by a church in the Northeast part of the country to serve as an administrative assistant. She was attractive and seemed—almost overly friendly. Yet, the church administrator knew that she was married and had a family—surely she loved the Lord and would be an added asset to their team.

Jeff, a happily married man and father of three was one of the staff pastors and also her direct supervisor. They worked together many earnest hours on computer projects.

**Then the worst occurred!**

Jeff and Amy secretly began to meet to commit adultery. It seemed so freeing and wonderful at first. **They just sort of gradually fell into it.**

**NO BLOWOUT---JUST A GRADUAL SLOW LEAK****IN CHARACTER**

First the casual glance, the smile, the perfume, the cologne, the attentive, listening ear, then the touch, the hug, and so on.... Somehow, it was discovered. He refused to repent. He also refused counseling. One day, he simply disappeared....

**JUST GONE.**

The F. B. I.—even their dogs—could not find him. Later, they found out that he had taken his own life. The newspapers discovered this story and....

**Well, many were devastated:**

1. Pleasure instead of character.
2. Selfish desires instead of godly character.  
(Self-Justified Unholiness!)
3. Foolishness instead of wisdom.

**SATAN AND THE FLESH HAD****A HEYDAY.**

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Finally, with an attitude of sorrow, please read the following letter from a Christian couple:

Dear Jim and Barbara,

Steve moved out Saturday—I filed for divorce Tuesday. He said in counseling that he wanted a divorce and wanted to be single.

I really believe he will renew his relationship with his girlfriend. I told the girls (two little blond-headed sweethearts!) and they were upset.

I bought them a puppy. I can take my grief but theirs is more than I can bear at times. I try to reassure them of their father's love for them but it's just not true. Steve doesn't love anyone. He never spends any time with them. Please pray that somehow Steve will turn back to the love of God he once had.

He has violated his faith so badly though that it will take a real miracle. He has stopped going to church.

All he seems to think about is his work, pleasing clients, and going to cocktail parties.

Financially, I'm strapped. I don't have a job. I will have to get one. I'm getting to be quite a prayer warrior. My faith has been so strengthened by this adversity.

I know better than ever what it means to cling to Christ. On Christ the solid Rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand.

Pray, please, that I forgive him,

Love,

Debby

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We must not only grieve for them but get angry at the dishonor this brings to our God!

We dare not judge them—it probably wouldn't take much for us to be there too!

But if we are going to wear the name of "Christian" with a sense of dignity, integrity, and purity:

### **WE MUST PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR!**

**(Read Ephesians 5:1-15 and 6:10-18)**

I am impressed with the importance John Quincy Adams assigned to **character** as he wrote to his daughter about the kind of man she should marry:

"Daughter! Get you an honest man for a husband and keep him honest. No matter whether he is rich, provided he be independent. Regard the honor and moral character of the man, more than all other circumstances. Think of no other greatness but that of the soul, no other riches but those of the heart."

It would be wise for people to heed such sound advice!

Without trying to judge these people who fell, it seems that they were right in the midst of Satan's plan for their destruction.

**DESTRUCTION  
OF  
REPUTATION, PURITY, AND HONOR  
(Malachi 2:1,2)**

If Satan can devastate us, he can do severe, sometimes irreversible damage to our emotions, our relationships, our integrity, and our witness. How we feel about ourselves, humanly speaking, can be deeply affected by:

**SIN AND ITS NUMBING EFFECTS.**

We deny, we rationalize, we minimize, and we embrace death with a passion. If we do, we will pay a dear price! If we love (are committed to) our Heavenly Father, we must be:

**ON OUR GUARD!!!**

Such carelessness and lack of commitment to honoring God can and often does result in the four D's:

1. Dishonor
2. Despair
3. Disloyalty
4. Disgrace

Satan knows it. We need to know it!

NOTE: If you have been involved in a similar tragedy as the ones mentioned above, do remember that your sin does not affect God's unmerited love for you. He is a God rich in mercy. He is a God of:

**NEW BEGINNINGS!**

**HIS GRACE IS BIGGER THAN YOUR SINS!**



Nonetheless, receive well the warning in Proverbs 4:23.

*"Above all else, guard your heart.  
for it is the wellspring of life."*

This key to Christian living demands that we allow the Lord Jesus **full** access to our lives so that He is given total freedom to forge godly wisdom and character in us. His love for us will never increase or decrease (it was infinite before the foundation of the world!) and He delights in making us—

### **MORE CHRIST-LIKE.**

Forming character and Christ likeness within us, even though it is painful for the moment, is our Father God's way of drawing us closer to Him. Don't try to understand it. It is simply God's marvelous way! He wants to transform us into the image of His Son. His transforming power brings about:

### **GODLY CHARACTER.**

Wanting to bring honor to God is a common trait of those children of God who are growing in godly character.

#### **Look up Proverbs 15:33.**

What is the mandatory prerequisite that must come before "honor?"

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Why do you think this is so?

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Are you willing to humble yourself before Almighty God, no matter what it takes?

(circle one)

**Yes      No**

If you truly receive by faith (embrace the truth) that you are infinitely loved by God, made in His image, and of infinite value to Him, there should be a response of gratitude deep within you and you will want to:

### **BRING HONOR TO GOD...**

especially in the private, unseen areas of your life, and especially in the hidden attitudes of your heart.

### **CHARACTER OR CALAMITY?**

As a child of God, do you want your life to be marked by the effects of godly character, integrity, and humility, or do you want nothing but calamity, self-effort, and dishonor? It seems to boil down to this—are you willing to yoke up with Jesus, desire to please Him only, and rest totally in Him? You're either a God-pleaser or a:

### **PEOPLE PLEASER!**

Since I (Jim) was locked into this for almost ten years of my Christian life, I know what I'm talking about. People-pleasing always leads to despair. You simply cannot please everyone. Instead of experiencing the freedom of abiding in Christ and walking in His light and His love, you are constantly burdened down by trying to earn:

### **APPROVAL.**

Your priorities will be out of balance, you will usually feel behind schedule, and you won't be honoring God. Operating in the "flesh" (trying to live the Christian life in your own power) leads to bondage. Worse yet, hardly anyone will know about your dilemma or your struggle, until it's too late!

Turn to Matthew 11:28-30, a favorite passage of mine. Jesus, with open arms, urges you, right now, to come to Him and take on His Yoke (like the old wooden, double holed, one-piece oxen yoke) and let Him pull the burden wagon. He wants **to let you** rest. He wants to free you from having to carry burdens such as worries, self-effort, fear, sin bondage, and people pleasing.

### **HE WANTS YOU TO "YOKE UP" WITH HIM.**

If you refuse, as many do, you will be a miserable Christian who will slowly be choked by your own stubborn desire to run things your own way, in your own power, with **you** in charge. What will it be? Will you choose to respond to Jesus' invitation or will you reject it because "you know better!"

The international sign for choking (physically) is hands to the throat. The international signs for choking (spiritually, due to trusting in your own efforts and earning approval from people) are a little more complex.

**YOKED OR CHOKED?**

- t. Take an honest moment, ask the Lord for wisdom, and carefully review the following Choking Signs to see if you are Yoking or Choking.
- a. Private Life: Slowly drifting into sneaking peaks at the immoral—porn magazines, sexy videos, late night TV, channel flipping, misuse of the Internet, porn shops, adultery.
  - b. Feeling I can never measure up: You feel guilty most of the time because you just can't meet everyone's expectations—especially yours!
  - c. Family Hurting: Priorities out of balance. Spending most of your energy trying to get ahead, get promoted, get noticed—mate and kids get the leftovers!!!
  - d. Marital Discord: You are into your own rights and what "you deserve." You really want your mate to improve, get better, and change. He/she does not measure up!! You and your mate are tense and isolated. He/she is a burden!!
  - e. Recognition and people's approval very important: You would give your eye teeth for a pat on the back. Other people's opinions of you mainly determine if you are happy or not. They are your gods! You thirst for recognition!!!
  - f. Flimsy "Going through the motions" walk with the Lord: Your devotional times with God are either nonexistent or hollow—are burden!!! You hurry through them. Your prayers are short, shallow, selfish.
  - g. Afraid of being discovered: You wear emotional masks; you are fake, closed, and exhausted due to your hiding. You do not want people discovering the real you—with all your problems, weaknesses, and fears. You might be rejected!!
  - h. No Accountability: The last thing you'd want would be to allow someone into your **inner circle**, to love you enough to ask the tough questions, to hold you accountable, and to help restore you when you stumble. Isolation is both sweet and deadly.
  - i. Blinded by Denial: You simply won't accept the truth. It is easier to hide behind this handy defense mechanism and believe you are yoking with Jesus than to understand that maybe you are "choking" and that maybe you do need the Lord's help. A problem in your life may be glaring to others, yet you refuse to acknowledge it. Satan loves denial!

2. Realistically and honestly rate yourself regarding any Choking Signs in your life. Then, if you feel safe, discuss them with your EMBRACING THE TRUTH Partner(s) when you meet. Lower your guard a little. If you only feel comfortable in discussing certain ones, that is OK.

### CHOKING SIGNS

(Circle the appropriate numbers)

	No Struggle				Greatly Struggle		
a. Private Life:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
b. Feeling I can never measure up. Feel guilty:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
c. Family Hurting; Priorities out of balance:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
d. Marital Discord:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
e. Recognition and people's approval very important:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
f. Flimsy "Going through the motions" walk with the Lord:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
g. Afraid of being discovered:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
h. No Accountability:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
i. Blinded by Denial:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

3. Pray for each other in your group, out loud, that each of you would choose to be **Yoked** up to the Lord instead of being **Choked** by the flesh.

### IS YOUR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT IN MORTAL DANGER?

When I (Jim) was a kid growing up in southern Wisconsin, our family would vacation almost every year at my cousin Lee's summer home on Green Lake, Minnesota. What wonderful memories these were.

One summer, when Lee and I were about 12, we took his trusty canoe and went exploring in an old, forgotten lagoon just off the lake. It happened to be near a very spooky castle as well!

Gliding silently across the dark and murky water, we just knew for sure that sooner or later a hideous, scaled creature would come up from the black depths and pull us both down to destruction. Needless to say, we had great fun!

One thing I did notice were all the lily pads where the frogs would sun themselves. They appeared to be restful supports for the frogs. **There was a problem though...**

Occasionally their mortal enemy, a water snake, would quietly slither and sneak toward them!

Instead of being restful supports, these lily pads served instead as:

## DINNER PIATES FOR THE SNAKES!

As men and women of God, Satan will tempt us into resting on similar false supports in our life. They won't look like lily pads, but they will tend to serve the same purpose.

Likewise, he will unleash mortal enemies, in a timely manner, whose purpose is to devour us and ruin our character and our godly witness.

The **False Supports** that you need to be wary of are many. A few of the Key ones are:

1. Recognition:           Leaning on the idea that just a little more recognition is worth sacrificing everything!
2. Popularity:            People looking up to you is what you need most. You desperately want "your name" to be in demand.
3. Perks and Strokes:    You love to "sun yourself on all of the good deals you've earned, such as a big office, a company car, a secretary, trips, and an expense account. You live for "pats on the back."
4. Track Record:        You put your hope in how well you've done in the past. You actually believe you are safe from falling sinfully.
5. "What's in it for me?":    You think—"Lord, I'll love my mate and serve You faithfully. I'll even suffer for Your Name's sake—BUT— "what's in it for me?"

The **Mortal Enemies** (Snakes) that you need to be aware of that are right now seeking to devour and destroy you are:

1. Fatigue: Operating in the adrenaline emergency mode. Weary. Feeling burned out, confused—touchy, running on empty—tense, under the pile, frenzied, driven.
2. Isolation & Private Life: Satan loves isolation. It feeds the Private Life—introspection, despair, sinful escape.
3. Tormented by "Ideal Self": Your "better than you" Phantom whips and beats you into performing more and more! When you fail, you judge yourself without mercy!
4. Feeding the Beast... Hunting!: People are not rewarding you enough so you sinfully reward yourself by viewing sexually stimulating material. Even in grocery stores or libraries you will quietly "**hunt**" for the sensually oriented book or magazine that you need to "**feed the beast**" within you—LUST! The more you feed the beast, the bigger and hungrier it gets. You need to starve that beast and avoid all forms of hunting. Shun evil!
5. Being Unwise & Careless: Too much eye contact with the opposite sex, doing nothing about emotional (chemical) reactions and attractions that could lead to unhealthy or adulterous relations. Working in close quarters with the opposite sex alone during a business lunch or at night at the office. Staying in hotel rooms alone can be very dangerous—fatigue, the sensual movie channel, prostitutes—the wise thing is not to trust yourself. Starting to listen deeply to the hurts and needs of that attractive secretary, boss, associate, client, or Pastor. Acting unwisely with Couple's dating and match making web sites. Texting, emailing, or Facebooking people that might endanger your or their existing relationships..

Determine your **Danger Level** for each of the **False Supports** and for each of the **Mortal Enemies**. Discuss with Partner(s).

### FALSE SUPPORTS (Lily Pads!)

(Circle the appropriate number)

	Don't Depend On				Greatly Depend On			
1. Recognition:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. Popularity:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Perks and Strokes:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. Track Record:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. What's in it For Me?:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

### MORTAL ENEMIES (Snakes!)

(Circle the appropriate number)

	Aware of & dealing with				Not aware of & not dealing with			
1. Fatigue:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
2. Isolation & Private Life:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
3. Tormented by Ideal Self:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
4. Feeding the Beast... hunting:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
5. Being Unwise and Careless:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

Hopefully, an honest personal assessment of the above issues will help you in your quest for character.

## MEN AND WOMEN OF HONOR

Is your heart's desire to  
bring honor to God as He enables you?

A few years ago, while I (Jim) was in San Diego for a week of ministry training, I had the opportunity to walk along the sandy beach of the Pacific Ocean.

I was chatting with a friend about accountability that is loving and encouraging and the need for this in every Christian's life if the person is serious about a loving commitment to God.

I was reflecting on the growing number of friends who had fallen into terrible, scarring sins of sexual immorality. Even one of my best friends and a regular prayer partner had committed adultery, desertion, and suicide by hanging himself.

I believe the Lord prompted me to write out a simple strategy in which men and women, who want to be wise, can establish and maintain a healthy grace-oriented track record of honor and personal integrity for Jesus Christ.

That next morning in the hotel room where we were staying, I woke up at 3:30 a.m. (usually a hideous hour for me!) and with an intense sense of urgency I wrote down the general outline for Men/Women of Honor.

Please, let me urge and invite you to enter into a relationship with another person (in addition to your mate) of the same sex who believes in grace, encouragement, and honor.

NOTE: If you are married, God intended your mate to meet many of your needs...

### **BUT NOT ALL!**

Jesus, Himself, wants to meet your needs, and I'm convinced that He delights in the idea of providing an environment for you in which you can meet with a trusted, loyal friend to:

1. confide in,
2. be real with,
3. bounce things off,
4. tell it like it is—

without getting hammered, judged, or, in a negative sense, "preached at" This will only serve to strengthen your walk with God and your relationship with your mate and with others.

### **THIS IS VOLUNTARY.**

### **WE BELIEVE ACCOUNTABILITY IS VITAL!**

To believe that your mate can meet all your needs is to demand that he/she be **like God**, and this is a setup for terrible failure!



To isolate yourself from other believers and look only to Jesus to meet your needs is simply not biblical! Yes. He **will** meet **all** of your needs. But, many times, He will work **through** other people to do so. Just look at the number of "one another" verses there are in the Bible. I have been in a "Men Of Honor" relationship for over a decade now. We meet at Tim's company office once a week. Sometimes we build our time around a meal.

We laugh, we share, we bear each other's burdens, we encourage—sometimes we gently exhort—we ask each other the tough questions. At the end of our time, we get on our knees and pray. I guess we care enough to do that.

What makes it healthy is that we voluntarily chose this. We were not forced. We have come to see the wisdom in it We know that we cannot place trust:

### IN OURSELVES.

**You see, godly wisdom is learning to trust yourself less and less each day and learning to entrust yourself to God and a few good men or women (same sex) who will help keep you honest, humble, pure, and wise!**

Remember Dr. Bill Bright, President of Campus Crusade for Christ, states that "people don't do what you expect. They do what you inspect." How true!

Left unchecked, isolated, discouraged, and unaccountable, there is no telling what we would be capable of.

### WHAT ABOUT THE RISK?

There is a risk that your Honor Partner may break confidence and betray or slander you. I am thoroughly convinced that the risks of entering into an Honor relationship:

### ARE FAR LESS THAN—

the risks of avoiding such a relationship. Just ask my good brothers in Christ who have fallen. Without godly accountability and encouragement, you become like the lawyer in the movie **Jurassic Park**. You are simply waiting to become lunch for the **T-Rex dinosaur!** The Devil seeks to devour and destroy. You become a **waiting lunch** for him when he finds you isolated and discouraged!

To be honest, I would rather have it slip out that I, say—had an argument with my wife, than to gradually and subtly grow cold to the things of the Lord, and then drift, stumble, and fall into perversion or infidelity.

### ACCOUNTABILITY

### IS BETTER THAN

### NO ACCOUNTABILITY.

My **Honor Partner** has never betrayed me. I thank the Lord for Him! Are we perfect? No! Do we stumble in thought, word, and deed? Yes! Does God use this affirming, inspecting accountability to help restore quickly and keep us spiritually sharp? **Yes!**

### JEALOUSY? SELFISH AMBITION?

What about these familiar words? Do they haunt you? Do they taunt you? Do they have their curled talons deep in your heart? Is Christ's character-forming process within you worth the possible loss of these two tormentors?

In the painful process of wanting to become a man of honor for God, I confess I wrestle with these two at times. When we give into them (and they are tempting), we allow Satan to get a firm foothold in our lives.

According to James 3:14-16 worldly wisdom is *"earthly, natural, demonic."* *"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."* The cure for jealousy and selfish ambition is wisdom from above.

James 3:17 captures the cure. It says:

*"But the wisdom from above is first pure;  
then peaceable, gentle, reasonable,  
full of mercy and good fruits,  
unwavering, without hypocrisy."*

As men and women who hopefully want to seek and revere the Lord, let us ask Him to remove any footholds that jealousy and selfish ambition may have in our lives. Let's ask Him to enable us to be gentle, content, vulnerable, pure, approachable, and honest. Let us also ask Him to help us maintain godly priorities at all costs. Let's bring honor to God.

Recently, I was depending on man's wisdom.

### Big Mistake!

Some other well meaning Christians had deeply offended me. I was bent out of shape! I stewed and fumed for a few days until Barbara, gently and mercifully confronted me.

She asked me, **"Jim, why don't you just choose not to be offended."** I was stunned! God convicted me of my sin of arrogance and pride and I confessed and repented of this iniquity.

By my choosing not to be offended, I gave up my right to my life. I began then and there to understand the benefits of the godly wisdom that James 3:17 is talking about. I still have a long way to go!

## IS YOUR GUARD DOWN?

I fully agree with Howard Butt, a businessman from Corpus Christi, Texas who writes:

"If your leadership is Christian you can openly reveal your failures. Leaders who are fully human do not hide their sins. Within you operates the principle of the cross, the *modus operandi* of strength in weakness.

This principle points up our problem—we who are religious. We want a Christian reputation more than we want Christ. And yet, our Lord, becoming sin for us, "made himself of no reputation..."

Am I willing to hide my strengths and reveal my weaknesses? Are you? Telling our triumphs, our successes, our achievements, we glorify ourselves.

Bragging about my goodness, I build up barriers; when I confess my sins, those barriers come down.

Pagan outsiders get driven away by our pious parade of religious achievements. Building our high walls of intimidation, we make their friendly corner bartender look good. Christians are not half-angels with high-beam halos, but real live forgiven sinners up close....

Christ's death frees you from hiding your sins. You can be vulnerable and open. When you are weak then you are strong. You shake the darkness with irresistible blows: the divine might of weakness. You hit your hardest when your guard is down."<sup>2</sup>

Are you willing to lower your guard (become appropriately vulnerable) in order to bring honor to the Lord? He did so for you.

**Now please read through the first page of Men / Women of Honor (page VI-128).**

**Then, please read the page (page VI-121) of Men / Women of Honor dealing with:**

**PURPOSE**

**BIBLICAL FOUNDATION**

**PRINCIPLES**

Look up at least the first verse for each of the five principles. How do you think each would help you maintain honor before the Lord?

1st Principle: **Model ministry, serve by example.**

John 13:3-5 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2nd Principle: **Be wise in your weakness.**

I Peter 5:8,9 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3rd Principle: Seek **specific, regular, godly accountability.**

Luke 9:10 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4th Principle: **Two are better than one.**

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5th Principle: **Carry each other's burdens.**

Galatians 6:2,3 \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now circle the **Principle** most helpful to you.

Which one is it? # \_\_\_\_\_

Please share why \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Read the last pages (pages VI-122& VI-123) of Men / Women of Honor (the five Roman Numeral Categories).**

Please look up at least the first two verses for each category (for each Roman Numeral). If you can look them all up—great! Write down what you think the Lord is saying to you through these verses:

**I. How are you in your relationship with the Lord?**

Colossians 1:9-14 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

John 15:4,5 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**II. How are you in your relationship with your wife/husband?**

**(For Men)**

Ephesians 5:25 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I Peter 3:7 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**(For Women)**

Ephesians 5:33 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I Peter 3:1-6 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**III. How are you in your moral purity?**

I Thessalonians 4:3-8 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

II Timothy 2:21,22 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**IV. How are you taking care of yourself?**

I Kings 19:1-9 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew 11:28-30 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**V. How can I pray for you?**

Colossians 1:9,10 \_\_\_\_\_

\*James 5:16 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

\* James 5:16 is a key verse! The Lord knew we would need "flesh and blood" people to encourage us, to sharpen us, and to lighten our loads.

Of all these verses, I. through V., which two verses helped you or encouraged you the most? Be prepared to share why. (**Circle those two verses above.**)

**Now please circle** the Roman Numeral Topics which would honor God in your life—if you choose to be held accountable by someone of the same sex.

**I.      II.      III.      IV.      V.**

Do you sense the need in your life to establish a MEN/WOMEN OF HONOR relationship?

(circle one)

**YES      MAYBE      NO**

If you are uncertain, or your answer is "NO", what would be your reasons?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Let me challenge you to enter into an **HONOR** relationship. Will you do so? It is the wise thing to do.

(circle one)

**YES**      **NO**

Now please commit to the Lord your future, your witness, and your:

## CHARACTER

If you are sincere about all this, please pray silently this prayer:

*Dear Lord,*

*I need You! I fully admit that I am weak, sinful and unable. But You are strong, sinless, and able! I place my confidence in You—not in me. Please enable me to have the kind of character that will be pleasing to You.*

*Instead of trusting in myself or man's wisdom, help me to be wise in Your wisdom and bring You much honor. Help me to be accountable for the rest of my life.*

*I love You!*

*In Jesus' name,*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

*"Commit your way to the Lord;  
trust in Him and He will do this:  
He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn,  
the justice of your cause like the noonday sun."*

Psalm 37:5,6

Feel free to make copies of the **Men/Women of Honor** sheets for others.

## MEN / WOMEN OF HONOR

HOW to implement the MEN / WOMEN OF HONOR strategy  
in your life and community:

1. Prayerfully select a close and trusted friend of the same sex.
2. Challenge your friend to be your Man / Woman of Honor Partner and to meet at least every two weeks for godly accountability and encouragement.
3. Share the purpose, biblical foundation, and principles that relate to this concept (on the next page).
4. Encourage your friend by sharing that this is a commitment for wise, godly men and women who wish to take a stand for honor in their Christian witness.
5. Stress the informal nature of these get-togethers. The questions can be discussed over breakfast, coffee, lunch, out fishing, out shopping, etc. There is to be a relaxed, supportive, nonjudgmental atmosphere because all of us fall short of God's glory and the log in our own eye is often quite large.
6. The first time together share your testimonies. Each time you meet look up the verses in one of the Roman Numerals. As you continue to meet together, take the time to confide in one another how you are really doing.
7. **SPECIAL NOTE:** It is imperative that you allow for an atmosphere of empathy, compassion and understanding. Let your friend be open and real with you. Don't judge. If you preach, with an "I'm holier than thou" approach, you'll lose them. Listen about three times as much as you talk. If there is sin, gently refer to I John 1:9 and humbly encourage your friend in godly character. **Restore him or her.**
8. **Confidentiality is absolutely crucial.** If your friend discloses a problem area to you that is beyond your ability or authority to deal with, prayerfully consider encouraging him/her to seek professional help. Perhaps then hold your friend accountable to do so.
9. Let me ask you to challenge two or more men/women that you know to establish a **Man / Woman of Honor Partnership with someone they know and respect Contact them from time to time to see if they are still getting together regularly with their "Men/Women of Honor" Partners. Again, content should not be discussed.**
10. Remember, the enemy is intent on destroying our godly character and our witness. He is ruthless and subtle. The key is to pray and look for men/women who seek accountability.



**As you know, Christian leaders are falling.** The cause of Christ is being hindered by these tragedies. Spiritual warfare is increasing and the bullets are real. The honor of the Lord is at stake. Something must be done. Men, women, and children who look up to you depend upon your sincere and uncompromising commitment to Christ. The people in your church and community and those affected by your ministry desperately need to see your walk with God. When they see you as a Man / Woman of honor, perhaps they will follow and do likewise.

## PURPOSE

To become Men/Women of Honor for God so that others will follow and do likewise.

## BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

*"...those who honor Me I will honor."*  
I Samuel 2:30b

*"The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom,  
And before honor comes humility."*  
Proverbs 15:33 (NASB)

*"Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise,  
making the most of your time, because the days are evil.  
So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.  
...and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ."*  
Ephesians 5:15-17,21 (NASB)

*"Iron sharpens iron,  
so one man sharpens another."*  
Proverbs 27:17 (NASB)

## PRINCIPLES

1. **Model ministry, serve by example.** John 13:3-5; II Timothy 3:10; Philippians 4:9.
2. **Be wise in your weaknesses.** I Peter 5:8,9; II Corinthians 12:10; Ephesians 6:10-20.
3. **Seek specific, regular, godly accountability.** Luke 9:10; Psalms 63:1; Colossians 3:1.2; Matthew 6:33; Ephesians 5:21.
4. **Two are better than one.** Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 3:12,13; 10:23-25.
5. **Carry each other's burdens.** Galatians 6:2,3; James 2:8; Philippians 2:4.

Please use the following questions as a guide for sharpening and building up one another. Feel free to add additional areas.

Do not use them as a legalistic check list but instead as a gentle reference to aid you as you build trust friendship, and accountability.

**I. How are you in your relationship with the Lord?** Colossians 1:9-14; John 15:4,5; I Peter 5:6,7; Job 22:21-28; Philippians 4:5-7; Psalm 119:133; Psalm 62:8.

- A. Are you having focused, uninterrupted time with Him and His Word regularly?
- B. What has He been teaching you lately?
- C. Are you abiding and resting in Him?
- D. What are you most worried or anxious about right now?
- E. Are your priorities in balance?
- F.

**II. How are you in your relationship with your wife/husband?**

**Men read:** Ephesians 5:25; I Peter 3:7; Colossians 3:19; Hebrews 13:4.

**Women read:** Ephesians 5:33; I Peter 3:1-6; Proverbs 12:4; Proverbs 31:10-31; Titus 2:3-5; Romans 7:2,3; Hebrews 13:4,5 (If single, simply focus on relationships.)

- A. **Men:** Does your wife feel listened to, understood, prized, and cherished? In what way?  
**Women:** Does your husband feel listened to, understood, prized, respected, and admired? Are he and your home high priorities?
- B. How are you making him/her feel more important than ministry or work?
- C. How much focused, uninterrupted time have you spent with him/her recently? Have you shared needs, fears, and concerns?
- D. With the goal of having a "two night" getaway for you and your spouse, where are you in your planning for yours? (Recommend one "planned getaway" a year minimum.)
- E.

**III. How are you in your moral purity?** I Thessalonians 4:3-8; II Timothy 2:21,22; Psalm 24:3,4; Matthew 5:8; I Thessalonians 5:21,22; Philippians 4:8; Psalm 101:2-4; Proverbs 4:25-27.

- A. Have you been exposed to any ungodly magazines, videos, movies, television, Internet surfing, texting, or literature? If so, how can you avoid this in the future?
- B. Are you avoiding all appearances of evil in your relations with other men/women? Are there any situations that can be potentially compromising?
- C. Are you careful not to stay in such places as hotel rooms alone?
- D. What area of your thought life are you wrestling with?
- E.

**IV. How are you taking care of yourself?** I Kings 19:1-9; Matthew 11:28-30; Matthew 4:11; II Corinthians 6:16.

- A. What are you doing for yourself to relax, have fun, and get your mind off work pressures?
- B. Are you taking care of yourself physically through exercise, diet, sleep, etc.?
- C. Are you experiencing signs of burnout? (anxiety, depression, frustration, anger, out of control. hard to concentrate, feeling listless or unproductive)
- D.

**V. How can I pray for you?** Colossians. 1:9,10; James 5:16; Ephesians. 1:15.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.
- E.

## NOTES

1. Dorothie Bobbe, Abigail Adams, (New York: Putnam, 1966), p. 206.
2. Howard Butt, The Velvet Covered Brick: Christian Leadership in and age of Rebellion. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), pp. 41-43.

# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword..." Hebrews 4:12*

Key Number Seven

## POUR OUT, RELEASE, AND PRAISE

### Think About This:

The cancer of the soul is the crippled heart—  
The heart that refuses to be empty—  
and refuses to be full.

MEMORY VERSE

*Psalm 100:4*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your  
**EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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## SLOW DEATH

Have you ever felt like you were dying a slow death inside of you and nobody seemed to care? Have you ever felt like exploding from the pressures within but you felt God would scorn the idea? We have many times. Maintaining a vital walk with God requires more than just knowing theological truths. It requires an honest to goodness two-way relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

## AFRAID?

You don't need to be afraid of Him ever again—if you belong to Him. And if you belong to Him, He will never let you go—no matter what. Fearing God and being afraid of God are not the same. Pleasing God and appeasing Him are quite different also!

Fearing God means that because you love God so much and He is **your** God—God Almighty, your Heavenly Father—you will want to revere Him with respect, awe, wonder, and adoration. Now, it is true that you would never want to **cross His path** (disobey, defame, disregard, rebel against, grieve, or offend your loving, all-powerful God.) Why would any child who has a Heavenly Father who loves unconditionally want to do that? Our Father's loving woodshed can be pretty big! His discipline is both effective and—quite memorable.

But He never punishes His beloved family! **NEVER!**

As believers, as His children, we are unpunishable! But because He cares so much for us, He lovingly and firmly disciplines His children. Punishment looks to the past. Discipline looks to the future—being molded more and more in the likeness of Jesus.

## JESUS PAID THE FULL PRICE FOR YOU.

God's Son, Jesus, bore all of His Father's wrath and punishment on the cross on our behalf—so that we would never have to bear them. You see, your Father in Heaven does not want you to be "tail between your legs" scared of Him. Just ask any person who suffered child abuse and they'll tell you what it's like to sweat, tremble, and be terrified of the approaching parent.

God loves you. And He earnestly desires for you to love Him in return.

Hopefully, you will bless this loyal, steadfast, merciful, **arms wide open** Heavenly Father by joyfully loving Him. He desires that you love Him by learning to please Him. "...*find out what pleases the Lord.*" Ephesians 5:10

The consequences of sin are deadly and severe. Your powerful and loving Heavenly Father wants to "protect" you from them. Responsive, loving obedience and faithfulness are the keys to allowing Him to properly preserve and protect you, His chosen and beloved one.

You will want to please Him, not to earn or maintain His love, but because you are so thankful! It's no wonder! We can never fall out of His caring hand. It becomes easy then to appreciate His unconditional, unmerited favor!

You please God. You appease a false, pagan god!

"Appease" means to make calm, quiet, or peaceful—to satisfy. Satan wants you to think that you have to calm a false god of explosive anger by satisfying his demands to perform better—to measure up—to be perfect.

Appeasing is like trying to quell the fiery anger and wrath of the temperamental, pagan volcano god—AKUA. You'd better obey and sacrifice or else! Or else he or she will zap you with lava, pestilence, and fire! (AKUA is make-believe.)

**PLEASING  
IS BETTER THAN  
APPEASING!**

Some of you who, like me, may wrestle with the difference between **performing** and **being faithful**. Maybe the following definitions will encourage you as you learn to please and love the **only** Father God there ever was:

1. Performing: Trying really hard to earn acceptance and approval. If ever the performance level is attained, the requirements increase—the standard is raised! Here—one wants to act the part.
2. Being Faithful: Heartfelt obedience and learning to please the One who already approves and accepts you just the way you are! It is a thankful response! Here—one wants to grow!

If you are in the snare of feeling you have to **perform** for God, church, or people in order to win or maintain their love, approval, or acceptance—turn away from this guilt producing burden! Renounce it with a passion! It is the devil's delight!

Learn to enjoy the freedom you have in wanting to obey and please your Father God because He prefers you, cares for you, and loves you **just the way you are!** With Jesus in your heart and life, you no longer have to:

1. Be afraid.
2. Appease.
3. Perform.
4. Measure up.

You can breathe deep, relax and begin to enjoy your loving and secure Father-Child relationship with a Father who is **for** you—who is on your side. Hopefully this perspective will help destroy some old lies and stereotypes that maybe have been crippling you for a long time.

Hopefully it will help you to **want** to love, obey, and please Him more and more as His Spirit enables you.

**YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER SAYS,  
"CHILD—I REALLY LOVE YOU!  
COME INTO MY ARMS!"**

Read the words of Jesus in Luke 15:20-24 (the story of the "prodigal son", or perhaps a more fitting title would be the "loving father"). After reading this, why would you be motivated to respect, adore, and submit to your loving Heavenly Father?

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### A DISTORTED VIEW

I (Jim) used to have a pretty distorted view of my Abba Father as Jesus called Him. "Abba" means "Daddy." Oh, I loved Him but I didn't really feel safe enough to confide in Him.

I figured He would respond like some human fathers—that He'd get angry or tired of hearing about all of my woes, deep yearnings, foolish mistakes, angers, and attitude problems. Regardless of what was in my heart, what I presented to Him was highly filtered, very religious, and basically:

### FAKE !

I wouldn't tell Him everything in my heart—only those things that I thought were good enough, worthy enough, pure enough, and rosy enough! Humanly speaking, I have come to the conclusion that God, who knows it all—

### WANTS IT ALL.

He does not want you to hide from Him anything that is in your heart. In order to experience our Heavenly Father's love, Barbara and I have learned that we regularly need to exercise three:

### HEART MUSCLES

1. Be willing to **pour out** your entire heart (as often as you can) to our Father. Tell Him like it is—the good, the bad, and the ugly. You can do this because in His sure, accepting love you can be totally free and secure.
2. Be willing to **release** all of your hurt and control to Him and then make a choice to do so. Refusing to release is saying to God that you can do a better job of judging, convicting, burden carrying, or caring for others than God can. You then make yourself out to be like The Most High and this is what got Satan into trouble!
3. Learn to **praise** Him because of His wonderful loving-kindness and grace He so freely bestows upon you. Learn to praise Him—no matter what!



He rewards faithfulness—not "sight-full-ness"!

**Faith says:** "Father, expend me for Your Glory."

**Sight says:** "Father, I will praise You only when I'm blessed or feeling good so You'd better bless me!\*\*

**Faith** is releasing.

**Sight** is demanding!

**LET'S TAKE A BRIEF LOOK AT EACH  
OF THESE THREE HEART MUSCLES.**

## I. POUR OUT YOUR HEART TO HIM!

A few years ago, I had a very bad day. Everything that could go wrong—did. I try to schedule a day like this onto my calendar now and then just to keep me humble. (Smile) I was venting my frustration in the direction of my boss. It was not that he was particularly awful—no! He was a good boss! The problem was that I was burned out, fatigued, and I needed to **dump my truck** on somebody.

I had to talk to someone so I went into my friend's office next to mine—my peer—and asked him if he would keep this confidential. I had to unload or explode! I needed a listening ear—someone to pour my heart out to. What I got was a listening ear and:

### A TALKING MOUTH!

I found out later that **my friend** went right to the boss and informed him as to how messed up I was. Nice guy, right? Wrong! I was hurt deeply.

**I had to take my pain to God.** There was no other choice. I took some time and really told my Father all of my frustrations, my livid anger, my sinful thoughts toward my betrayer, and my feelings of helplessness.

Down deep, I waited for Him to:

**ZAP ME.**

But He didn't.

He just loved me and—He understood!

### MARVELOUS!

#### A. Pour It All Out.

Turn to Psalm 62:8. Drink in deeply the joyful delights of these words as they free up your soul. In what way are they freeing or encouraging to you?

It is just like the painful boils my older brother used to get. He did not want anyone touching them. That would hurt. But once they were properly lanced and all the "stuff" was freely allowed to pour out and drain, there was immediate relief and true healing would begin.

### GOD WANTS YOU TO SHARE.

Remember the pitcher of iced lemon water from the first Help of the Nine Helps for the Hurting? Your Father wants you to **feel safe** about telling Him everything troubling you even if you think it is awful, gross, unworthy, immature, or cheap.

If it's on your heart and it's bothering you—

**HE WANTS YOU TO POUR IT ALL OUT.**

Picture yourself as a child crawling up into His big, safe lap, and His strong, fatherly arms wrapping themselves protectively around you. Next, see yourself nuzzling your head under His chin with His gentle face smiling upon you.

**NOW — POUR.**

Pour out all of your heart to Him—the good, the bad, and the not so good.

**B. Take Your Time.**

Take a moment and do this now. **Bear your soul to Him.** If you were victimized, abused, attacked, beaten, misunderstood, wounded, made fun of, shamed, fired, divorced, rejected, passed over, betrayed, judged, condemned....

If you wrestle with lust or depression or rage. If you are so angry you could spit a mile—

**TELL HIM.**

**HE LOVES YOU.**

**HE'S BIG ENOUGH.**

**HE CAN HANDLE IT.**

Please write down the feelings that you experienced as you poured your heart out to Him. Whatever you say here is just fine.

"I felt..."

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**A FEW WORDS REGARDING FEELING SAFE  
IN SHARING YOUR HEART'S NEEDS AND JOYS  
IN THE ASSEMBLY OF OTHER BELIEVERS.  
(CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP)**

I'm convinced the Lord desires for us to be **real** and open when we are among our brothers and sisters in Christ. If your church service has a **sharing** time or if your **private home Bible fellowship group** encourages honesty, sincerity, and lowering of your masks, you and the others are blessed indeed!

**LET US MAKE SURE  
THAT WE CREATE AN ATMOSPHERE  
FOR OTHERS TO FEEL SAFE.**

Don't stop with pouring your heart out—  
now—

**II. RELEASE!**

It is important to embrace the biblical truth that:

**GOD IS INVOLVED IN EVERYTHING.**

Whether you have been severely mistreated or neglected, whether your health and emotions are unstable, or whether success and blessing have met your every step—

**YOUR LOVING FATHER ALLOWED IT.**

Nothing, and I mean nothing, comes to you until it first has been approved by and sifted through His merciful, all-knowing hands.

If life has dealt you a blow or two (and it probably has), you can rest in knowing that God purposefully chose to allow this to happen.

You may never understand (Proverbs 3:5-6). You don't have to.

**YOUR FATHER UNDERSTANDS.**

**HE'S IN CONTROL.**

**HE HAS YOUR "BEST" IN MIND.**

**YOU CAN REST IN THAT.**

There are three aspects of **Releasing**.

**A. Release Your Guilt.**

Satan wants you to feel guilty and condemned all of the time! Much of your guilt is Satan-imposed or self-induced so you can morbidly act like a god and continually condemn yourself for not being:

**PERFECT.**

Satanic or self-induced guilt (both are false and destructive) starts a **Death Cycle**:

1. We sin, mess up, or just blow it.
2. We condemn ourselves. Satan may or may not join in.
3. We then despair and beat ourselves up without mercy.
4. Finally we flee and hide. We isolate ourselves only to set ourselves up to sin or fail again.
5. This vicious cycle starts all over again!

When you are truly guilty of sin, the Holy Spirit within you allows you to feel and experience His conviction in order to motivate you to **repent** of your sin (agree with God, turn away from your sin, and fully surrender to His Lordship).

It is conviction from a loving God. He has your best in mind when He employs it.

God's conviction is like a **Life Preserver**:

His life preserving conviction possesses three glorious attributes:

1. God's conviction is **RESCUING**.
2. God's conviction is **RESTORING**.
3. God's conviction is **HEALING**.

**GOD'S CONVICTION: THE WONDERFUL LIFE PRESERVER**

(note the drawing below)



As a child of God, **picture yourself drowning** in a sea of sin, despair, self-exaltation, or disbelief. Jesus is not on some condemning tower looming over you, looking down at you with piercing, shaming, and condemning eyes. Jesus came to save the world, not condemn it.

Instead, I see Jesus in a **sturdy rescue ship**. He not only throws you His Life Preserver (Conviction) but He, Himself, jumps in after you. Because you know His attitude is to save and to care deeply, you will quickly want to receive His help. You are helpless without it! He lifts you up and out (Psalm 40:1-3). He takes you to the warmth and safety of His **ship of restored fellowship** and He puts dry clothes on you, feeds you, and smiles upon you!

This is a picture of a **Life Cycle**:

1. You sin, mess up, or blow it.
2. You experience God's healing conviction. (John 16:8)
3. Jesus is jumping in to rescue and restore you. (Forgiveness & Fellowship)
4. Not wanting to choke in the drowning sea any longer than you have to, you quickly cry out to Jesus for help and forgiveness.
5. Instead of hiding, you receive His loving, affirming embrace and you then want to remain safe in His care. Fellowship restored; isolation destroyed.

Any guilt we feel apart from the Holy Spirit's conviction is destructive, hurtful, and:

**ENSLAVING!**

False guilt leads to despair, isolation, and feelings of worthlessness and condemnation, and this certainly is not from God. Read the following verses and write down what you think Jesus is trying to say to you:

Psalm 32:5 \_\_\_\_\_

Psalm 32:7 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Romans 8:1 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I John 1:9 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please **circle** the verse above that encourages you the most.

Why does it? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you have any sin to confess and consequently any guilt to release,

**PLEASE DO SO NOW.**

**B. Release Your Burdens.**

Why is it that we Christians insist on carrying our own burdens? Do we feel this will make us more like God? Satan tried to be like The Most High and look where it got him! The Lord didn't make us with the ability to carry burdens for too long. It's also true that Henry Ford did not design the automobile to fly. It seems that if we were cars, we Christians would spend much of our time.

**TRYING TO FLY!**

Look up I Peter 5:7 and write down what you think your Heavenly Father desires of you:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The American Heritage Dictionary defines "cast" as:

1. To throw or fling.
2. To turn or direct.
3. To deposit.
4. To release.

Our Father reserves the right to carry our burdens. (Sometimes He does this through other people.)

**HE CAN HANDLE THEM.**

**YOU CANNOT.**

**DON'T EVEN TRY!**

If you have burdens to release, please give them to your Father right now...

**C. Release Others From Your Judgments.**

Remember that friend who betrayed me to my boss? I was really ticked at him for a while. I think that's normal and human. The Lord then convicted me. As I quickly forgave my friend and released him to the Lord's care, I was freed from this bondage. Choosing not to be offended is not only godly, it is smart! I released him from my judgment. I could love again.

**I WAS FREE AGAIN!**

Please look up the following verses and jot down the first thought that comes to mind:

Luke 6:37 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Isaiah 33:22 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Ephesians 4:32 \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



When we forgive someone, they don't have to ask to be forgiven or even apologize.

We release them from our requirement that they **should** somehow suffer or pay for the injustice and wounds they caused. We agree to endure the injustice, unfairness, and wrongful suffering that they have caused.

Jesus, on the cross, agreed to endure the sin and injustice we inflicted on Him. So we must do likewise to others who have hurt us if we are to call ourselves Christians.

We **must release them** from our judgment if we say that we love God.

### PONDER FOR A MOMENT

Is there:

someone—a parent, a relative, a mate, an ex-mate, a brother, sister, or friend—perhaps your boss—or your pastor, or your church?—anyone or any organization? that you need to release from your judgment?

If so, please release them now.

Your humble prayer might start like—

*Heavenly Father,*

*I release \_\_\_\_\_ from my judgment.*

*I forgive them fully. I can do this because You forgave me and You are able to work in their lives much better than I am. Thanks for freeing me from this bondage.*

*Thanks for forgiving me for holding on to this as long as I have. I love You!*

*In Jesus' name,*

\_\_\_\_\_  
(date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

Please use this prayer format to forgive each person or organization specifically or one at a time.

Don't stop with just pouring your heart out and with releasing—but go the final mile with:

### **III. PRAISE!**

Praise seems so foreign to our tired, weary, downtrodden, souls. I mean—doesn't it seem to go against your nature to:

#### **OFFER PRAISE TO GOD**

when everything happening to you seems to be so crummy and unfair?

The truth is:

#### **PRAISE MAKES SENSE.**

The late Dr. Bill Bright, president and founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, stated that—

#### **PRAISE IS THE LANGUAGE OF HEAVEN**

so it is wise to get in the habit of it now.

Praise may seem easy when a major blessing falls into your lap. Yet, the true cutting edge of a solid, godly character that is utterly surrendered is that of praising God:

1. When life turns upside down.
2. When you feel cursed.
3. When depression comes.
4. When sickness haunts.
5. When money is gone.
6. When your pride has been crushed.
7. When God seems absent.
8. When your emotional tank seems empty!
9. When your prayers seem unanswered.
10. When you feel abandoned, forgotten, betrayed, and alone.

I'm not talking about cheap, fake praise that only impresses man, but the deep, earnest (sometimes through tears) kind of **praise that wells up** in the hearts of the children of God who truly acknowledge the worthiness, goodness, and sovereignty of their Heavenly Father.

When we experience a deep loss like the loss of a loved one, I think it is healthy to grieve. Denial, depression, anger, and resolution are expected. In addition to these, it is good that we come to the point (many times it IS a process) where we pour our hearts out to God, release our burdens and pain to Him, and finally:

**P R A I S E    H I M !**

Being happy or joyful is not a prerequisite for genuine praise. In fact, you may be confused, downtrodden, and discouraged. In time, joy and contentment gradually arrive as guests in your heart:

**WHEN YOU CHOOSE  
TO INVITE PRAISE IN.**

NOTE: I seldom meet Christians who embrace much godly joy, and contentment unless they have endured suffering and setback. Being humbled has its advantages.

**Character is sweet but it does not come cheap.**

Praise—a very pure form of prayer, unleashes God to act in time of need.

He seems to respond in compassion when we:

**PRAISE HIM.**

The World Book Dictionary defines "praise" as:

1. "Expressing, heartily, a high opinion or admiration of someone or something."
2. "Saying that a thing or person is good."
3. "Words that tell the worth or value of a thing or person."
4. "Words or song setting forth the glory and goodness of God."

If we believe that we love and are grateful to our God for redeeming, adopting, and loving us, I think we will want to possess an attitude of praise—even when:

**THINGS DON'T GO OUR WAY.**

Praise puts feet to our faith. It sees what our eyes cannot. It feels what our heart cannot. By it, we let God know we yield to Him, we love Him, we defer to Him, we prefer His way, and we agree that He:

**KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOING.**

**A. God Deserves Our Praise!**

We could talk about hundreds of passages dealing with and thanking our worthy, all-wise, and loving Father. Yet, I can't find one more pure and loving than Psalm 100:1-5.

Read it now and jot down **four** reasons (from this text) why you will want to start praising your Lord:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Aren't you glad His love and commitment don't last just for 100,000 years? He loves and keeps us secure forever.

As His beloved child, there is **NOTHING** (not even you or your sins) that can separate you from God's love.

I praise Him for keeping me eternally safe and protected from the devil, eternal death caused from sin, the world, and even—**MYSELF!**

Please look up Romans 8:38,39. Does this give you peace, hope, and rest?

(circle one)

**YES      MAYBE      NO**

WHY? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*"And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day."*

John 6:39

We would consider that pretty good news. What do you think?

**B. Beware!!!**

When we choose not to praise God, we in effect, usurp His authority; we sit on His throne for a while and start to mope around, worry, and then:

**WE START TO  
JUDGE OTHERS!**

I am persuaded that the opposite of praise is:

**JUDGMENT**

We start to pick on everyone's shortcomings, including our own. Before long, everyone else is messed up and wrong—

then—

**THE LIGHT TURNS OFF IN OUR SOUL.**

It seems, then, that the enemies against us slowly or quickly decimate our morale, our joy, our love.

We become bitter, sullen people:

**SATAN SCORES!**

Let's not let this happen. Remember that when we sincerely praise God we are changed somehow from within. Our whole perspective on life is transformed from darkness to light—from despair to hope. God lifts our souls when we praise Him.

## **A MAN WHO RECEIVED COURAGE FROM HIS FATHER GOD**

Jehoshaphat, King of Judah, with his palace in Jerusalem, had great opportunity to be scared, sullen, and discouraged. Vast enemy armies were approaching Jerusalem. It looked despairing and hopeless.

Right now, please look up an amazing true account of something that is hard to believe, but actually took place. Turn to II Chronicles 20:12.

Here. Jehoshaphat poured his heart out to his God and yet he closed his statement with what words in that verse?

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By choosing to embrace these words by faith, Jehoshaphat went to the next step beyond just pouring out his heart.

### **HE RELEASED HIS BURDEN TO GOD.**

When he said, "Our eyes are upon You," what he was doing, in effect, was releasing that gloomy, hopeless situation to God—where it belongs! He is saying if his eyes are on himself and his ability to fight the vast approaching armies, he and his people are:

### **UP A CREEK WITHOUT A PADDLE!**

In essence—**their Goose Is Cooked!**

But, by faith, he looked to his Father God with trust and with a sense of release. I know he was glad his God is loving and faithful!

**Please read II Chronicles 20:15-29.**

1. Whose battle was it? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What did King Jehoshaphat and the people do? (verse 18) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. In verse 21, what did Jehoshaphat appoint men to do? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In verse 22, how did God honor their choice to sing and praise even when gloom looked like a sure thing? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Do you think they felt pretty good about their great God and themselves for choosing to demonstrate faithfulness even when their emotions, at first, told them not to?

(circle one)

**YES      NO**

6. In verse 30 what did God give His beloved child Jehoshaphat? \_\_\_\_\_

Yes! The meager army of King Jehoshaphat, by faith, advanced against the vast enemy, but they knew:

**IT WAS GOD'S BATTLE.**

NOTE: After he released his burden to God, he put final feet to his faith by what? You're right!

**PRAISING GOD!**

We need to be able to praise God even if the vast armies overwhelm or destroy us. They may crush us now but they can't touch us in eternity. Heaven is a totally safe place!



## Heaven is Home!

If you need to offer praise and thanksgiving to God for whatever blessings you have and whatever enemies are poised for attack, we invite you to pray this prayer:

*Dear Father,*

*I need You! Right now, I trust that my battles belong to You. I praise You for Your goodness, Your salvation, and Your lovingkindness.*

*I even praise and thank You for the setbacks, problems, and vast armies of trouble facing me right now.*

*My eyes are toward heaven. The results are in Your hands! I love You no matter what happens!*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*

## S P E C I A L      C H A L L E N G E

Right now, you are being encouraged to embrace the truth. You know just how intense Satan's forces are scheming to keep souls and hearts forever wounded and deceived! Barbara and I want to ask you to pass this material on to at least one other person (same sex) or to a small group (can be mixed). Passing this baton of truth and encouragement may be the tool that God uses to change someone's life and family forever!

People have been lied to. Many are hurting and in bondage. Please reach out and help them to embrace the truth so Jesus can set them free. If you don't, who will?

**HAVE YOU BENEFITED?**

Have you benefited from this material? Please write below the names of three possible people that God might want you to help embrace the truth.

The Dead Sea gathers and takes in water but it refuses to give any out. That's why it is dead.

**The world is full of dead seas.** We are praying for risk-taking **rivers flowing with living, giving water!** Truth does matter. Knowing right from wrong is important. Lives in eternity and lives now are at stake. Will you help?

We pray you will choose to help others by taking them through EMBRACING THE TRUTH. Pray for God's leading in getting this material out to others.

**God bless you!**

**POSSIBLE NAMES OF PEOPLE THAT I MIGHT ASK  
TO GO THROUGH  
EMBRACING THE TRUTH  
WITH ME:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

*Father, prepare people to say "yes"  
so I may help them find freedom, hope, and purpose.*

*Thanks in advance, Lord. I love You!*

# EMBRACING THE TRUTH

## Truth To Embrace:

*"Great peace have they who love your law,  
and nothing can make them stumble." Psalm 119:165*

*"...Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are  
God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long." Psalm 25:5*

## Key Number Eight

# LOVE THE LORD

### Think About This:

The greatest joy for God is to love you and be loved by you.

### MEMORY VERSE      *Mark 12:33*

Please print or write this verse and be prepared to share it from memory when you meet with your  
**EMBRACING THE TRUTH** Partner(s).

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## LOVE THE LORD!

One night, years ago, we tucked our four kids into bed and then I (Jim) went to bed and read for a while.

Due to **continuous bombardment** of emotional stressors, I had been wrestling with headaches for several years and, once again, my head was beginning to throb.

I had spent the day counseling troubled, defeated people. A phone call I received led me to believe that someone was spreading a hurtful rumor about me that was totally untrue. On top of all that, I was rather frustrated and depressed.

## I STARTED TALKING

### TO MY HEAVENLY FATHER.

At 10:30 p.m. that night I told the Lord, while lying in bed, about my pain and my doubts. I told Him that I felt **far** from His love.

I felt unsure what true love was all about.

Even though I knew the truth, I kind of wondered, as I despaired, if I could ever experience or understand a Father God's love for me.

I sort of muttered—

## LORD, PLEASE HELP ME UNDERSTAND!

I guess I was hoping for a still, small voice to impress my heart with some confirmation, but nothing came. Nothing.

## I TURNED THE BEDSIDE LIGHT OUT.

As I drifted off, I heard a faint and feeble whimpering come from Brittney's room. (She was five and full of spunk!)

Getting up I hurried to her room only to find her sitting on the edge of her bed, half asleep, **mumbling fearfully**, and pointing to the night light on her wall.

I had disciplined her that afternoon for some sort of disobedience, but right now, it was on my mind to comfort and protect this **little lady**.

Quickly sitting down by her, I put my arms around her and held her close. I asked her tenderly:

**"ARE YOU DREAMING, HONEY?"**

Amidst her precious little tears, her head nodded a little—up and down—and then, her tiny little arms reached up around my neck.

**SHE HUGGED ME TIGHT**

**AND I HELD HER CLOSE.**

A lump formed in my throat as I felt a warm, unconditional, father's love for his little, helpless girl.

I then knew this must be a small taste of how my Heavenly Father must love me—undeserving me!

I had my answer to my bedside prayer.

My Father God loves me as "special" and "prized" whether I am good or not!

*"The Lord your God is with you, he is mighty to save.  
He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love,  
he will rejoice over you with singing."  
Zephaniah 3:17*

**DON'T YOU WANT TO LOVE THIS KIND OF FATHER?**

Barbara and I are becoming more and more motivated to love our Lord!

**Barbara writes:**

"Through the sufferings, set backs, and losses in my life, I am learning that loving and serving the Lord Jesus is all that really matters. Gaining security in finances, career, or even relationships, just won't satisfy.

Just when you think you've got it all nailed down, something will fall apart somewhere. That's just the way life on this side of Heaven is. I'm learning to be grateful for all that God has given. I'm also learning to hold onto these things loosely.

Loving Jesus, seeking Him, and serving Him are things that will not fall apart when everything else seems to. When we love Him, He'll take care of everything else."

## GOD'S GRACIOUS LOVE

AND

## OUR HUMBLE GRATITUDE ARE LINKED

**Our obedience to God** reveals:

1. Our growing understanding of God's unconditional, unmerited love for us, and
2. Our ever-increasing desire to know and love Him. Our obedience becomes a **thankful response** to His amazing love, mercy, and grace.

Grasping (1) and (2) above will help you understand your **treasured status** as a child of God. This will enable you through your church, neighborhood, and work place, to reach out and serve others in need.

This is far better than the humanistic "**you can make it on your own.**" This sumptuous lie may taste good in the beginning, but later it breeds a rotting stench deep within.

## ARE YOU MOTIVATED BY GUILT OR BY GRACE?

**Note the difference:**

### **GUILT MOTIVATION**

(Satanic, flesh driven)

1. I feel I must earn God's favor and approval. I feel guilty.
2. I feel I must serve, but it's out of a cold-hearted duty.
3. I feel I must serve more, more, more in order to feel good about myself or feel loved by God.
4. I feel God loves me with a scornful frown no matter how hard I try. I can't win!

### **GRACE MOTIVATION**

(Biblical, Spirit led)

1. I know He will never stop loving me! I can't lose!
2. I want to serve God and others out of heartfelt adoration and thankfulness to my Father God who loves, favors, and keeps me forever! Wow!
3. I am full of gratitude. I feel free. I'm "Graced!"
4. I depend on Him to lead me away from grace killing (legalism) and grace abuse (license).

Which motivation have you been operating by lately?

(circle one)

**GRACE MOTIVATION**

**GUILT MOTIVATION**

Which motivation do you want controlling and directing the minutes and hours of your day?

(circle one)

**GRACE MOTIVATION**

**GUILT MOTIVATION**

Please share why. \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

*If you sincerely want to be motivated by grace, let me invite you to pray this simple prayer. Please pray it often:*

*Dear Lord,*

*I need You. Please motivate me by Your GRACE. Prevent Satan from discouraging me by his accusations.*

*In Jesus' name,*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(date)*

\_\_\_\_\_  
*(signature)*

**Focusing on Christ**

**and His loving, freeing grace**

**is the key.**



**LET US NOT FORGET...**

Satan is a master planner, deceiver, and counterfeiter. He will go to any lengths to convince you that all you need to do is:

1. Believe in yourself. TRY HARDER!!!
2. Trust that there is nothing but "good" in you.
3. Realize that you were a victim in your past. (Many of you were!)
4. Surround yourself with supportive friends.
5. Depend on your own ability **deep within you** to overcome challenges and solve all your problems.

**NOTE:** The problem with Satan is that he gets you to believe that 1 through 5 are total truth. (No Christ-focus, no Lord-dependence)

There is some truth to the above statements, but mixed in is a deadly amount of falsehood that will spread and contaminate the whole pot.

Our Faith must be rooted only in Jesus Christ. We must be:

1. Dependent upon Him.
2. Secure in Him.
3. Looking always to Him.
4. Strong through Him.
5. Kept by Him.

Be encouraged! Don't put hope in your righteous track record! It is miserable at best! Instead, hope and rejoice in the perfect, righteousness **that Jesus gives you...and it can never be taken away!**

Loving the Lord as an active response to His Love throws a major wrench into the machinery of Satan's plan to water you down, get you feeling pretty good **about yourself**, and slowly get you to drift away from God.

**WE MUST ASSEMBLE FOR BATTLE AGAINST HIM!**

**THE LORD IS OUR STRENGTH.**

**THE LORD IS OUR DEFENSE.**

**OUR HOPE**

**IS IN THE LORD!**

A question for you: **Who do you love?**

Satan's plan is that you **love yourself** in a selfish way.

He doesn't mind if you Like God now and then....

He just doesn't want you to ever **Love God!**

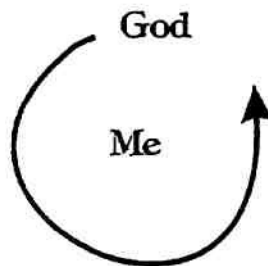
**If you are loving in the wrong way**, you will want God to revolve around you, bless you, and meet your needs. You will look to Him as:

**A GRAND ERRAND BOY!**

**A WONDERFUL WIZARD!**

**A GENEROUS GENIE!**

The drawing below depicts a **Loving Self** attitude.



Your heart will be crying out:

"Here am I. Bless me!"

**ONE BIG PROBLEM!**

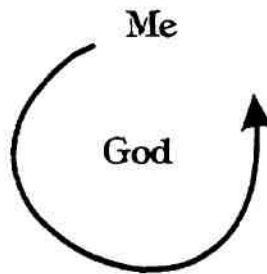
This attitude won't get you far once you realize that life is unfair—at least from our human perspective.

If you are loving the Lord, He will be Lord and you will be servant. He will be Father and you will be Child. He will be God and you will not be!

If you love God, you will desire all that God wants for you even if that means you perish here on earth. His dreams, His delights, and His longings will become paramount! (Read of Esther's courageous conviction in ESTHER 4:16 "...And if I perish, I perish.")

You will want the privilege of **revolving around** His plans and desires for you and your destiny.

The drawing below shows a **Loving God** attitude:



Your heart will be crying out:

**"HERE AM I. SEND ME!"**  
**Isaiah 6:8**

As you grow in your contentment of who you are, and you develop a biblical view of who God is, you will begin to **learn** to love The Lord.

**DO NOT CONTINUE WITH THIS KEY #8 UNTIL YOU HAVE "DONE BUSINESS"  
WITH THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL ON ARCH IDOLS.**

1. Any idol in your life is an Arch Idol. I will define an Arch Idol as a giant:

Anything which constantly demands your attention and allegiance (not the Lord) and if not dealt with properly (repent, forsake, flee) will rob you of the life God intended for you to enjoy.

2. An **Arch Idol** or **giant** is a **false god**. It will draw you further and further away from loving the Lord Jesus. If you have idols in your life, you are struggling. Yes, you will want Jesus, BUT you may not be willing to part with your idols.

Isaiah 44:15 says,

*"...But he also fashions a god and worships it;  
he makes an idol and bows down to it."*

**ARE YOU BOWING DOWN TO ANY IDOLS?**

3. If you are brave, I urge you to repent and forsake them as Saint Augustine did in the 3rd century A.D. His idol was sensual love for women. He was tormented and obsessed by this giant until he repented (agreed with God this was sin, turned away from the idol and fully surrendered to His Lordship).
4. Please **CIRCLE** any of the following **Arch Idols** or giants you are allowing to control you:

Results...Power...Position...TV...Movies...Internet...Sexual Lust...Ministry...Work...Food...

Approval...Recognition—Relationships...Entertainment...Sports...Your Weight...Fear...Texting...

Materialism.. Alcohol...Drugs...Peer Pressure...other \_\_\_\_\_

NOTE: Your Giants will only fall when God's reputation is more important than your welfare.

5. Are you torn between an Arch Idol and the Lord? If so, you are feeling miserable?
6. Arch Idols are demonic replacements for the Lord in your life. They insist on nothing less than:

**MASTERY OVER YOU!**

**They crave your undivided attention,**

**But they cannot give life.**

Even good things like serving, doing ministry, working hard, and church activities can be used of Satan to drift you away from the only True God who can fill your life with contentment. Read Philippians 4:11-13

Jesus says in Revelation 2:4,

*" Yet I hold this against you:  
You have forsaken your first love "*

7. If, by now, you know of any Arch Idols in your life, I challenge you to obey I Corinthians 10:14:

*"Therefore, my friends, flee from idolatry."*

And obey Romans 13:12,14:

*"...Let us therefore lay aside the deeds of darkness  
and put on the armor of light...  
Put on the Lord Jesus Christ  
and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts."*

8. A suggested prayer:

*Dear Lord,*

*I now can see that I have the following Arch Idols in my life. (Name them before the Lord.) Please forgive me. I clear these wretched trophies from the mantel of my heart. I now return to You, Lord Jesus—my First and Only Love. Please fill me with Your sweet peace and contentment. These other **things** won't do.*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*

Now you can go on with learning how to love your "First Love."  
Keeping things simple, I have broken down "Loving The Lord" into four aspects.

1. Love To **Delight**.

2. Love To **Gaze**.

3. Love The **Least**.

4. Love To **Love**.

Let's look at each aspect now.

## I. LOVE TO DELIGHT

- A. Read Job 22:21-26. Based on "**finding delight**" in verse 26 (NTV), please write down five action points throughout the passage that God defines as "**delighting**" in Him.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Circle which "delight" step (from above) is the most helpful to you.

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

- B. Looking at Job 27:10, how does Job (a weak, needy person like you and me) define "delighting in the Almighty?"

\_\_\_\_\_

- C. Look up Psalm 37:4. What is the natural result of delighting in the Lord?

\_\_\_\_\_

The beauty here is that as you seek a growing relationship with the Lord Jesus, His Spirit takes over. He gradually begins to transfer His desires to your heart from His Heart.

## HE GIVES YOU NEW DESIRES!

He creates in you new motivation. He grows within you new life. After all, you are His new creation! And He's not finished with you yet! (I Thessalonians 5:24)

One freeing thought: In II Corinthians 5:17, Paul states,

*"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ,  
he is a new creation;  
the old has gone, the new has come!"*

Ryrie, in the (NIV) Study Bible footnote for this verse states that the "old has gone" indicates the decisive change that salvation brings. We are indeed a "new" creation!—totally made righteous and holy in God's eyes due to what Jesus has done for and in us.

However, he states that "the new has come" is in the Perfect tense, indicating the new life in Christ. This means His growing or sanctifying of us takes time—a life time. It is process! It would be accurate to say that we are "being made NEW all the day long" as we abide (draw life from and remain close to) in Jesus and He abides in us (gives life to and remains close to. John 15:3-5.

That is why some of the things you still struggle with are not yet fully healed, resolved or cleaned up!

D. As you learn to Love The Lord, don't forget:

### **THE NORELCO SYNDROME**

The rechargeable Norelco shaver cuts the beard beautifully after it's been adequately plugged into the power source.

Now if you forget to recharge it (spending time with the power source), after a few days, it will still make sound and go through the motions as if it were cutting the whiskers. But it will only be:

### **LOOKING GOOD**

Little beard will be cut. There is no power.

Many Christians have slipped into the pit of trying to look good and trying to perform. Yet, all they are doing is:

**GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS  
OF THE  
CHRISTIAN LIFE.**

**miserable...      fatigued...      guilty...**

**THE BURDEN IS HEAVY!**

When we try to force spiritual fruit by gutting it out in a fleshly, people-pleasing manner, we end up burned out and spent.

**THIS IS THE ROAD  
TO DISCONTENTMENT**

When we learn to rest in the grace and presence of Christ and we spend regular, focused uninterrupted time with Him

**AND HIS WORD,**

His Love and Power will flow through us and this will result in His fruit (Galatians 5:22) budding forth in His time. And—

**IT WILL IMPACT ETERNITY!**

We must spend time with Jesus and order our lives by His Word if any of these truths are to become reality in our lives.

E. Read Psalm 119:9-11. What must we hide in our heart? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



## II. LOVE TO GAZE

*One thing I ask of the Lord,  
this is what I seek:  
that I may dwell in the house  
of the Lord  
all the days of my life,  
to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord  
and to seek him in his temple."*

Psalm 27:4

A godly surgeon, who is also an Elder in a fine church in Little Rock, Arkansas, defined "worship" as:

"The preoccupation of the soul,  
not with God's blessings nor with our needs—  
but with God Himself."

There is a **serious trap** that many people in counseling and some support groups fall into. Everyone usually has good intentions, yet, too much Self-Focus:

**BREEDS SELF-WORSHIP**

**OR SELF-HATE.**

Because we are sinful, we either gloat, get selfish and puff up with pride...

or...

we end up dwelling on our shortcomings, and then we:

**DESPAIR!**

We learn to despise ourselves, for there is no hope within us.

**A. This is called:****THE GAZE-GLANCE DILEMMA**

We gaze upon ourselves, our problems, our pasts, or on some issues, and then only occasionally glance at the Lord. This can even lead to suicide!

Satan's plan for you is **Destruction**. And it is:

**A DEATH TRAP!**

Dr. Bill Bright, President of Campus Crusade for Christ, exhorted all staff members to practice:

**THE GAZE-GLANCE SOLUTION.**

Gaze upon the Lord, seek His face, worship Him who is worthy of glory, honor and praise—  
And only glance at ourselves long enough to break through any denial, to examine our heart, or  
to understand past influences—

But then, quickly gaze back at the Lord with face lifted up. Look to Christ where performance  
requirements and too much self-focus melt away!

**GRACE !****B. Look up Psalm 27:4. Why did King David want to dwell in the Lord's house?**

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If we adopt Satan's plan of the Gaze-Glance Dilemma, we will soon become depressed and introspective. We will begin to tremble and fear what others think of us. We will worry that we are never going to measure up to **their** standards.

We will seldom reach out to others in need.

We will be caught up in ourselves.

**C. Look up Proverbs 29:25. What is the Key to being kept safe in Christ?**

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Note: If you can identify your greatest fear, you will have a pretty good idea of the idols in your life that are demanding your worship. Deal with them.

If you look too long at yourself, you will end up trusting in yourself. If you look long to the Lord, your trust will follow also.

Take heed from the beginning of this song:

Live looking at Jesus.  
Live looking at Jesus.  
Live looking at Jesus.

And your life will begin to shine!

**D. Take five seconds now and look at the next page.**

What do you see? \_\_\_\_\_



If you are like me (air in your lungs and blood in your veins) you probably saw a black dot. Quite revelational, eh?

What I'm beginning to see is perhaps what our Lord sees.

### **A LOT OF WHITE!**

Oh yes! There is a small dot, but the Lord, I believe, is focusing on:

1. Where you are winning.
2. God's grace toward you.
3. Forgiveness and New Beginnings.
4. Growth being a process and taking time.
5. Wounds that take time to heal.

Get used to the idea right now that you are worthwhile, beloved and cherished in God's eyes if you are His child. Jesus blotted out all our sins and washed us whiter than snow by His shed blood. He has removed our **sinful and wretched** labels and permanently replaced them with labels of **righteousness, love, forgiveness, and always welcome** in my Father God's home.

### **HE SEES ALL WHITE IN HIS CHILDREN BECAUSE OF JESUS.**

Now this does not mean that we are to overlook or deny our need to live wise, godly lives!

### **FREEDOM WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY IS A FARCE!**

We must never deny our need to confess our sins to the Lord and repent (change our minds. agree with God, and fully surrender to His Lordship).

Yes. Sin is serious and dangerous business.

Knowing this, we are to keep our general focus heavenward based on His Grace, His Workmanship within us, His available guidance and directive power, and His indwelling presence. He is in the process of transforming us into His likeness.

Too many of us are dwelling on other people's black dots—perhaps a spouse, parent, child, pastor, boss, or friend. Philippians 4:8 is just the guidance from Paul that we all need!

Too many of us are focusing or gazing on our black dots,—our failures, our inability to earn God's approval on our own.

**THIS IS A DEATH SENTENCE  
TO THE EMOTIONS!**

Look at that page again. What are you beginning to see?

Grace or performance?

Christ living in you or you working harder?

Freedom or slavery?

Joy or depression?

Forgetting past sins or remembering past sins?

Unconditional acceptance or "Shame on you!"?

Success or failure?

Where you and others agree or disagree?

It will take you time. It does with all of us.

**DON'T WORRY!**

### III. LOVE THE LEAST

Lawrence is considered the town fool—the harmless menace that goes into every store and says:

**"PA-RAISE THE LO-ORD! GOD BULLESS EE-YOU!"**

He even has been told to stay in his small apartment because his zeal for the Gospel and his bothersome way about delivering it have **offended** the town's people.

They want this weird duck (in their eyes) out of sight.

Lawrence had partial brain damage years ago due to drug usage and now he is a child of the King and dearly loves the Lord. He is grateful that God would love him enough to save him and keep him saved. (Christ's accomplishment—not his!)

**LOVE HIM!**

This was the Lord's message to our family.

We put it off for a while, but then we befriended him, talked with him, shared prayer requests and so on.

Finally we had him over to the house for an afternoon of family fellowship and food.

**WE ALL HAD A WONDERFUL TIME!**

When we gave him a gift of a new flannel shirt, he didn't know what to say—except:

**T H A N K   Y O U !**

Our family is learning that we need to love the least in the Lord's Kingdom.

For sure, he is far from least in God's heart. With God:

**HE'S NUMBER ONE!**

- A. Please read Matthew 25:34-40. When we love the least (in the world's eyes), whom are we actually loving?

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If someone is considered a bother, or worthless in the world's (society's) eyes and if they can't really return the love shown them—ah! Seek them! Help them. Comfort them. The Lord will be thankful!

- B. Now look up these two passages below and jot down what is challenging to you.

Matthew 18:5 

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Isaiah 35:3,4 

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- C. Do you know any "**least**" who need the love of Jesus? 

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#### IV. LOVE TO LOVE

The final aspect of loving the Lord is **Loving to Love**. Remember: this love requires action.

- A. Look up Deuteronomy 6:5. Does God desire a halfhearted love/commitment from you?

(circle one)

**YES**

**NO**

What kind of loving response from you does He long for in response to His unwavering love and kindness?

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## B. Read I Corinthians 13:1-8.

What three qualities of love mentioned (the kind that only Jesus can produce in you) do you personally need right now in your life?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## C. In embracing the truth,

**"I ADMIT I HAVE NO POWER  
TO LOVE THIS WAY.  
BUT JESUS DOES,  
AND HE LIVES IN ME."**

But—maybe you are tired, beat down, frustrated—not seeing much spiritual harvest for all your efforts. Maybe you attempt to love, reach out and **touch the world for Christ** but your weary efforts haven't gotten much past your back door.

As the Lord Himself teaches you how to **Love To Love**, remember to **walk lightly**, with the Spirit of Christ in control of you and your daily agenda.

Don't get onto the **burn-out track** and eventually toss in the towel. **Remember who calls** you **to love and to serve**. Understand also that God wants you to serve in and through your local church.

Since Barbara and I are married and believe it is important to minister as a team, we have told our church Elders that we desire to serve together. Right now, I'm teaching an adult Sunday-School class and Barbara, my help mate, is there supporting me and praying for me while I teach. This presents a **unified message** that the marital unit is important!

Later on, if God leads Barbara to teach the Kindergartners, then I'll assist and support her in her Sunday School classroom. We disciple couples with **Home to Home** together. **We just love serving together!** Those who think it's the **need** or **ministry workload** that calls them will be driven to frustration and fatigue.

Those who **look only to God** for their calling, their direction—those who learn to depend only on His enabling power and love to fulfill that calling—will be blessed, honored, and led by His Spirit. Those who **look away** and depend on their degrees, abilities, press reports, approval, etc., will, spiritually speaking, lie still and be:

## **DEAD IN THE WATER!**

They will be like the Christmas tree that never grew nor spawned life because it became infatuated with its own glitter and ornaments instead of remembering to be utterly and humbly dependent on its roots and where it came from.

We, like that tree, must remember the **God of our Roots**.

We also must remember who **Calls us to Love**.

On page 57 and 58 of **THE SAVING LIFE OF CHRIST**, Major W. Ian Thomas, the author, writes:

"You are not called upon to commit yourself to a need, or to a task, or to a field. You are called upon to commit yourself to God!

It is He then who takes care of the consequences and commits you where He wants you. He is the Lord of the harvest!

He is the Head of the body—and He is gloriously competent to assume His own responsibilities!

Man is not indispensable to God. God is indispensable to man."

A stable individual who is God-called and God-controlled will choose to reach out to needy, unlovable people. They will feel loved, valued, and lifted by your compassion. Once you start making **Lord directed** choices to:

## **LOVE TO LOVE.**

Then the Holy Spirit will move quickly to empower you and:

## **HE WILL LOVE OTHERS**

## **THROUGH YOU.**

Your unconditionally loving Father loves to be loved. You love Him through your commitment, surrender, servanthood, praise, thankfulness, heartfelt obedience, being faithful in little, seeking Him, and learning to please Him. Don't you want to love Him?

You love Him when you say "**No!**" to sin.

You love Him when you live by faith, not by sight. Like the Jet pilot flying through the dense storm clouds, you decide to:

**FLY BY THE INSTRUMENTS.**

Many others would panic because they can't see any stars or land marks in order to navigate. You decide not to panic or doubt. You decide to trust Jesus and His Word.

Read Hebrews 11:6, Matthew 5:6, Ephesians 5:10.

D. Read John 14:15.

Read it slowly and then read it again.

What is the prerequisite before obedience will occur? \_\_\_\_\_

The Devil and the "flesh" want you to believe the heresy that if you just work real hard and obey, obey, obey—and just ritually focus on obeying, then you will be loving Jesus.

**NO WAY!**

This is a one way ticket to legalism, fatigue, isolation, and gradual moral failure. Don't listen to its calling!

Based on the verses before and after this landmark verse, it is clear that we are to humble ourselves. cease from striving, and enter into a deep commitment, yearning, and love for the Lord. As we surrender to Him, He unleashes His love, power, and grace through us.

Read Philippians 1:6,10-11, 1 Corinthians 1:8, Psalm 138:8.

**GROWTH TAKES TIME.**

**THIS IS A PROCESS.**

As you love the Lord your God, then you will obey His commands. Just be sure you spend time with God, getting to know Him.

**REST IN HIM.  
THEN  
HE'LL TAKE CARE  
OF THE  
"REST."**

**UNSHAVEN AND DRUNK!**

My friend is committed to loving the Lord. He is far from perfect. One day, dressed in our suits and ties, we left a high-rise parking lot and walked toward a seminar we were attending.

We had to walk past some seedy areas—bars, pawnshops, etc.

Out from a dark alley, straggled a young, unshaven bum in rags. He carried a beat-up guitar; a dirty old skinny dog, with head lowered, followed him in shame.

**HE LOOKED THE PICTURE  
OF DRUNKEN DEATH.**

He came to us desperate, hungry, and reeking! My friend saw the hurt and hopelessness in his eyes. He immediately said, "**Friend—you need Jesus.**"

Before He could get his next breath, the young man burst into tears, grabbed my friend's arms and they both went down to their knees on the cement sidewalk right in front of a dim, sleazy pawnshop.

Without my friend saying hardly anything, this young, needy man cried out a "sinner's prayer" of repentance. There was no eloquence—just simple words—to the Lord Jesus. They were beautiful! Right there in sin and depravity, an empty man received Jesus Christ into his heart and became full. My friend indeed loved the Lord and now the Lord was drawing others to him to receive:

**THE LIVING WATER**

that only Jesus can give.

Scribbled in the front of my Bible is a prayer that I pray often. Barbara and I wish to encourage you to close this EMBRACING THE TRUTH time by joining us in this prayer:

*Lord Jesus.*

*Lead me to the hurting, the sinful, the downcast.*

*Lead me to the lost, the unfortunate, the misdirected.*

*Lead me to the hopeless, the undeserving, the needy...*

*Just the kind of people You love!*

*In Jesus' name,*

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*(date)*

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*(signature)*

## CLOSING THOUGHTS

The aging grandfather looked to his beloved granddaughter and asked her, "Do you believe that darkness will come into your life?" She thought for a moment and then said, "Yes, Grandfather."

Then he looked deep into her eyes with a caring, steadfast love from God and asked, "And what if the darkness prevails?" The sadness on her face was slowly replaced by a smile of growing proportions. She took a deep breath, looked into his eyes, and said with resolve:

**"Then I will light a candle!"**

We, as many of you, have endured hardship, suffering and trials. It all seems so unfair. We have experienced pain, depression, despair, fatigue, confusion, fear, and strained relationships.

What the Lord is teaching our family is that although "darkness" may prevail, our gloomy, joyless response to it does not have to prevail with it. We do not believe we are to deny our pain or put on a fake "Oh, I'm fine!" mask. It is OK to hurt and grieve deeply at times. Jesus did, of course, in the Garden. **We just are not to dwell there too long.**

When we choose to dwell in the darkness, we snuff out a lot of candles. Instead, Barbara, I, and our seven children, now want to light as many candles for the Lord as we can. We want to cheer the hopeless, encourage the crushed in spirit, and bring comfort, joy and light to those still swallowed in darkness. This is our prayer! Jesus spent time grieving in the Garden, **but He did not stay there.** He chose to go on and light **"Heart-Candles"** all over the world.

God bless you for going through EMBRACING THE TRUTH.

We care for you!

i

God willing and enabling, you will have benefited enough from EMBRACING THE TRUTH that you will want to:

### **HELP OTHERS EMBRACE THE TRUTH.**

At the end of Key #7, you wrote down several names. Will you take one or more of those people through this material?

(circle one)

**Yes, soon**

**Not now**

Please, if you would like, write down the name(s) of the person(s) you are going to contact.

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Thank you and God bless you! We pray EMBRACING THE TRUTH was an encouragement to you.

**QUESTIONS TO ASK AND  
VERSES TO EMBRACE AS YOU  
PASS ON THESE "EMBRACING THE TRUTH" KEYS  
TO SOMEONE YOU HAVE PRAYERFULLY SELECTED.**

**WHAT IS THE LORD'S NEW COMMAND?**

*"Love one another.  
As I have loved you,  
so you must love one another."  
John 13:34*

**WHO DISCIPLES?**

*"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations,  
baptizing them in the name of the Father  
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and  
teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.  
And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age."  
Matthew 28:19,20*

**ONCE DISCIPLED, AM I TO REPRODUCE?**

*"And the things you have heard me say  
in the presence of many witnesses  
entrust to reliable men  
who will also be qualified to teach others."  
II Timothy 2:2*

**WHO, THEN, IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RESULTS  
IN THE LIVES OF THE PEOPLE WE DISCIPLE?**

*"... 'Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit,'  
says the Lord Almighty."  
Zechariah 4:6b*

**GO FOR IT!**

## NOTES

1. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, TH.D., PH.D, marginal reference notes used by permission, The Ryrie Study Bible. NTV, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1986), Ref. verse II Corinthians 5:17, p. 1595.
2. Major W. Ian Thomas, The Saving Life Of Christ. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), pp. 57-58.



# EMBRACING THE TRUTH EVALUATION SHEET

Your name, address and phone number: (Optional)

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 (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

1. Which Key meant the most to you, or had the greatest impact on your life?

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

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2. What lie was exposed or what truth was revealed that helped you the most? Why?

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3. If you could change or improve just one aspect of EMBRACING THE TRUTH to make it better. what would it be?

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4. Would you take a small group from your church or at least one other person through:

EMBRACING THE TRUTH?

(circle one)

**YES**

**NO**

5. Please mail your EVALUATION SHEET to:

JIM & BARBARA GRUNSETH  
W4760 Steeple Chase Way  
Elkhorn, WI. 53121

Our Home #: (414) 642-5092 E-Mail: [jgrunseth@centurytel.net](mailto:jgrunseth@centurytel.net)

Ordering **Embracing The Truth, Home to Home**, or **Remember the Rowboats**: Call 1(800) 827-2788 or simply Google them online. Also visit [www.marriageanchors.com](http://www.marriageanchors.com)



# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES FOR GET-TOGETHER #1

**(Expose The lie)**

Time: 90 minutes

## **A. Arrival**

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Everyone must have their homework completed in order to meet.

## **B. Warm up (10 minutes)**

1. If you don't know each other very well, each of you take turns sharing briefly about your life, your family, and what you hope to gain from Embracing The Truth.
2. Keep this light hearted, short, and voluntary. If someone does not wish to share yet, O. K.

## **C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)**

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page I-1. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them. It might be best for you, the Host-Leader, to share first.
2. Strongly encourage this memory work, but if someone forgets it, let him/her paraphrase it.

## **D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)**

1. Turn to page 1-6. Take turns sharing some of the measurement examples of Performance, Appearance, and Possessions that each wrote down. Which measurements were assigned the highest points and why?
2. Referring to page 1-7 take a few moments and facilitate the sharing of enabling and disabling memories that were written down. Be sensitive and compassionate here.
3. Referring to pages 1-8 through 1-13, take turns sharing about the Steps to Destruction that were circled. Discuss the drawings as well as "My Ideal Self on page I-10.
4. Turn to page 1-15. Gently ask if anyone had difficulty praying the closing prayer or in signing and dating their name. (Don't force anyone to sign but know that signing one's name is powerful and important! It says they own and embrace what they are signing.)

## **E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)**

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud. Please do not force someone though.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #2

## (Present Your Wounds)

Time: 90 minutes

### A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. If meeting at home, perhaps have coffee, soda, cookies available.

### B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask how each person's week went. Encourage appropriate transparency. Since Leadership is modeling and modeling is everything, perhaps you could start. Don't come across as "holier than thou" or as perfect. If you do, they will not be able to relate to you. If you had a rough week, say so. Perhaps someone else did too.
2. This is also a good time for clean, lighthearted humor. It breaks the ice and soothes.

### C Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page 11-17. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them. Be sure you share as well. Keep this light, not legalistic.
2. You should read Psalm 119:11 and share why verse memory is vital.

### D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Turn to page 11-24. Ask if anyone made the wise decision and prayed the sinner's prayer.
2. Referring to pages 11-25 through 11-27, ask them, "What should our response be to our Lord for forgiving and saving us from eternal death and hell? (Key word: **Gratitude**)
3. Referring to pages 11-28 through 11-30, gently encourage the sharing of the "Wounds to the Heart" numbers that each person circled. Ask them to share why they are important.
4. Turn to page 11-31. When referring to wounds from sins, mistakes, and poor judgment, be very merciful, gracious, and sensitive. It's O. K. not to share here. Share only if God leads.
5. Referring to pages 11-32 through 11-33, discuss the wounds that were circled. Finally, ask if they had the chance to pray the prayer and sign their name on the last page. If they did not, perhaps they are struggling or in bondage to some sin, deception, or wound.

### E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud. It helps if each person prays out loud.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #3

## (Embrace The Truth)

Time: 90 minutes

### A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Have someone provide refreshments if possible. This would be a great time to extend your time together: Have a picnic, pot luck supper, play a game together, etc.

### B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask what was the best thing that happened to them this week. Then ask what the worst thing was.
2. Be sure you share as well.

### C Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page III-37. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them. Be sure you share as well.
2. On the same page, briefly ask why the "Truth To Embrace" verses are significant.

### D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Turn to page III -41, the "**Oh Beloved, Fortunate Christian**" list. Have everyone share why the biblical truths they each circled encouraged them. Their security and identity in Christ are eternal! (Key thought: Because of this good news, we should rejoice and tell others.)
2. Turn to page III -45. Ask them, "What feelings and thoughts were you experiencing when you read '**Remember The Duck**'?"
3. Referring to pages III -46 through III -47, take turns sharing the importance of the verses circled. Ask them to share why they are helpful.
4. Turn to page III -50. Have them look up Romans 8:1,2. Tell them that if they are "In Christ Jesus", **then** they are the forever recipients of God's uncondemnable love and favor. Ask, "How does this eternal truth about your position in Christ encourage you?"
5. Turn to page III -51. Take turns sharing why the circled verses are helpful.
6. Turn to page III -54. Have them share why their circled "Securities" encourage them. Ask if each prayed and signed their name on the last page.

### E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud for each other.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #4

**(Rejoice In Weakness)**

Time: 90 minutes

## **A. Arrival**

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Have someone provide refreshments if possible.

## **B. Warm up (10 minutes)**

1. Ask what was the funniest or most embarrassing thing that ever happened to them.
2. Be sure you share as well. (Smile)

## **C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)**

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page IV-59. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them.
2. On the same page, briefly ask why the "Truth To Embrace" verses are significant in light of our pagan culture that feeds on worthless things and promotes and justifies lying.

## **D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)**

1. Referring to pages IV-60 through IV-66, ask them to share what they learned about **Weakness**.
2. Turn to page IV-68. Take turns sharing answers. Discuss strengths and weaknesses openly.
3. Turn to page IV-69. Take turns sharing the importance of the verses circled. Ask them to share why they are helpful.
4. Turn to page IV-72. Ask, "Which of letters "a" through "e" does the Devil hinder you?"
5. Turn to page IV-74, the "Three Qualities I Admire About My Partner(s)" exercise and do it.
6. Turn to page IV-75. Ask if each prayed and signed their name.

## **E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)**

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud for each other. Urge them to call each other during the week to see how the other person is doing. Perhaps they can pray together.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #5

**(Be Authentic)**

Time: 90 minutes

## A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Think about the possibility of a husband / wife, family cook out, or pizza party not during an **Embracing The Truth** get-together, but just to get to know one another.

## B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask them to share about a vacation or trip where everything that could have gone wrong, did!
2. Tell them to be real or **authentic! Ha!**

## C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page V-77. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them.
2. Ask, "Why do most people resist pouring their heart out to God?"

## D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Referring to pages V-78 through V-92, open the group up to sharing as the Lord leads. Talk about **Authenticity**, its benefits, and its dangers. Address a few of the **Nine Helps for the Hurting** that apply to you and those in your group. Encourage each sharer to take his or her time.
2. This may be the **first time** in their life, they have been given permission to pour their heart out. Don't let others interrupt, judge, preach at, or attempt to solve the problem, struggle, or difficulty. The person sharing just wants to know they are loved, valued, and understood. This is the time to listen attentively. **Grace them.**
3. If the person starts to cry, that is O. K. If you sense they need someone to pray for them, then either you pray or ask someone in the group to pray right then. If appropriate, stand or kneel by the person, put a hand on their shoulder, and then pray for God to comfort and restore.
4. Turn to pages V-93 and V-94. Talk about the various **Action Steps for the Hurting** that were circled. Also have them share what they wrote about describing themselves authentically.
5. Turn to page V-95 and ask if they prayed the prayer and signed their name.

## E. Close in prayer (10 minutes) Share requests and then pray for each other.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #6

## (Commit To Character)

Time: 90 minutes

### A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Have someone provide refreshments if possible.

### B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask what person in their past had the greatest influence on them in terms of godly character.
2. Be sure you share as well.

### C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page VI-97. Ask each Guest to share why the verse is helpful to them.
2. On the same page, referring to "Truth To Embrace", ask, "If you were walking through a deep, mountainous woods at night, how safe would your journey be without a flashlight?"

### D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Turn to page VI-101. Ask what were their impressions of **Battle Casualty**. How could this tragedy have been prevented?
2. Turn to page VI-105. Discuss answers in reference to Proverbs 15:33.
3. Turn to page VI-108. Take turns discussing numbers circled regarding **Choking Signs**.
4. Referring to page VI-111, discuss, openly, numbers circled regarding **False Supports** and **Mortal Enemies**. Be transparent and honest.
5. Referring to pages VI-116 through VI-118, discuss verses circled, written answers, and the crucial need for one to one, same sex accountability. Urge them to get a Man / Women of Honor!
6. Turn to page VI-119. Ask if each prayed and signed their name.

### E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud for each other. Urge them to call each other during the week to see how the other person is doing. Perhaps they can pray together.



# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #7

## (Pour Out, Release, and Praise)

Time: 90 minutes

### A. Arrival

1. Greetings as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Have someone provide refreshments if possible.

### B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask what was the happiest or most fulfilling year of their lives and why?
2. Be sure you share as well.

### C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page VII-125.
2. Ask, "What happens to our souls when we praise and give thanks to God?"

### D. Share answers, insights, and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Turn to page VII-127. Ask what is the main difference between **performing** and **being** faithful?
2. Referring to pages VII-130 and VII-131, discuss why Psalm 62:8 is freeing. Share the "I felt" answers.
3. Referring to pages VII-134 through VII-135, discuss, Death Cycle, Life Preserver, Life Cycle. circled verses.
4. Turn to page VI-137. Ask, "Are any of you struggling with forgiving and releasing anyone?"
5. Turn to page VII-143. Discuss answers regarding Jehoshaphat and his response to God.
6. Turn to page VII-145. Ask if each prayed and signed their name.
7. Turn to page VI-146. Ask them if they sense God leading them to Host-Lead a new small group (mixed) or one to one (same sex) through **EMBRACING THE TRUTH**. When will they start?

### E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)

Share requests and then take turns praying out loud for each other. Urge them to call each other during the week to see how the other person is doing. Perhaps they can pray together. Encourage them to start or maintain the discipline of **regular prayer and devotional** times. Keeping a journal is best. Keep praying for God to raise up their Men / Women of Honor.

# SPECIFIC HOST-LEADER GUIDELINES GET-TOGETHER #8

(Love The Lord)

Time: 90 minutes

## A. Arrival

1. Greetings, as Guest(s) arrive(s).
2. Have someone provide refreshments if possible.

## B. Warm up (10 minutes)

1. Ask which Key so far was the most helpful or encouraging in meeting specific needs.
2. Be sure you share as well.

## C. Share the Memory Verse (10 minutes)

1. Take turns sharing the Memory Verse on page VIII-147.
2. Ask, "Why is loving God and neighbor more important than anything else?"

## D. Share answers, insights,-and opinions from this week's Key material (60 minutes)

1. Referring to pages VIII-151 and VIII-152 and, discuss the differences between **Guilt** and **Grace Motivation**.
2. Referring to pages VIII-54 and VIII-155, discuss the difference between the **Loving Self/ God** drawings!
3. Turn to page VIII-156. Openly discuss the **Arch Idols** that were- circled. On page VIII-157, did anyone sign and date their name?
4. Referring to pages VIII-158 to VIII- 162, discuss answers to questions relating to Delight and Gaze.
5. Turn to page VIII-164. This is the **Black Dot** page. Ask what they first saw. Did they see a lot of white after gaining a biblical perspective?
6. Turn to page VIII-168. Ask who are we loving when we love the least. (Matthew 25:34-40)
7. Turn to page VIII-169. Discuss the three qualities of love, each needs now. (I Corinthians 13:1-8)
8. Turn to page VIII-170. Read out loud the quote from **The Saving Life of Christ**. If we commit ourselves to God, is He, then, able and willing to lead, direct, and provide?
9. Turn to page VIII-174. Ask, "Do any of you, like me, struggle at times trying to fly by the instruments of faith? Do we demand more landmarks to see our Way?"
10. Please have each Guest fill put the Evaluation Sheet right now and give them to you. Then please mail them to our-address on. the bottom of that sheet. Thank you and God bless you!

## E. Close in prayer (10 minutes)

Jim & Barbara's Passion:



"To help marriages, families, and individuals find lasting hope and a future in the Lord Jesus Christ." Jeremiah 29:11-14, Deuteronomy 31:8

Our 1<sup>st</sup> Priority:

"Undivided love for Jesus and His Word." Psalm 86:11

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Jim & Barbara Grunseth  
W4760 Steeple Chase Way  
Elkhorn, WI 53121

262-642-5092

Jim's cell/text: 262-745-4160

Barbara's cell/text: 262-745-9653

Jim E-Mail: [jgrunseth@centurylink.net](mailto:jgrunseth@centurylink.net)

Barbara's E-Mail: [rberrybarb@centurylink.net](mailto:rberrybarb@centurylink.net)

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