Into The Light

Mark 4:22, Matthew 10:26, Luke 8:17, 1 Corinthians 4:5

"For there is nothing hidden
which will not be revealed,
nor has anything been kept secret
but that it should come to light."

by

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Preface

The journey behind this book has been a life dedicated to understand the process of growing closer to God. First it involved experiencing a spiritual transformation through the practices of prayer, meditation, self-examination, confession, repentance, restitution, service, humbling of self, forgiveness, mercy, truth, justice, and more resulting in healing, purifying, and cleansing. This included a steady focus upon the sensations involved.

The fact that people can grow and change in character proved to be real and achievable resulting in spiritual freedom. My journey with God involved choices to change inwardly and outwardly. At 18 years old I was in a special education program with poor social and reading skills. I was an addict with skills in the street. I transformed into a man with a Master's degree in education and counseling. I became a Licensed Professional Counselor and Licensed Independent Substance Abuse Counselor in the state of Arizona. (I let these licenses expire in 2007 for spiritual reasons)

Around the year 2000 I found the Bible and went to church. I expected to find people who were spiritually wise, but I was disappointed. I was hurt by my expectations. I attended different churches expecting to find people who were wise in the will of God, but was disappointed. I was confused about why the church teaching methods would be at such a low level—see Webb's "Depth of Knowledge." People taught with words instead of demonstrations. Sermons and lectures are the weakest form of teaching.

When I began sharing my experiences with christians in doing the will of God I experienced people changing the subject, becoming awkwardly silent, or walking away. I was inspired to better understand why. It was easy to find people theorizing, but difficult to find people transforming.

I thought maybe if I found the right scripture verses, they would hear and do them. I created a year long study of different character topics using concordance style Biblical research. I did a pilot group for a few months, but it never seemed to go further than theorizing.

I researched pre-conception and found a book written for the C.I.A.. It was created to help people guard against their own personal bias when doing international mediation. I found a description about a study on preconceived beliefs. It described how once people form a belief it will

then require extra evidence to prove their belief wrong. Here's how I see it. Learning truth reveals error. As we are shown the right way, we subsequently learn how we are wrong. This is rarely comfortable. We must continue revealing our errors to learn the path for growth and correction.

I researched cognitive bias and found over 100 different described common types—search Cognitive Bias Codex. I researched varieties of deception; Group Think, Asch Conformity, Learned Helplessness, Milgram Obedience, Self-fulfilling Prophecy, and more. The human brain each day is filled with faulty assumptions, misperceptions, and misunderstandings. This is a proven reality. We error in our assumptions daily, but don't see it.

My soul was convicted to research and create materials that might help others better experience God. I decided to use the first and great commandment as the cornerstone. Then I used the Bible to learn how it described God. I found the Bible describing God with terms like; compassion, merciful, forgiving, not partial, just, true, righteous, good, loving, spirit, and more. Obviously, the great command instructs Christians to increasingly love such principles with their inward all. But it's a choice.

God gives us a choice to pursue either good or evil and such actions will bring consequences—Deuteronomy 30:11-20, Ezekiel 18, John 15:5-8. I did an extensive concordance study to learn how the Bible described good and evil and began putting it into practice. I used the results to create the "Good and Evil Quick Reference" included in this book.

I've practiced this process with successes and failures for over 35 years. I've learned through my failures because I kept showing up to examine myself to see how I can better do the will of God. Testing my assumptions, perceptions, and learnings is necessary, because I have a mind full of errors. This book is for those who make spiritual mistakes and are willing to look at them long enough to find good solutions and walk in them.

The magic happens during and after applying corrections. Putting on the yoke of Christ will involve doing what Christ did. What we do proves our faith. When my inward being is growing in the likeness of Christ, my life is better. There truly is nothing better in life than experiencing improvement with God, sincerely doing the will of God. It's a process that grows love and peace inwardly and outwardly. Growing in righteousness will bring feelings—sensations of being right.

Introduction

Luke 7:50 Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.”

Many times in the Bible when Jesus heals someone the credit is given to the person’s faith. Jesus credits “your faith” for healing. It’s what we believe that forms us. Our choices and actions impact our faith. We can change the course of our faith through corrections, if we believe.

This book will describe a pathway to walk better in the will of God. Of course like any other training, we will need to go at it with self-discipline, willingness, and readiness. Belief without correction misses the mark.

Moving Into the light is about facing truth about ourselves. When our bodies are sick the physician looks squarely at the problem to learn the facts. The facts are then communicated clearly. We may even learn that we’ve made bad choices which caused us to be harmed. The physician will describe a clear course of action for healing. Then it will be up to us to put into practice a healthier lifestyle. God teaches us to examine our spiritual behavior and apply corrective actions for improvements.

This book is an attempt to speak spiritual formation truth regardless of bias, feelings, or preferences. It’s not designed to fit in with mainstream thought. It’s goal is to help us see spiritual facts within our faith and to improve. It’s to be direct, bold, and firm for correction in God’s good.

The proper use of the Bible will involve us changing and becoming “thoroughly equipped for every good work” 2 Timothy 3:16-17. If we are not equipped for good work, we can investigate ourselves for improvement. It’s good to humbly check our reasons for lack of growth.

We can change. In fact, we can change a lot. Many people do. We will need to choose it with our hearts and minds. With change, often comes struggle. We can learn how struggle is a natural part of improvement and not our enemy. A much better life can come. We can rely upon God’s good more than our own trained ideas. We can. Like all growth, this takes time, perseverance, and staying the course. Completing the course is necessary in order to be trained. All this and more will be described in this book. Read 2 Peter 1:5-9

Because the Bible tells me . . .

Ephesians 5:8-14 For you were once darkness, but now *you are* light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose *them.* For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

Therefore He says:
"Awake, you who sleep,
Arise from the dead,
And Christ will give you light."

James 1:22-25 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it,* and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Romans 2:29 but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.

For best results:

Find the section with the "Good and evil quick reference." Print a copy, take a picture with your smart device, and keep it with you to use as a tool to compare and contrast your own thoughts, attitudes, desires, words goals, demeanor, and behaviors. Think how to guide your thoughts into better alignment with God's good. Grow your focus upon it with action.

Our thoughts are to abide in God. We can't read ourselves into it, we must act and experience God's good for such experiences to work within us.

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Good & evil quick reference

Romans 12:9 NKJV “Behave Like a Christian”
Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is

1. Truth, no partiality, heeding the word

2. Humble, serving, contrite

3. Seeking good, knowing good, abhor
   evil, repentance

4. Peace, love, compassion, mercy

5. Charitable deeds, lending

6. Zeal, perseverance, labor

7. Forgiveness, caring for enemies, not to

1. Deceit, false lips, flattery, hypocrisy

2. Pride, arrogance, vanity

3. Seeking evil, thinking evil, avoiding good,
   covet, envy, rebellion, ungodliness

4. Malice, clamor, bitterness, wrath, anger

5. Not giving or helping others

6. Seeking comforts, sloth, avoiding struggle

7. Holding grudges, vengeful thinking,

Malice - desiring ill will or misfortune of others

Clamor - making lots of noise to agitate

Hypocrisy (hypokrisis) - playacting,
“any person who was wearing a figurative mask and pretending to be someone or something they were not”

https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/hypocrite-meaning-origin

Progression Flow Chart

Learn Good & Evil
Managing inward good & evil

Dealing with evil	Growing good
Identify, write down, & confess our own Evil thoughts, choices, & practices. Bring into the light—sincere truth.	Identify, write down, & describe our own good thoughts, choices, and practices. See the truth in our good with facts.
Learn affects of Evil in our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, & relationships.	Learn affects of Good in our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, & relationships.
Practice humility, remorse, contrition, and learn their spiritual purpose. See how they are good in helping us repent and correct our spiritual errors.	Learn good sensations through practicing; charity, helpfulness, caring, kindness, compassion, sincere love, encouragement, peace, & mercy.
Learn Good sensations through experiencing forgiveness, repentance, patience, service, choosing God's good over our own understanding, restoration of harm done, sincere love, self-denial, long-suffering, and truth.	Learn Good through; continued growth, perseverance, endurance, standing firm, teaching by demonstration, renewal of mind, new formation in Good conduct, and obeying the great commandment with improved corrective actions.
Learn what it is like to be at peace with a clean conscience and purified heart. Understand the comfort this brings. Witness values and interests change more to love and belonging.	Learn the Good sensations through helping others purify, cleanse, and improve inward conduct with Good. See how helping others helps us too.

Learn it, think it, do it, feel it

Learn it

Most if not all behavior is learned. We choose to follow patterns of behavior often modeled by others and then once it is practiced over time it becomes habitualized. They often become our personality and identity. Renewing our mind and habits will require a willingness to be different. We make the time to learn God's good with the intention of practicing it.

Think it

We set our minds to think how to better practice God's good each day. We pray for strength to keep focussed upon learning good and evil with the goal of applying good corrections. We meditate and ponder God's good for directions on how to do it better. We examine our inward selves to learn our wants, desires, expectations, and assumptions. We test all things.

Do it

Behavior development begins when we put it into practice. How well we practice it will train ourselves how well we do it. How often we practice it will affect how quick we learn it. We must remember that development of God's good will require resisting development of evil. Old trained ways will unconsciously seek to be played out, not because we are evil or bad, but because they are hard wired. Mindfulness of our inward activity and God's good is required. We assess our actions for growth in love and peace.

Feel it

Feelings happen. It's best to practice being present with them. We invest our time to learn from them. Spiritual reality involves many feelings both comfortable and uncomfortable. Sincere empathy is a must. Emotional understanding is necessary. We seek growth with sincere compassion. There exists within us all a mass of mental, emotional, and spiritual unexplainable reactions. We are to grow love and peace. Societies guide many into repression and avoidance of feelings. Being hard hearted, stiff-necked, and callous is to miss the mark. We are to ponder our emotions, search our thoughts behind them, and seek God for direction. Ponder the experiences of being humble, contrite, supplication, and mourning.

Formation Benefits

1. Feeling right with who we are and what we do.
2. Recovery from bad habits, obsessions, and addictions.
3. Make healthier choices, learn new options, experience inward healing.
4. Decreased stress and worry.
5. Less rushed and more patient.
6. Decreased fear and increased faith. Content and confident.
7. Improved relationships with sincerity, honesty, and compassion.
8. Improved self-awareness and spiritual understanding.
9. Increased peace, calmness, and experiences with freedom.
10. Increased clarity of focus upon the present.
11. Improved financial decisions and stability.
12. Easier to sleep and peace of mind. Clean conscience.
13. Decreased loneliness and increased belonging.
14. Improved empathy and emotional understanding.
15. Being appreciated, respected, and valued by others.
16. Feeling fulfilled and accomplished. Knowing we helped others.
17. Witnessing others being helped and experiencing the shared joy in it.
18. Experiencing what amazing grace feels like over and over again.
19. Seeing hurt relationships transformed and renewed.
20. A deeper inward relating to scriptures across the whole Bible.
21. Improved conflict management and relationship skills.
22. Increased understanding of empathy and how it is good.
23. Improved time management.
24. Having purpose and goals set to better ourselves and others.
25. Knowing love and how God is there.

Conscience

Titus 1:15 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and **conscience** are defiled.

Our conscience is a moral coach seeking to help us with God's good. We are to practice giving improved attention to it. Time and effort is needed.

John 8:9 Then those who heard *it,* being convicted by *their* **conscience**, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest *even* to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When our conscience feels convicting, we ought to learn from it. We can meditate and pray about it. We can discuss it with others.

Acts 24:16 This *being* so, I myself always strive to have a **conscience** without offense toward God and men.

We are to strive for a clean conscience. This involves inward activity.

We can strive to learn and discern our conscience—what it teaches us. Think about the difference between someone who is confident and someone who is pretending to be confident. The one pretending knows they are wrong, but tries to fool others. The one with confidence knows they are right and will be better situated to see through the foolishness of those who pretend. Being right is seeing right.

Striving to have a conscience without offense toward God and men will require sincere truth. We are to get real with who we are inwardly. If we are not right, how then can we see what is right? We correct our falsehood.

2 Corinthians 1:12 For our boasting is this: the testimony of our **conscience** . . .

Our conscience will testify our inward condition. Improvement with God's good will improve our conscience. Our conscience will testify and affect all things spiritual around us. As we experience God's good and see that it is good, our understanding grows, our conscience is cleansed, and our faith improves. Confidence will grow with continued experience.

Levels of deception

The following inward responses can be below the conscious level. It's good to boldly think about these behaviors long enough to help bring them to the conscious level. Failing to do so could be practicing levels 1-4. We are to carefully learn spiritual growth instructions until we can see clearly how to walk in them better. Choosing to avoid growth can likely fit into one of the following descriptions of self-deception. The process of getting to level 8 can take time with uncomfortable facing of inward truth. We must bring to light our inward spiritual realities each day.

1. Blindness—I don't have any deception. Just won't see it.
2. Distraction—Change the subject, redirect, brief acknowledgement followed by thinking about, talking about, or doing something else.
3. Hiding—If I acknowledge this truth, it might scare someone. I know it, but I won't talk about it, because it's bad. It's hurtful. Must protect others from this truth. Let's just stay positive and act as if everything is fine and dandy. More helping others will make up for it. Ignore the evil and just focus on what feels nice. Smile and move on. Don't make others uncomfortable, that's bad.
4. Ya but—Blaming, reasoning, excusing, and other forms of avoiding responsibility for own choices and actions. It's someone else's fault. "It can't be my fault." "I had no choice." "Everyone else is doing it."
5. Hopeless & helpless—Acknowledge evil with the idea that it's something that can't be fixed or changed. It's who I am or how I'm made.
6. Not that bad—Acknowledge evil with justifications on how it's normal and okay. Can't see the damage. I'm better now, that's good enough. Resting on laurels or comparing self to others who are worse off. Normalizing evil.
7. Faithless trials—Acknowledge it, apply action without diligent heart/mind focus. It's like taking action without paying close attention to the thoughts and feelings involved. Lack of willingness to face the hurt, pain, fear, anger, and bitterness. More outward application than inward.
8. Surrender—Broken, humbled, done. Ready to give up control, be a servant of spiritual Good, and trust the process. Ready to face inward spiritual reality, confess, repent, and begin a new life. Ready to die to self, put on a new yoke, and give inward all to God. We apply diligent cognitive daily effort to protect ourselves against deception, seeking to control others—fixing, and false presentations/hypocrisy.

God's collective good

Our goal is to grow in all of God's good, the collective good. The goal is not to seek God like a buffet, partaking in what we want and neglecting what we don't. The goal is to seek all of God, even parts we like the least. If we skip out on certain aspects of God's instructions, we may miss out on some saving grace. Who knows, we might miss out on a lot of it.

1 Corinthians 13 describes how having all knowledge and faith without love leads to *nothingness*. It also breaks down into various character traits and applications of what love involves. We can take away from this teaching two important lessons: how to better understand love; and that if we do not partake in that love, our faith may amount to *nothing*.

Love described here involves a collection of dos and don'ts. Keep in mind that growth in discernment is needed to understand the spiritual impact of them. The continued practices of inward self-examination, critical thinking, and honest collaboration with others about our own good and evil can go a long way in building spiritual discernment. But we must sincerely, honestly, and humbly practice it.

Don'ts—Love is not proud, self-seeking, evil thinking, or enjoying iniquity. The practice of these can bring us to a nothingness experience.

Dos—Love is long-suffering, kind, humble, enjoying truth, patient, enduring, persevering, hopeful, and tolerant. The practice of these can bring joy, freedom, peace, fulfillment, blessings, and belonging.

We can be kind while dishonest. We can be friendly while insincere. We can be positive while self-seeking. We can be encouraging with false flattery. We can focus on the good we do while turning a blind eye to the evil we practice. We can partake in Biblical truth we find acceptable, while avoiding Biblical truth we dislike. This can be rejoicing in half truths. We can then lack in long-suffering, enduring all things, and believing all things.

The point here is to shine light on how imperative it is to acknowledge all things—good and evil, to see the truth, the whole truth, our inward truth. Improving is not a journey in self-condemnation or shaming. It's a journey using good inward corrective practices like forgiveness and mercy. Learning our sin convicts us into corrective action, but does not shame us.

Choosing Light

Points of light

John 1:5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

Growth with God comes by doing the will of God. Until we grow new good in God's light, we cannot comprehend light nor understand the evil we practice. Our spiritual insights will remain dull. Matthew 13:15

The choices we make each day with good and evil involves our heart, mind, and soul. It's so vastly complex words alone are insufficient for understanding. We must have Godly good experiences for better understanding—doing the will of God in ways that challenge us.

This book is to shine some light for inward spiritual formation. The way to know God deeper is to experience love deeper. Experiencing deeper love is to grow increasingly with the actions defined in 1 Corinthians 13. As we grow more into God's light we will become more aware of the evil within us. John 3:19-21, Mark 4:22, Luke 8:17, Luke 12:3, Romans 13:12, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Ephesians 5:13, 1 John 2:9

God created instructions on how to think and behave. The Bible describes how, but many will not follow the how. Being in the light is facing God's truth, how we are in error, and how to obey God better. Luke 1:79, Luke 8:16, Luke 11:36, John 11:10, John 12:46, Acts 26:18, Romans 2:19, 2 Corinthians 4:6, 2 Corinthians 6:14, Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, James 1:17, 1 Peter 2:9, 1 John 1:7

The light will show us corrective action. We are to walk in it. No correction means no growth. Practice Proverbs 12:1. There is an old saying, "If nothing changes, nothing changes." The Bible teaches inward change, correction, renewal, formation, and growth. Thoughts promoting no growth are not good. We must practice ending thoughts blocking growth. This book will light a path to make that happen, but each of us will need to walk it. This book is for people who are ready to commit themselves to face personal truth, walk with correction, and move more into the light—the revealing and correcting light of God.

Who's your God

Matthew 4:10 Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve.' "

We serve some idea, desire, habit, principle, or belief all day everyday. We inwardly convince ourselves consciously or unconsciously where to go and what to do. These thoughts flow out from our faith. The truth is that our faith changes moment to moment. We can be one way in one moment and another the next. Growing with God involves choices to be with God.

Luke 16:13 "No servant can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon."

We must be in the truth about who and what we serve. This means continued thorough self-examination. Being in the light does not mean with closed eyes. The light helps us to see. We pay attention to our words and choices. We can each day review our actions and attitudes. We can look at where we go and with whom we choose to associate.

We often do what we believe must get done. We can honestly face ourselves with investigative questions. We can ask ourselves, "Did I perform a thorough self-examination today and how well did I look?" If no or not well, then it wasn't a high enough priority. It means we trusted in other actions because we believed them to be more important. If yes, then it was a high enough priority. Such questions can be humbling and convicting, but remember, it's good to be humble and to repent.

Our course is to discover how to walk better with God's good, with progressive improvements. We stay long enough with our problems to find solutions and then immediately put them into action. If God is our solution we will search out new ways to grow in corrective action with God's good.

We can each day repeatedly ponder questions like, "Why did I do that?", "What was I thinking?", "What would God have me do?", and "How can I do that better next time?" This is a forward thinking exercise focused to grow, reshape, and improve our inward selves with God's righteousness.

Be Positive

Imagine a mind that is so situated toward staying 'positive' that it develops a system of thoughts to keep it focused in that direction. Whenever anything negative—uncomfortable would become revealed the person would quickly and smoothly turn the subject back toward something 'positive.' But how well are we correcting our discernment to what God describes as positive and good?

Being positive with God means owning our errors and correctively abide more with God's good. We learn good and evil and what they feel like. We see how practicing evil corrupts and good cleanses. We learn the effects of them, reflect upon it, and share about it. This is conduct that is positive.

Being positive with Jesus is likely speaking convicting truth. That's what Jesus did. It's about lifting up the humble and broken while humbling the proud and haughty. It's behaving in ways that bring both hope and conflict. Being positive means we speak corrective truth with demonstrations. We will have a good testimony with a transformed life.

Practicing ways that opposes the will of God and calling it positive is deception. Self-seeking, dishonesty, false-flattery, idolatry, loving money, obeying fear or pride, harboring bitterness or resentment, and insincerity are not positive. Lying to make people happy is still lying. Will we have the courage to teach this truth with possibility of people running away?

We must build our discernment between good and evil to recognize practiced deception within our circles. "By their fruits you will know them." Matthew 7:20. Being more in the light reveals the darkness around us.

Positive — Making time to contemplate, pray, discuss, struggle with, and demonstrate God's good with growth and correction. Being right with God.

Negative — Practicing evil without growth in God's good. Condoning evil.

Good speech — describing experience with God's good, what it looks and feels like, and how correcting evil with good is good. Good testimony.

Being positive has nothing to do with the sort of feelings evoked, but instead, the sort of character encouraged and developed.

Darkness

Luke 11:35 Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not **darkness**.

The world is full of darkness and it will want us to cooperate with it. Walking in the light is to be a contrarian to the world and even our own dark trained ways. Many of us are so trained in darkness we believe it is normal and therefore correct. Walking in more truth and sincerity will be different. It feels different. We must have faith that being different with God is good. We must become aware of our dark ways and abide in good.

It can be difficult to stop doing what we are trained to do. If we choose the yoke of Christ, we choose to set aside other ungodly ways we are trained to do. We apply concentrated effort with God's ways, to do them. We decrease attention to evil—darkness and increase attention to good—light.

Jesus instructs, "take heed" which means to be careful. That means we improve our attention with inward good and evil, to discern it better. We continue to grow our understanding. Low understanding of light and darkness develops weak discernment. Why would we choose to have a weak spiritual understanding? Because repeating what we know is easier. Also, the world will resists correction and anything we do that points to it.

The affects of darkness can be subtle, moderate, or extreme. Our pursuing pride, self-seeking, deception, insincerity—pretending, anger, bitterness, idolatry, etc. corrupts and destroys in various degrees and levels. We can feel empty inside, alone, disconnected, loveless, miserable, and the world will provide medication, counseling, etc. Why is it so hard to fathom the solution for loveless to be more love? Because few really understand love, even therapists. We must improve our love. Those who love, know God.

To know if something is true or not is to test it. This often requires an open mind—willing to learn something new, even if it is vastly different. Patience, perseverance, and endurance are part of growth. We will need to improve our practice of walking in the sandals of Jesus, or at least the apostles. We will need to increasingly give ourselves over toward being the kind of person Jesus teaches us to be, to understand it. That means we will be different inside and out. As we grow we can learn new insights into the spiritual way of life, how it is good, right, healing, and powerful.

Reading vs. doing

There is a knowledge argument called “Mary’s room.” It is good to ponder the point of this argument often. Look it up and read it. Talk about it with others. There are beliefs that reading is sufficient. God commands experiences with God’s ways. Merely reading limits growth and fails to fulfill God’s commands and instructions. When we read instructions, we can then learn how to do them better, and learn through the doing of them.

Reading is absolutely necessary to learn the instructions of what to do. But if we don’t do what’s instructed, what good are they? It’s like reading a recipe and then not cooking. We would starve. Who wants to starve? Let’s face some truth about reading. Reading is easy. It doesn’t take much effort, risk, energy, or struggle to read. No change is needed, only attention. No risk is involved. It’s the same thing with watching videos or listening to sermons. A dog can sit through that. People sleep through it. Does that sound like something Jesus would promote? Not likely.

Jesus gives instructions on what to do so that we would do what’s instructed. Only by some form of deception would we merely marvel at the words and continue lacking in productivity. We must investigate this self-deception. Lacking productivity in doing the will of God misses the mark. We are to do good, increase in it, and learn from the experiences.

Is there be a difference between reading about Jesus and walking with Jesus? Is there a difference between reading about fasting and fasting? What about prayer, meditation, self-examination, confession, repentance, service, forgiveness, mercy, or giving? What if we did everything Jesus teaches us to do without excuses, to learn from the experiences? Those who do what Jesus teaches will understand what Jesus teaches.

This book is about experiencing God through active inward growth in doing God’s good. We must choose to leave the fence of inactivity and step into a new way of living with God. The world is full of churches with book studies and lectures. We are to be about personal testimonies with powerful spiritual experiences. We can teach a new path because we are walking it. If we are not walking it, we shouldn’t try to teach it. Jesus did not lower this goal for the sake of anyone’s feelings. Struggle and conflict are part of our journey. We share how we have grown, risks we have taken, sacrifices we have made, and how life is better with God.

Why not be better?

Matthew 11:20 Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of his miracles had been performed, because they did not repent.

Jesus teaches "because they did not repent." Repent means to move towards God—do the will of God. Repentance has significant spiritual consequences. Repentance means a refocus. No repentance could mean, no growth. More with God = better spiritual life—soul. Repentance is key.

A willing and ready faith—belief is needed. What does your faith tell you? Does it tell you God's is that important and worth it? Does it tell you to delay? What thoughts in your mind do you choose to obey? Do you know?

Why not choose to be better with God? Review the levels of deception page in this book. Each of us can inwardly have a reason/delusion to delay improvement. Our instinct and unconscious quick reaction to our own understanding bias will likely nudge us away from even considering this question. Few will sincerely get honest with themselves about their spiritual choices and consequences. Being in the light is to increase awareness of our spiritual choices and consequences.

Inwardly we each have a narrative about our spiritual life. We ought to investigate it further so we can improve it. Our inward reasoning will guide us to repent or not. Either growth matters or it doesn't. If it means something—really means something—to the point of us doing it, then we will do it? We can! As we grow in better practices, we can grow spiritually. So why not? What reasons do we teach ourselves not to grow? We ought to look at them closer and make corrections or at least no them well.

Why not reduce self-seeking, pride, bitterness, hurry, insincerity, deception, idolatry, and other forms of evil? Why not be inwardly better with God's love, peace, forgiveness, mercy, truth, justice, compassion, gentleness, and obedience to God. Discuss the reasons and learn.

Why not practice learning our feelings, thoughts, and sensations. Are we repressing, minimizing, or avoiding growth? Do we have sensations like love and loneliness? Are we willing to *pay attention to them,* to learn their purposes. Or will we neglect them leading ourselves to spiritual apathy?

Spiritual Apathy

Proverbs 21:16 A man who wanders from the way of understanding Will rest in the assembly of the **dead**.

Do you know what it means "assembly of the dead?" Read Proverbs 21.

Matthew 8:22 But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me, and let the **dead** bury their own **dead**."

If we cannot discern the living from the dead, we may be suffering spiritual apathy. Spiritual apathy develops from a lack of sincere practice with God's good. Many can become hyper focused upon tasks like; growing our income—promotions, becoming physically fit, building intelligence, and service work, but yet lacking in God's love. The heart is neglected.

Groups are created to help rescue people from problems. Often times the group's content focuses upon problems. Experience with growing in love is rarely discussed. Instead discussions focus upon problems like; anger, addiction, lust, etc. Although God is the stated solution, few participants will share how they love their enemy, humble themselves, repent, or confess their ungodly ways. Prioritizing God is a known goal, but few will share how they inwardly make it happen and the will of God they practice.

The solution to spiritual apathy will involve improved sincere participation with God's good. We must grow in doing the will of God and ponder the spiritual senses involved. Our focus and conscious awareness upon the will of God must practiced each day. We must ponder love, what it feels like, and what our thoughts are telling us about it. We must move and think peacefully and grow attention to the senses and feelings involved.

It may, at times, feel like a spiritual work out; to keep focused spiritually. We can pray for strength and courage to do what we don't want to do because we know it is the right thing to do. It will be good for us and God to be doing it. Thinking differently will be choosing to develop new pathways within our brains. That means renewal and new creation. Note the Bible's use of words like; perseverance, endurance, diligence, and effort. Learn why they are used. They are used for a good reason, because we are to do it. We ought to partake in them to grow spiritually with love and peace.

Ready for light

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the **light** of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the **light** of life.”

Choosing “the light of life” involves setting our hearts and minds upon that life, the good life. The evil already trained within us will not want it. We must practice choosing reliance upon God instead of our trained evil ways.

Matthew 6:10 Jesus teaches us to pray. “Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as *it is* in heaven.”

As we practice praying the way Jesus taught and demonstrated, we can evaluate ourselves to see how willing and ready we are to do more precisely what the prayer says to do. How willing and ready are we to choose the light of God and do His will? Are we sincerely and honestly willing and ready to do His will? This also involves self-denial. Are we willing and ready set aside or let go our wants, desires, interests, entitlements, goals, and demands—anything blocking our improvement with God?

This is an imperfect process of progressing toward that which is perfect, God. It can be a slow and gradual process with moments of profound amazement. Will you choose to grow in loving God with your all?

Philippians 2:14-16 Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Choosing “the light of life,” to walk in it, is to choose to begin anew with God, to do God’s will instead of our own. As followers of God, we are no longer deciding which way to go, but looking to God for direction. God teaches less where to go and more how to go from the inside out. Wherever we are, we ought to seek “the light of life.” We ought to first seek inward good. The more we can inwardly be the light of God, the more souls God can save. It is God’s light, not ours, that saves. But we must choose it, to have it and keep it in us, so many can be saved.

The Inward Battle

Inward Action

1 Timothy 6:12, 2 Timothy 4:7, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, James 4, 1 Peter 2, Ephesians 6:10-20

By what principles do we inwardly arm ourselves with? How well do we prepare our minds and hearts with the armor of God? How are we sincere, honest, compassionate, patient, peace bringing, loving, serving, tolerant, and generous? These are all signs of good fruit we are to produce. Matthew 7:15,16,20; Philippians 1:11; Hebrews 12:11; James 3:18

As we improve our inward self-examination we can discover evil thoughts, desires, and practices. There lies the battle. Yet we must begin to see, the corrections God desires us to have, even if merely small doses. We must intentionally identify parts of ourselves to improve. First we identify corruptive thoughts and then we bring in or add Godly good ones. We practice this throughout each day to train ourselves into seeing more of God's good and how it is good when we abide in it. 1 Corinthians 10:5

We have unconscious trained evil responses seeking to be played out within us everyday. Our practicing Godly good can be choosing to situate ourselves in a juxtaposition or cognitive dissonance. We will experience ourselves practicing evil even while we know it is evil. This does not mean we are evil. We all sin and have evil trained within us. Growth is more about progress than perfection. We measure our progress and rejoice with the good fruit as it's produced.

Condemnation of self or others is not good. We focus more upon the good we can do and encourage ourselves to do it. We choose to set aside our own understanding and walk better with the will of God. Proverbs 3:5

Retraining involves concentration and struggle. The moment we choose to give up the struggle—to stay with God, is the moment we can begin to fall away. Psalm 101:3, Luke 8:13, Hebrews 6:6, Romans 11:16-25

This is not a sprint, but a marathon. We must find a pace we can keep for the long haul. It is better to slow down to a drip than to stop completely.

Price Range

Once upon a time in a land really close by Jose bought a new car. Jose was really proud of his new car and called a friend named Susie. Susie was envious and wanted to get a car too. She said, “I want to buy a car.” Jose asked, “what kind of car do you want?” Susie responded, “what kind can I get?” Jose asked, “what’s your price range?” Susie thought about it and said, “I want something cheap, but still good.” There is an old saying, “you get out of it what you put into it.” The same goes with our faith.

What price did Jesus pay? What price did Jesus teach the disciples to pay? Why don’t teachers instruct disciples similar to the way Jesus instructed disciples? What price are we paying with our time and effort?

When the whole world seems to invest a few hours a week in their walk with God, that then becomes the norm and expectation. Many do what they see others do. What if we followed Jesus more than the crowd? What if we learned more efficiently how self-examination, confession, repentance, restitution, prayer, and meditation done sincerely and honestly brought increased freedom, peace, and feeling inwardly whole?

Most people who have invested themselves in such formative ways can testify that a better spiritual experience happened as a result. Following the instructions in the Bible better produces a better spiritual experience. Jesus, Moses, and many other characters in the Bible emphasize giving our inward all to God. Yet many of us develop justifications, excuses, rationalizations, assumptions, and opinions that lower investment of heart, mind, soul, and strength. Deception happens. When life gets good enough, the good works seem to settle down and a sense of coasting occurs. Auto pilot faith is easier and often the behavior of the crowd.

Here’s good truth. People who have persevered in the process described above know better that giving their inward all is better. People who have not invested in said ways often speak as if the know, when they don’t, that such practices are not necessary. Why would people act as if they know, when they don’t? More importantly, why would we listen to them? Isn’t it best to listen to those who really know, who have walked the walk? The cost of growth with God and most things in life involve investment of time, effort, focus, correction, and improvement. It is not doing the same thing expecting different results. Many have said “that’s insanity.”

The price demonstrated

Jesus discipled daily. Disciples lived with Jesus. Think about the time and dedication invested. Pay close attention to the corrective language from Jesus and the Apostles. Look at the first commandment—at the word "ALL." Think why it was used three times. What would your "all" look like with your time and effort? How have you practiced it?

Here are some Biblical terms to ponder; diligent, effort, night and day, train, grow, better, more, increase, perfect, and correct. Beware teachers who oversimplify being with Jesus. Learn the difference between grace and cheap grace. Learn the price Paul paid for his teachings. Can you invest more of yourself to learn and grow with God? How so or why not?

Read Luke 14:25-33

Teachers seek out new christians to spread the word of God, who have paid a minimal price in time and correction. It's like sending out of shape people to teach how to be fit. This system can easily misrepresent God's truth and few will search themselves for how this is a problem. The truth is that we cannot teach someone a path we have not walked ourselves.

Good testimonies teach better than books. Good testimonies share and demonstrate the process of renewal. Good testimonies sincerely and truthfully describe a price paid for growth with God. Such testimonies reveal risk, fear, change in character, and rewards of new thought choices.

Wise discernment will involve continuous thinking—separating facts from opinions. We must discern our learning carefully. Many will talk the talk without walking the walk. Will we discern the difference? We must practice comparing and contrasting what Jesus demonstrated and what we follow. If we are to follow Jesus, we are then to do better as Jesus did.

Sometimes the cost of growth involves changing our associations and the people who discourage us from growth. Many will say things like, "you're thinking too much" or "You're overcomplicating it." If we compare our efforts with the Bible character's then we will likely find we are not thinking enough. How did Jesus show the disciples to think or pray. The cost of discipleship is not cheap, because the resulting product is the greatest thing we could ever possibly experience.

Resist

1 Peter 5:8-9 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.

Are you resisting, steadfast in the faith? How discerning are you with good and evil? Do you even know what to resist? Do you believe the scripture about being vigilant? What does your faith guide you to do? Want to improve your faith with "the faith?"

James 4:7 Therefore submit to God. **Resist** the devil and he will flee from you.

We are to submit to God and resist evil. As we review good and evil we can investigate ourselves for what we resist. As we practice this self-discovery we can shine the light on some valuable spiritual truth.

Acts 7:51 *You* stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always **resist** the Holy Spirit; as your fathers *did,* so *do* you.

Questions to ponder: What is it to resist the Holy Spirit? Is it obeying God or not obeying God? Is it something else? Is it obeying evil? Can it be unconscious responses? If we know the good we ought to do, but don't do it, is that resisting the Holy Spirit? How so, or why not?

Since no-one is perfect and we all sin, that likely means we all participate in resisting God. We must learn to face the truth about our inward practices. Studying good and evil each day can improve our spiritual awareness.

Romans 13:12 Therefore whoever **resist**s the authority **resist**s the ordinance of God, and those who **resist** will bring judgment on themselves.

We can easily convince ourselves that our choice is good and right regardless of whether or not it agrees with God's instructions. It's always good to test our conclusions and understanding with critical thinking skills.

Shame

1 Corinthians 15:34 Awake to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God. I speak *this* to your **shame**.

Shame is not a comfortable experience, but one that is necessary to face, feel, sense, identify, and learn. It is a sensation like hot and cold created to guide us, for safety, to better discern good and evil. If we avoid, deny, or repress our shame, we may be closing a door on the Holy Spirit. Shame is a sensation, not a thought. Condemnation is not love, nor from God. We are not to practice it. We are to practice love, mercy, and forgiveness.

When children misbehave and a parent catches them, their faces drop and guilt is experienced. When we are caught doing wrong, if we have any sense of integrity, we can feel embarrassed, humbled, or afraid. These feelings and sensations exist within us and even interconnect us. This is a powerful spiritual reaction, if we can be present with it. But many hearts are hard and resist being present with it. Many avoid, repress, hide, and deny the inward experience. It gets pushed aside out of consciousness.

Inward formation requires our being present with such inward sensations. We must improve our hearts and minds to better experience love, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness. We are to inwardly learn what happens as we stay longer with sincere truth. The fear, shame, and humility involved as we own our wrongs can teach us. Our growth largely depends upon our being present with these underlying sensations.

Matthew 12:7 But if you had known what *this* means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the **guilt**less.

The goals are not the outward actions of love and mercy, but the inward spiritual developments that can come through our love and mercy. The more sincere and true our love, the better the outcome. The more present we can be with our own inward thoughts and sensations, the more present we can be with spiritual life.

Try some studies in the Bible on the words "Stiff-necked, hard heart, dull, guilt, shame." Examine yourself to see how you inwardly respond to sensations with guilt, shame, or even intimacy. Ponder them more.

Daily Process

Ponder God's character traits, learn how to inwardly practice and serve them, for they are Good.

Practice introspection identifying thoughts and feelings throughout the day. What was I thinking and feeling? Why did I choose . . . ? How are my thoughts with God?

Humble ourselves away from self-seeking, pride, vanity, idolatry, or other ungodly distractions.

Meditate upon the feelings and sensations of our doing Good and evil. Inwardly learn how Good is Good and evil is evil.

Pray for strength, courage, and direction to trust, obey, and do Good.

Identify struggles with evil, confess and discuss them, have mercy, and walk in forgiveness. Psalm 34:14

Slow down, take it easy, practice patience, walk peacefully.

Look for opportunities to do God's good today. Be spiritually ready, observant, and discerning. Practice spiritual connections.

Take comfort in the Good experienced, find the joy in it, and feel the affects of God's Good.

Empathetically and sincerely; compliment, comfort, encourage, and support others with love and truth. Let conviction happen when necessary.

Progress, not perfection. Improve awareness of progress. Tally up the good each day. Identify errors to better learn how to make improvements.

Teach by example, demonstration, and shared personal experiences. Be ready to describe own progress with real life examples.

Suffering is a Companion 1 Peter 3:17

Suffering for doing good is to be normalized. Improvements in life involve uncomfortable actions. Inward corrections and facing our mistakes can hurt our pride and popularity. Clinging to pride is clinging to evil. Our self-seeking ways can bring thoughts like, “but what’s in it for me,” “no-one else does it,” “why me,” “but that’s my time or money,” and “do I have to?” We ought to increasingly take our thoughts to God with a willing and humble attitude ready to submit ourselves to do God’s will.

Mark 8:34 When He had called the people to Himself, with His disciples also, He said to them, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.”

Doing the will of God will need to increasingly become our way of life. Our Godly good productivity is to increase while ungodly productivity is to decrease. That means more God’s way and less our own. This can be a slow shift in our identity. The trained evil within us can wither away as we continue to grow and develop good. It’s a transition and renewal process. It involves a dying to self, of our old ways, and growing new ways with God. This is rarely comfortable in the beginning. Afterwards, good fruit can develop with love, joy, and peace.

Mark 12:50 For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother.”

Suffering exists with building good character. It’s our trained attachment to evil that creates much of the suffering. Wishing suffering wasn’t there won’t help. Merely praying for God to do it *for us,* without our repentance, doesn’t work. We must examine ourselves, confess, and repent.

Suffering is not the goal. Love and peace is the goal. The suffering does not grow us, the new training in good grows us. Suffering without growth is just suffering. We must keep our focus upon growing good. We must watch closely for spiritual experiences with love and be present in our hearts and minds to learn from it. Suffering is part of the experience.

In what ways did Jesus suffer for teaching the path of righteousness? How did the Apostles suffer doing the will of God? Learn how it was necessary and good. 1 Peter 4:19, Philippians 1:27

Growing grace

Author's experience:

"Grace is real . . . through faith. If I have a faith that keeps me unproductive in God's good, I will be inwardly situated to miss it. This has been my experience. In humbling myself, my attitude, my resentments—bitterness, fear, etc. while opening my faith—mind—beliefs to the Spirit's direction—instruction, I can then inwardly step into a new faith experience—kingdom—realm of the Spirit. In this new experience with an open mind and heart to God, freedom from sin can happen, moment by moment. This sort of faith, centered to be God's vessel—clay, that is trusting and relying upon learning and experiencing God's good, can witness the sensation of healing grace flood in, filling the whole body. I'm referring to chills in the spine goodness. This is a belief—faith so powerful it can move mountains, yet with a shovel. It's the sort of faith where doubt dissolves into nothingness. Of course there are different variations and levels of this faith. I've found that grace comes more when my mind and heart are set upon God's good, to look for it and walk in it. Trusting God more usually has me abiding more in God's good. As I increase my inward being more in alignment with God, grace also grows. I'm not growing the grace, I'm growing in my cooperation with the grace giver."

Grace is a spiritual experience often resulting from our inward positioning to receive it. If we are positioned toward self-seeking, hurry, worry, and idolatry, we may not even notice it. As we train our inward senses toward seeking the free gift we can empower our souls to better experience it.

Bible verses

Matthew 17:20; Luke 19:17; Romans 4:16, 5:2, 9:32, 11:20, 12:6, 14:23; 2 Corinthians 8:7; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; Ephesians 2:8; 1 Timothy 5:12; Hebrews 11

2 Peter 3:18 but **grow** in the **grace** and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him *be* the glory both now and forever. Amen.

More grace comes to the humble than the proud. James 4:6, 1 Peter 5:5

Inward Learning Positions

Closed Mindsets

Rejecting
Believes info is irrelevant, incorrect, unwanted, unnecessary, or invalid. "This is a complete waste of my time."

Faking
Listening to be nice or socially appropriate. "Of course I'm learning, I'm here aren't I."

Indifferent
Don't really care. Talk all you want. It doesn't matter.
"Whatever"

Beginner Mindsets

Low Motivation
Interested with a desire to learn more, but to be fed the information with minimal inward investment.

Investigative
Asking questions, discussing with others, learning on own time, testing information, using multiple resources.

Connecting learnings
Putting together pieces of the puzzle. Aha moments. New inspiration & wanting more.

Trained Mindsets

Practicing/applying
Doing what it says. Trial and error. Developing skills, learning through mistakes, making corrections, gaining new abilities.

Teaching/demonstrating
Demonstrating change and growth. Producing good fruit. Explaining how …
"When I did …
I experienced …."

Creating Lessons
Real life stories, metaphors, parables, antidotes, examples, models, etc.

Mindset Continuum

Non-stick
All the info slips away. Nothing changed, because nothings changed.

Passive learning
Learn with the crowd. Follow and agree. Fit in. Wait for others to lead. Learning, but not mastering. Mainstream understanding.

Active Learning
Follow suggestions. Test ideas. Know through experience. New identity. Changed heart & mind.

Hypocrisy

Jesus emphasizes active faith with inward conditions. Read Matthew 23:25-28. Read it slowly and carefully. Jesus is pointing out inward activity that is ungodly and not good. Jesus uses the words in the NKJV "hypocrites," "self-indulgence," "appear beautiful outwardly," and "uncleanness." Jesus uses the word hypocrisy and hypocrite often throughout Matthew 23. But what does it really mean? It means being fake, putting on a false front, or pretending. It is insincere. Jesus is criticizing plastic and inward deceptive behaviors of the teachers.

Why is this important? Pretending and being fake is ungodly and not good. It's evil, unproductive, corruptive, and spiritually harmful. Please do a concordance study on the words hypocrite and hypocrisy. Search for the meaning of these words when Jesus used them.

If we believe that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, then we would respond likewise. We would heed the words. If we believe in and trust Jesus more than ourselves, other people, and worldly ways, then we would increasingly grow in obedience with the ways Jesus teaches us to behave. Our actions, thoughts, attitudes, words, and growth (fruit) prove what we believe. This is how we can measure our faith, by our fruit.

Jesus teaches for the purpose of bringing good changes in believers. Many people walked away from Jesus. People threw rocks, yelled, and plotted to kill Jesus. Few decided to believe and follow Jesus. This is how it's always been. Few will sincerely and honestly decide to seek, follow, and obey Jesus in a manner where inward growth and development will take place. Why? Because getting real with who we are and where Jesus teaches us to go involves difficult inward training. Difficult, and yet easy.

Matthew 7:14 Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

Each day we will need to choose Jesus and His teaching more than anything else in our existence. If we can't/won't make that choice, our reliance will be diminished. That said, we could still grow and experience goodness; just not in the same way. Growth involves change. Not changing is being the same. We can measure our growth by measuring how different we are in our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions.

Inward Christianity

A process of increased Inward cooperation with God—inwardly doing the will of God. The will of God are all inward behaviors and practices the Bible instructs us to do. We focus upon applying our heart, mind, strength, and soul for God's Good. We focus on imperfectly improving with that which is perfect—God. As our inward parts improve with the will of God, so does our body and soul. This process is an introspective, investigative, and corrective lifestyle. We seek to be different with God.

God's path for us

1. We decide to practice giving our inward all to grow in alignment with the first and great commandment. (all heart, mind, soul, and strength)
2. We believe God gives us free will to make choices with Good and evil. We study Good and evil using all of our inward senses. We ponder how to grow and improve in doing the will of God. We are responsible for our choices. We are not puppets. God doesn't make us do things. Results are beyond our control. We can't have everything our way. We simply trust in our application of doing Good and growing in it.
3. Our choices bring consequences—Deuteronomy 30. Choosing Good will add Good to us. Choosing evil will add evil to us. (Also Ezekiel 18) Practiced repeated trained habitual responses will seek to be played out. A practice of denying ungodly training will be required. We have conscious choices and unconscious choices. Improving our conscious choices will, over time, improve our unconscious choices.
4. We practice each day examining ourselves, identifying how to grow, finding our thinking errors, and applying corrections. We learn how our sensations change as we change. (Thy will, not mine, be done)
5. We identify corruptive thoughts, confess them, and humbly practice God's Good solutions. (practice repentance). Progress, not perfection.
6. We grow in love without hypocrisy—(being fake, pretending), clinging to what is Good, and abhorring evil. (Romans 12:9)
7. We seek to help others grow through our own inward cooperation and outward demonstration of abiding in the will of God. We honestly and sincerely share in detail our growth and productivity with God's Good.

Sincerity

The practice of sincerity can be challenging. Being fake and pretending can be normalized in social gatherings. Falsehood is evil. Our goal is to be honest, real, genuine, and true. Our yes is to be yes and no, no. We are to grow in productivity with truth. We practice speaking difficult truth in love. "Say what we mean, mean what we say, but not say it mean"— Unknown.

Some of us may have no clue how to be real. Regardless, we practice, struggle, and learn. We let others struggle and learn as well. We search our thoughts for deception, practice correction, and behave more truthfully. We watch our words and guide them to be honest. We seek to inwardly put an end to lies, manipulation, and other practices that support falsehood. As we practice truth over time, it can become easier.

While at work we can remind ourselves we have one boss, God. If our earthly boss instructs us toward evil, we will face a difficult choice. Our choices have their inward consequences. Their is no simple answer to this dilemma. Prayer, consultation with others, and meditation can help a lot. If we practice this with careful self-examination, considering God's good, we will likely grow no matter what we choose.

Jesus emphasizes that those who do the will of God are his family Matthew 12:48-50. Be diligent about being inwardly real and true with our spiritual families—those who do the will of God. In our support groups we must gently encourage each other to practice more sincerity through our own demonstration and sharing. We can emphasize in each meeting how essential it is for our own spiritual growth.

More verses on hypocrisy and sincerity

1 Corinthians 5:8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth.

Matthew 6:5, 6:16, 7:5, 15:7, 16:3, 22:18, 23, 24:51; Romans 12:9; Galatians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 1:12, 2:17, 6:6, 8:8; Ephesians 6:5, 6:24; Philippians 1:10, 1:16, 2:20; Colossians 3:22, 1 Timothy 1:5, 4:2; James 3:17; 1 Peter 1:22, 2:1

Sarcasm

Being funny at someone else's expense is not good. When we put others down or point out flaws as a joke, it rarely does any good for love and peace. If we feel the need to poke and joke, perhaps it's more humble to poke at our own faults, mistakes, and foolishness. Laughing at ourselves that involves humbling ourselves is likely a better idea. Jokes that promote shame or embarrassment bring down, not lift up. Such poking and jabbing can be destructive. We are to lift each other up, not put each other down.

We are to be humble, sincere, caring, and compassionate. This does not mean we are overly sensitive, easily hurt, nor pushovers. It means we are focused to grow love and peace. We are seeking deeper and more meaningful conversations with each other that are personal and caring. We ought to always be developing deeper intimacy, not sabotaging it.

Joking with or at each other can be both good and dangerous. Why prioritize something that brings risk? Why gamble for a temporary laugh? How important or necessary is it to God? Did Jesus demonstrate sarcasm? Self-seeking and doing what we want or feel like is no longer our priority. We have a new priority—to seek the good in others. Yet, self-deception will seek to justify and rationalize continued ungodly behaviors.

Sarcasm can be habitual. When someone is using it, especially at someone else's expense, we can choose not to laugh. A non-response to poor taste jokes can sometimes give needed nonverbal truth, that it's not funny. When someone has the habit of sarcasm, it can take time to relearn not to use it. The development of practicing sincere truth in conversations can be slow and gradual. We ought to always be testing what we do to see how well it promotes sincerity, truth, peace, and love.

Nonverbal Communication

We ought to always consider the messages we are sending with our facial expressions, body language, and eye contact. How we dress also plays a role. Humble and modest is a good start. There is no perfect way here. It's not about creating a dress code. It's about raising our awareness to how others are impacted by our nonverbal communication with readiness to make corrections. It's good to evaluate what messages we are sending.

Heart & Mind

The Bible teaches extensively about heart and mind activity. The word heart is used more in the Bible than the word love. The Hebrew word for heart includes the mind. They are not separate. One way to define the Hebrew word heart is 'inward authority.' We are to practice using both our thoughts and sensations. Feelings and sensations teach us spiritual truth.

We are guided to become more discerning and wise with love and peace. We can improve our senses with compassion and empathy. Any deliberate downplaying of either the heart or mind is likely spiritual deception. They are connected. Avoiding or repressing feelings may be necessary at times when it can affect our good. However, if it continues day after day, it can be destructive. Existing with a separated heart and mind can corrupt, stunt, or block our growth in spiritual understanding.

Just as some can repress emotions, others can avoid the practice of reasoning. The Bible instructs us to examine and think increasingly about the will of God and to do it. We can improve in discernment. Choosing to lack improvement in our weaker areas will be choosing to maintain weaknesses. Nowhere in the Bible does it say, 'stop growing.' The Bible does not teach us to be unproductive in good.

We can practice connecting our thoughts with our feelings in order to better experience how they influence each other. The more we learn how they influence each other, the greater our ability can be to witness spiritual truth and reality. We can improve our spiritual effectiveness in doing good.

What does Jesus teach and demonstrate by His choices?

Jesus cried and mourned. Jesus was humble, gentle, and compassionate.
Jesus let others love him and care for him. Jesus loved deeply.
Jesus spoke truth nobody wanted to hear. Jesus obeyed God, not people.
Jesus did not fit into the crowds, but instead with God's good.
Jesus discerned spiritual good and evil constantly, without breaks.

We can improve in doing likewise, if we devote our hearts and minds to grow in such actions and experiences.

Meditation & Prayer

We practice each day sincere humble prayer for guidance and strength to do the will of God. We ponder deeply how Jesus teaches us to pray in Matthew 6:5-15. As we meditate and pray with a learning mindset, we can offer up our hearts and minds to cooperate with good, ready to do it.

The Bible gives us directions about what to set our hearts and minds upon in meditation. Philippians 4:8, 1 Timothy 4:15

Meditation and prayer can feel uncomfortable and even be a struggle. Our physical position, how we sit, etc., does not matter. The point is to increase thought and sensation awareness with corrective actions.

The process of growth can be like going to the gym and lifting weights. If all we can do is five minutes, then we do five minutes, take a break, and repeat with the goal of strengthening our ability with calm inward reflection. We must be continue to practice to improve.

We can discuss struggles, fear, anxiety, etc. We can investigate deeper to discover our rational. We must dig further with facts to learn truth. Meditation has been proven to help with inward conflicts. We can only learn if we give ourselves over to cooperate with the experience.

Some may experience extreme uneasiness at first. Those who are used to keeping their minds occupied, distracted, or guided with external stimulation can struggle to be without direction. It may be best to begin with guided meditations and gradually progress to silent inward reflective meditations. Willingness with a growth mindset is often required.

Our spiritual growth will depend upon our continuing to give ourselves over to abide more in good. Our minds and hearts are to abide in more productivity with God's good. This is a biblical fact. When God says to do something, it's best to believe there is good in it—if we do it.

Read about perseverance and endurance in the Bible. Explain how it is important. If we can't explain it, we probably don't know. We can only know to the level of production we have had with it. Experience is needed.

Perception, beliefs, and faith

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be deceived: “Evil company corrupts good habits.”

What we inwardly teach ourselves to believe forms our faith. We ought to discern our thoughts carefully and help them into alignment with God’s good. If our minds ponder evil and continue in it, then our minds will cooperate with evil, practice, and grow in, and die by evil. James 1:14-15. Thought examination, confession, repentance, and correction is needed.

Jesus deals with temptation in Matthew 4:1-11. When Jesus is tempted, He redirects and speaks out loud His own thoughts. He appears to be talking to satan, but do you really think satan cares what Jesus is saying? No. Satan is only concerned with corrupting Faith. Jesus stands firm with His thoughts to stay focused with God. This is a demonstration of how we can inwardly respond with temptation or misleading thoughts. James 1:13-15.

When we are tempted, we can examine and discern our thoughts to see if they are leading us toward good or evil. This action is a skill we can improve upon through continued practices. Through such practices and skill development we can gradually improve our faith, beliefs, perceptions, motivations, and even desires. If we lack in our productivity with inward good, evil can more easily sneak into our minds and take root. There will be less of a defense against such inward corruption.

The instructions throughout the Bible tell us to apply our inward being to cooperate more with God and God’s righteousness. The Bible repeats instructions to seek, trust, follow, and increasingly obey goodness and righteousness within our own choices, thoughts, and behaviors. When we cooperate and walk in such virtues with increasing measure, we can purify our hearts and cleanse our conscience. We will spiritually improve.

The messages we choose to believe, follow, cooperate with, and practice will guide and develop our inward condition. Romans 3:12-21

The continued practices of self-examination, confession, repentance, while growing in love and peace will renew our minds more and more with God.

Right Thinking

The Bible uses the word righteous over 500 times. Righteousness is thinking and doing right with God. Jesus says in Matthew 5:20 “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Our thinking and doing right with God is to grow and be greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees. This means there is a Godly and ungodly way to inwardly and outwardly behave. The Bible describes such ways.

As we continue to practice self-examination and growing our discernment with good and evil thoughts, we will be more empowered to correct our thoughts and shift our focus increasingly upon God’s righteousness.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? —unless indeed you are disqualified.

In the earlier stages of our development we can feel intimidated by our sinfulness. However, after we have begun making corrections and walking more in the will of God we can experience improved sensations with grace. We can experience the joy in righting relationships, purifying our hearts, and cleansing our conscience. This improvement can motivate us and even increase our faith.

We are to set our minds more upon God’s righteous ways and less upon the world’s. Romans 8:5, Philippians 3:19, Colossians 3:2

Continued practice with improving righteous inward behavior can build Godly good character. Romans 5:3-4

We are to meditate upon good things and do them. Philippians 4:8-9

We are to add to our faith virtue. 2 Peter 1:5

Our faith can increase. Luke 17:5 & 2 Corinthians 10:15

God desires us to be inwardly with Him. Romans 7:22, 2 Corinthians 4:16

Beware the Monkeys

The practice of “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil” do not agree with God. In fact, they are counterproductive to Biblical instructions. Imagine a new translation of the Bible, which happens all the time, created to remove any mention of evil. The Bible would note only what is good. Faith would no longer involve risk or struggle. The Bible is pro correction, correction with evil. We all need correction. But will we examine ourselves to see our inward evil practices enough for correction? God gives us the choice.

Many are trained not to acknowledge evil within themselves. Refusing to see evil is to live like a horse with blinders. The wise monkey philosophy teaches avoidance of evil, even to the point of pretending it isn’t there. The practice of rebuke and exhortation is to be done gently, but this cannot be done if we are not identifying evil where it exists.

We may be in a world today where speaking the truth about evil will get us canceled. Yet who will we serve, the world or God. Jesus and the Apostles experienced being hated to point of death. Many of us won’t even risk our job or social status. Why? Because of our faith.

If our leaders in the church are withholding truth for fear of being canceled or arousing bitterness, then our teaching is tainted and influenced by fear or control. Strong faith involves risky action. Learn the faith of Abraham and why it is the benchmark. Let’s practice training up Abraham’s faith instead of acting like we can’t, as if it it’s too much for us. Jesus shunned and accused religious teachers. He was hated, attacked, and killed. Read Matthew 23. Imagine yourself following Jesus in conflict. WWJD.

We need challenging questions about our thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors. Avoiding them is contrary to Biblical instructions. Are we doing what the pharisees did? When pretending is condoned or encouraged, like fake smiles, and false flattery, wouldn’t that be acting like the pharisees? How so or why not? If we do not find evil, we can’t correct it.

Fear of struggle, hurt feelings, and scaring people exists for Godly good reasons, partially to humble us. Discomfort teaches us. In order to grow closer to God we are required to walk through it. Examine the stories in the Bible about this and see the truth. We all must face our inward evil and go to God sincerely and humbly. Contrition and supplication are good.

Negative effects of monkeys

Isaiah 5:20 Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!

Let's agree that the following is evil, because the Bible declares it as evil. Self-seeking, pride, insincerity—pretending, deception—dishonesty, bitterness—resentment, and idolatry. Now examine ways such evil is condoned, practiced without correction, or modeled by leaders. Seek God in prayer for good corrective actions. What did Jesus do?

Examples of negative effects from avoiding evil:

Code of silence — People choose not to discuss harmful things that happen. (This often involves pretending, insincerity, and lying.)

Elephant in the room — A group of people act as though a problem does not exist. They avoid discussing it out of fear of hurt feelings.

Cancel culture — People who speak the truth and try to reveal the elephant can be attacked and removed from the group.

Ostrich effect bias - burry one's head in the sand to avoid negative or uncomfortable information

We can't be perfect - People use this phrase to avoid struggle in growth.

Half truths - See only information one believes to be positive and good while not testing one's self to ensure that belief is accurate and correct.

Conformity - Fear of losing; people in our lives, social status, job, money, attendance—Some might think, "Gotta keep them coming."

Examples of good corrective teaching - Acts 18:24-28, Romans 2, 1 Corinthians 4:14-21, 1 Timothy 4:1-11, 2 Timothy 3:16, Titus 1:7-16

Will we choose to see the evil that is present to set goals for corrections. We can choose to abide better in God, or not. God gives us choices. Think about all the corrective language in the Bible and how we can do likewise.

“First Thought Wrong”

“First thought wrong” is a common saying around circles of spiritual formation. It guides us to discern our thoughts. It involves second guessing our old ways and trained responses to help improve them.

New thoughts do not come from following old ways of thinking. Going through motions and running on autopilot only repeats what we are used to doing. Renewal of the mind develops from practicing new thoughts. Correction requires more energy and attention. Our unconscious responses will seek to fulfill trained thoughts and behaviors.

Many situations can trigger us towards anger, impatience, complaining, faultfinding, blaming, fear, worry, hurry, etc. It is necessary to notice and identify the thought messages involved. Then we can pray for guidance on how to slow down, move peacefully, forgive, have mercy, be patient, and practice spiritual good.

We can examine our inward situation. Were we stressed, hungry, tired, fearful, angry, hurried, worried, anxious, at peace, or calm? Who were we around and what were we doing? Did we have expectations or demands? How well were we seeking to do the will of God?

We have chosen to walk in God’s good whether comfortable or uncomfortable, familiar or unfamiliar. This is a daily practice. Some days

Good to increase	Evil to decrease	New thoughts, words, & actions.	What to watch for within and around us
Forgive	Grudges, remembering wrongs for retaliation or hurting	Let go of condemning thoughts towards others and self. Seek peace	Watch for condemning thoughts, add in new forgiving thoughts. Trust the forgiveness process.
Forgive	Faultfinding, blaming, bitterness, anger, and resentment	Let it go, trust God. Take a breath and calm down. What good can I grow right now.	How’s my stress, thoughts, and words. Am I more kind, if so, how are others responding?

likely will be better than others. Perseverance and endurance is key to having new character formed. Over time, our faith can improve and the process becomes easier.

Test—1 Thessalonians 5:21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.

We must practice testing ourselves, our own productivity with God's good. We can hold fast to what is good and grow in it. The "Scientific Method" involves testing. Deeper learning requires testing. We are not testing—challenging God. On the contrary, we are testing ourselves—our own understanding, productivity, thoughts, and behaviors. Remember, growing in the light exposes our deeds so we can learn better steps. With more light, we can walk more safely with God.

Humble improvement

Romans 3:23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Improvement and growth are a choice. They are a choice in raising the bar and being more different with God. Many will not choose to grow more with God for the sake of self-preservation and comforts. Our own understanding will disagree with God's path for us. Our minds will seek to rationalize what we do and convince us we don't need to change or to change very little. So the path will involve obeying God more instead of our own understanding. Doubt, worry, and fear are corruptive and misleading.

The greatest commandment says to love God with our all. Yet most of us will barely give even 10% of our time and inward resources to increasingly abide in, learn about, and obey God. Instead, we will often justify easier convenient performances as good enough. Our good enough will rarely match God's instructions for us. Yet we will convince ourselves it is good and feel satisfied. Our minds have an ability to fool ourselves into being comfortable with this falling short of God's instructions. A huge part of this cognitive deception is the avoidance of self-examination and learning how we can improve. The Bible is full of examples about such foolishness.

James 1:23-25 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself,

goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues *in it,* and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

Pretty much all of us are fools as described in James 1:23. Some of us will recoil from the idea of being a fool because of pride and self-deception. The Bible warns us about pride and how the goal is to be humble. People who follow the instructions will seek out humbling themselves and continue to grow in it. We can humbly give ourselves over to God's good.

James 4:6 1 Peter 5:5 "God resists the **proud**, But gives grace to the **humble**."
Choosing to build pride is likely choosing to walk in resistance with God. Choosing to be humble is likely choosing to walk in agreement with God.

Stay Focused and Connected

Having a mind and heart completely devoted to God will, for most of us, be an entire shift in our thought life. Yet the mind often wanders. It's imperative that we measure our productivity. We can ask each other how we are growing and in what ways. This can help us stay focused.

We can ask, "How's your growth this week?", "Can you elaborate?", "what does that mean," "what are you discovering," "how are you practicing more Godly good?", or "what new senses did you experience?"

We must always stay focused upon our own production with God's good and repentance. If we get lost in what other people are doing or how we think they should improve, we can lose focus and attention upon our own growth. As we grow in the will of God, others will be helped.

We can share our growth with others. We describe with details using facts and our own experiences. We share what good or evil we practiced and what we experienced from it. This deeper sharing together as we grow in the will of God can be a powerful spiritual experience.

We can share what went through our minds as we confessed resentment or bitterness. We can share what it was like to humble ourselves in doing what is right and the struggle we experienced practicing new good

actions. We share how we were convicted of new truth and ask others for suggestions. We can share about improved relationships and more peace. We can describe the struggle of adapting to a new way of life.

No matter where we are or what we are doing, we ought to focus upon how to walk more with God's good. Even in small doses each day we can grow. As we add in new activity, we can practice it for awhile until we adapt to it and it becomes less of a struggle. Then we can raise the bar.

Our spiritual improvements with God can heal and protect us from the affects of evil. John 15:5-8. As we slip away from our focus we can notice a withering dryness in our hearts and minds. We can miss the fulfillment we were experiencing when we were focused and connected. One day at a time we can focus upon our next right steps doing the will of God.

Yoke of Christ

Learn the "Law of Reversed Effort"

Taking on the yoke of christ is not about controlling—forcing ourselves to better do what Christ does, but instead, it is giving up any part of ourselves that goes against Christ ideas, demonstrations, or instructions. It's a process of becoming willing and ready to walk more obediently with God. We fully embrace the ways in which Jesus and the apostles teach us.

We identify inward beliefs, one thought at at time, which prompt us into ungodly ways and reset our thoughts upon the will of God, to do it and trust it. Accepting the yoke of Christ is to give our inward all to go and do as Jesus instructs us. If we are yoked, we will do the will of God. We will cease questioning or arguing. We will simply do it. Of course, we all sin and fall short, so this will likely be a moment by moment experience. We will have successes and failures. Yet if we can continue to grow, our successes will outweigh our failures. We can become less burdened by our failures as we experience more and more successes. As we experience more love and peace, we can come to accept our failures as growing points toward increased love and peace.

When we feel rushed or worried due to fear about missing some deadline or having to wait, we can set our mind to be with God and believe that will suffice. We can think to ourselves, "trust God and it will all work out" or

"this too shall pass." Our job is less about changing what is outside and more about forming our inward parts. We maintain our inward focus of trusting God. We can use verses in the Bible that help us with this principle. We can use messages that help us be yoked with Christ.

When contrary thoughts lead us from the yoke we can identify them and redirect our thoughts back to the will of God. We can humbly pray for strength and guidance.

We must walk in the yoke long enough to experience sensations of love and peace. These real life experiences can carry with them real spiritual power and influence. Experiencing the love of God and knowing how it is available here and now is a powerful awareness. The yoke is easy, if we can stop fighting the direction Christ leads us to go and trust in it.

Trusting God

There are some great stories that illustrate the trusting experience. One is the "Wheelbarrow Story" over Niagara Falls. Here is a shorter one: A man was hiking and slipped off a ledge, but was able to grab onto a branch. As he was hanging there he yelled for help. He then heard a thundering voice saying, "Let go!" With doubt on his face he looked at the sky and asked, "Is anyone else up there?" Sometimes, we won't like or want God's help.

Trusting God can involve us doing things we don't want to do. It can feel way out of place, yet safe. It can feel as though we are being someone else, while doing something we would never do. Others who know us may become perplexed by our actions because we are responding differently.

In team-building exercises there is an activity called a trust fall. It can be intimidating and scary to let ourselves fall and trust others to catch us. This is similar to trusting in doing God's good. When we do something we know is right with God, yet unlike our personality, habits, identity, etc., we are likely taking a step toward growth in God's good. Sometimes, the more risk or awkwardness the better.

We must inwardly observe our thoughts and feelings for the spiritual activity at work. This can help us have empathy and compassion when helping others to do likewise, because we will understand. As we face spiritual truth, both comfortable and uncomfortable, we can uncover and

reveal new spiritual teachings about ourselves and the world around us. We must face our inward spiritual realities if we are to grow spiritually.

There is a felt sense of moving from self will to God's will. There is a felt sense as we shift from worry to faith, hurry to calm, resentment to forgiveness, and uncaring to compassion. There is an emotional affect.

Through repeated practices of sincere honest confession, repentance, and restitution, we can learn how they cleanse the conscience and purify the heart. The more we do it and learn from the experiences, the better we can understand how they work. We give ourselves over to the experiment.

Loving our enemy, prayer, and meditation can seem unreasonable. If we can humbly continue despite our contrary reasoning or feelings, we can situate ourselves to learn new spiritual truth.

Character-building formula

Romans 5:3-4 And not only *that,* but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulation produces perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Let's respectfully acknowledge the first step in this description of growth—"tribulations." How we respond to tribulations will impact our growth. Will we respond with perseverance unto developing character? This is rarely a comfortable choice. Many will not choose to continue in the face of struggle when other seemingly less challenging choices are available. Which sounds better? The easy way? Or the hard way?

If we are willing to give ourselves over to the path of tribulation with the response of perseverance to the point of developing character, then we can experience the result of hope. We will be able to witness the other side of perseverance and understand how good it is to develop improved Godly good character. We will know the good with experience, a much deeper level of understanding. With this new knowledge we will gain hope and know this process is trustworthy.

It is unlikely anyone will sincerely understand the freedom, joy, peace, and comfort that results from Godly good growth without giving themselves over to it. We will have to go there and witness the amazing spiritual grace.

We can have life changing experiences through our self-sacrificing adoption of God's good ways. By dying to self, owning our sin, confessing it, walking in repentance, and righting our wrongs with a unifying heart and mind cooperation, we will indeed experience new powerful spiritual truth. Tribulations are the first steps, and we must persevere forward on that path to the point of new character. Hope is on the other side with so much more beauty, freedom, understanding, and grace.

Heed the word

Proverbs 16:20 He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy *is* he.

New Structure

Training and development will require new structure in our day. We will need time for meditation, prayer, discussions, pondering our next steps, self-examination, etc. We need to make it happen and that may involve sacrifices. We can pray for direction and ask for our mentor for help.

Think about the following words used in the Bible and their purpose. Perseverance, endurance, learn, train, teach, grow, practice, and correction. Our goal is progression and improvement with God's good.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

We must remember that running on auto-pilot is a no-growth method. It perfects imperfection. Time, struggle, and energy is needed routinely. We must filter out contrary thoughts and focus upon the Holy Spirit given to guide us. Beginning our retraining will require extra effort (learn the law of Inertia). The first 30 days, if done consistently and correctly, will set us on a good path and become easier. But we must have a mindset of continuing with God and continuing to learn. Some struggle will always be present.

In sports players train themselves to preform acts well. Athletes shoot for perfection, but fail a lot. They miss the mark frequently. They celebrate their successes and continue to train toward perfection. Our sport is inward improvement with God's good. We train our hearts and minds to

better sense the spiritual reality of God. Our inward successes will overflow outward toward others pouring spiritual goodness and healing. As we are filled with light it will shine outward toward others.

We fight the good fight and run the race of doing good. If we choose to skip training we will diminish our abilities. If we stop evaluating ourselves for progress we can subtly and slowly become corrupted with evil.

Whether wanting to or not, we begin our day prioritizing God because it is good and right. When we struggle, we pray for help. We must always be open to our unconscious self-deception. It exists. We can pray for strength and a humble attitude to learn Godly good directions. If we have walked in it with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength with perseverance, we will know that it is good and right. Others around us will testify how it is good.

Daily Trainer

We become trained in what we practice and how well we practice it. If we train little, then we are trained little. If we train diligently, with perseverance and endurance, as the Bible instructs, then we can be trained well. If we train only when it's convenient and when we feel like it, it's likely we won't be trained well—the way the Bible teaches us. We train regardless of convenience or feeling like doing it. Diligent spiritual training is daily. These trainings are guides to build learning and spiritual discernment to empower ourselves to apply new corrective actions. Each new action and discovery can better position us for more growth and spiritual understanding.

Focused meditation part 1 - We meditate upon our thoughts to learn from them—how they operate. We search our thoughts to discover what is practiced there. We identify thoughts that are good and evil. We write down as reminders what we find and reflect upon it the next day. We ponder new thought options—ways to think to improve with God's good.

Focused meditation part 2 - Once we have decided upon a direction to grow, we can meditate upon our anticipated interactions for the day ahead. We can review past experiences to learn how to improve. We can discern our inward attitude and outward demonstrations, both verbally and non-verbally. The focus is to always be upon Godly good solutions.

Good growth prayers - We identify a form of evil we inwardly practice. Then we identify the good we can seek to practice instead. We can pray for strength, courage, willingness, readiness, and desire to grow in it.

Example: We can select help from deception. We can pray for strength and willingness to see where we are practicing self-deception or dishonesty. We can pray for guidance to pause and apply corrective truth. We can pray for strength and courage to better practice sincere truth.

Seeking good - We watch others for the good they practice and results that come from it. We avoid justifying complacency. We humble ourselves and seek to learn from others. We observe others who are strong where we are weak and learn from their demonstrations. We meditate upon what we learn and pray for strength to put it into practice. Then we reflect upon all our experiences to learn how to improve with God's good.

New Identity

Our goal is to increasingly grow love, peace, sincere truth, and spiritual justice. We are to be free of bitterness, hurry, worry, and self-seeking. This shift in our productivity will change us. The more we give ourselves over to God's good, the more we can feel different. Others around us will respond differently. How we perceive the world will be different. Our goals in life will likely change. We can experience new freedom and comforts.

The process of renewal will involve letting go of old ways. It some cases it can include letting go of unproductive associations, places, or hobbies. These can be difficult choices to make. Look to the stories in the Bible where good characters made drastic and challenging choices affecting their identities and lifestyles. It's part of the process.

As we apply such changes and begin new associations with others who are seeking to do the will of God, we can find ourselves experiencing loss. As we let go of people, places, and habits that have become part of our identity, inwardly there will be affects. Anger, confusion, sadness, and more can take place as we aim toward acceptance. These are natural and normal inward responses to life-changing events, even spiritual growth.

This huge hurtle is likely the most difficult to get over. Will we struggle through the spiritual detox of our old ways to become new with God? Will

we endure and persevere until new character has been formed? This is where the power of prayer for willingness and strength can help tremendously. A humble and sincere plea to God for help can bring powerful results.

We can view this transition like a graduation ceremony. We are moving on from trust in the worlds ideas to trusting God's directions. We are setting out to discover what abiding more in God will actually be like. We walk out the door of self-seeking and into the world of helping others toward God. We exit the playground of self-gratification and enter the spiritual realm of building intimacy. We leave unspiritual middle school and move into spiritual college. This leap is a big one that can produce life changing results. Real freedom, peace, love, and sincere relationships are at your door. The yoke is easy once we let go of the inward struggle of giving ourselves over to it.

Measuring Growth

If we can't explain our growth clearly to others or others can't explain our growth to us, we might not be growing. Spiritual development involves a lot of subjective analysis and inward activity. If we skip testing ourselves to ensure we are productively growing with God, we can easily make ourselves victims of self-deception. The goal is to grow and correct ourselves enough inwardly where there will be an outward measurable change. The list of possibilities is too large for this book, but here are some examples.

Growth in peace: less hurried (going to bed earlier, getting up earlier, taking more time to prepare for the day, driving the speed limit, talking and walking slower, letting others go first, less arguing, more sincere compliments)

Growth in seeking God: (meditating, pondering the will of God and how to do it better, praying for strength to do God's will, talking with others about serving God and what that is like, reading instructions and taking that action)

Growth in compassion: (understanding how others feel, desire to help others, taking a volunteer position, acts of kindness, being more gentle, searching for opportunities to comfort someone)

Growth in truth: (less lying to others, fewer false presentations, identifying deceptive thoughts, correcting deceptive thoughts with truth, speaking the truth, discerning better truth and deception, talking to mentor about deception and truth)

Growth in forgiveness: (identifying grudges, complaints, bitterness, or resentments and prayerfully seeking to find peace, learning our part in thinking about it, confessing the holding onto it, humbling self to let it go, describing the peace and inward benefits of letting it go)

Growth in loving enemies: (praying for their growth with God, applying the will of God with them, describing the results we experienced as we turned from bitterness to kindness)

Growth in perseverance: (demonstrating consistency in doing good, describing the gradual process of good character development, good testimony, week after week and month after month showing up for the good of God)

Quantify Growth

Because our minds will, from time to time, trick and deceive us, we must practice self-examination regarding our productivity in doing good. We can bring into our minds the level of production of good done by the teachers in the Bible and see how we can grow in that direction, doing as they did.

Grace is quantified. The Bible describes grace using words like ‘more’ in James 4:6 and abundance in Romans 5:17. We can ‘fall from grace,’ Galatians 5:4 and Hebrews 12:15. Our choices and actions matter.

Love is quantified and directional Matthew 10:37, John 12:43, Philippians 1:9, 1 Timothy 6:10, and 2 Timothy 3:2.

Black-and-white thinking lacks thought energy, perseverance, and discernment. Quick conclusions and unchecked assumptions are our enemies. Because of self-deception existing within and around us, it is easy to become mislead by bad habits, evil company, Group Think, Herd Mentality, conformity, and comfort seeking.

To know we are growing in love and peace we will need to learn ways to measure it. We can ask others around us how well we are growing. We can learn through observing how others react toward us. Are we developing closer relationships? Are we more distant? How are our words?

We can practice quantifying each day:

1. How sincere, genuine, and real are we in our thoughts, words, and actions? How often do we evaluate ourselves?
2. How kind, compassionate, and caring are we with ourselves and others? What compassionate words or thoughts do we practice?
3. How forgiving, merciful, and generous are we in our thoughts and actions? Have we restored wrongs and can we do more?
4. How calm, patient, peaceful, and gentle are we in all our activities? Where can we do better?

We can learn more how to do this with a counselor, mentor, pastor, consultant, etc. Are we humble enough to ask for help and feedback?

Visualize good

There is a lot of evil in the world. It's easy to find. Yet we are committing ourselves to inwardly improve our minds to participate more with God's good in ways that produce good fruit. As we begin each day we can choose to stand ready with a firm grip upon God's good.

We can make sure we have good footing. Matthew 7:24-27

When we fall short, offend, or hurt others, we know we can do good and make right the error of our ways. Through such experiences, we will know the good in doing it.

We can visualize good because we have done it and we know trusting God and walking in the will of God is good. It is always better than practicing evil. It's better for our peace of mind, inward healing, and a good conscience.

Beware the dangers of doubt. Romans 14:23. When our minds turn to doubt we can discuss it with a mentor or spiritual member. If we let doubting continue it will surely corrupt our growth and reduce our productivity. 1 Timothy 2:8 It is normal to experience doubt and to be confused. However, we who are diligent in growth with God know the path of correction. We know the way to conquer doubt with faith. We are not a wave tossed by the wind. James 1:6.
We are now builders of good. Whatever we have built, we look forward to the good we can add to it. Every builder makes mistakes and then the good builder corrects it. As mistakes happen, we repair and continue to add good. 1 Corinthians 3:9-17

And if we fall away from doing good, which of course will have its consequences, we can always return to God and God's goodness. We can always step back into God's healing good practices and renew again our hearts and minds. The damage we do will be done, yet healing and restoration is always available. Romans 11:23

We are to hold tightly within our hearts and minds God's good and improve in it. Romans 12:9

Inward conditioning process

We study the Good & Evil Quick Reference tool long enough to identify good to increase and evil to decrease. Each day we can practice praying to God for various inward needs to make the changes possible. We can pray for willingness, awareness, strength, courage, perseverance, endurance, readiness, knowledge, guidance, patience, and more.

We continue investigating the character traits to learn more and more about their consequences. We can meditate, reflect, and recall our experiences. As we go through our day we watch for this spiritual reality at play within and around us, to learn from it. (See next page for details)

We can explore our thoughts and how others react when we engage in evil. We can search ourselves for any guilt, shame, or remorse while submitting ourselves to God for corrective guidance. We can ponder what it might feel like if we had such inward baggage cleared, while knowing it can be cleared as we increase our improvement with God's good.

Once we have decided what good to grow and evil to decrease we put them down on paper. We can use this format when discussing growth with others. The below examples are entry-level illustrations. We increase our learning with new experiences.

Light for others

These next few pages will be focused on walking Into The Light in a way that is good, right, and impactful. If our walk can be sincere, honest, and confident, while demonstrating peace and love, we can become more light for others.

We can grow our light as we abide more and more in God's good. Our new knowledge through our renewal experiences; confession, repentance, and restitution; will be reshaping our hearts and minds into an inward being more capable of confidently leading others to God.

We can only guide others down the path we have walked. We can only describe the path we have experienced. Our ability to describe and demonstrate can grow over time through much practice and discovery. Testimonies based upon real life experiences described in ways others can believe and understand will go a long way for encouragement and hope.

It is essential that we continue to grow our experiences with God's good while reflecting upon them to learn how to better describe them with others. As we better understand how love and peace is more healthy, right, and good, through experience, we will be better situated to help others understand it too.

If we are not believing and sensing the spiritual good in these practices, it will affect our light and spiritual expression. Our faith is paramount. Right faith is faith in righteousness, walking in it. Righteous faith will bring forth good fruit. Such faith is a faith of good works and deeds. It progressively develops good inward practices and experiences.

When light shines on darkness it reveals truth that seeks to be secret. Opposition ensues inwardly and outwardly. Bitterness and fear happen. Awkwardness and confusion develop. These experiences are normal for light shining on darkness. The more we practice being a bright light with others, the more we can encounter these transformative experiences. But

this is merely the first effect of the light upon darkness. What happens next is between God and others. Each will need to choose whether to hide from the light or face the truth revealed. We can choose to walk more into the light which can offer a new transformative life for others.

Structured sharing

Our mission is to grow with God. When together, we ought to structure our thoughts around this goal, how to practice it. We can share about our struggles, success, and new understandings with good. We can share what level of self-deception we are witnessing in ourselves. We can share about how others have practiced good with us and what that was like.

Mission conflict

When we are in conflict with the goal of growing with God, it's best to meet with our mentor to discuss it. In groups, discussing the conflict can be a distraction, especially if there exist a defensive attitude. Resentment and hurt can have a way of distracting from forgiveness and Gods' good.

Find solutions

As we share about our problems; fear, resentment, self-seeking, deception, pride, and other forms of evil, we can then discuss the corrective solution we are seeking to grow. Sharing our lack of growth will seldom bring growth. We must focus and speak more about solutions.

Catharsis

As we face our inward selves and make changes, many of us can experience deep emotions. This is natural and normal. It is good to be present with our thoughts and feelings for continued inward learning and growth. As others share and become emotional, it is imperative that we practice compassion, tolerance, and empathy. At the same time we ought to respect the group process and step out when needed. When ready, we can return. It is good for someone spiritually mature to step out and offer help. If the help is not wanted, then respect the person's decision. Sometimes, being alone with God is best.

It's good to be working with someone who has experience with emotional growth to help us with our hurt. As we struggle with hurt we can identify our coexisting thoughts. Often times our thoughts influence our feelings. If we can identify thoughts promoting the hurt, we can improve our ability to find corrections and improvements.

Purify and Cleanse

All to God

We evaluate our hearts and minds to see how well we are loving God with our inward all. Then we can fine ways to improve, one day at a time. (Deuteronomy 6:1-8, Matthew 22:37, Mark 12:30, Luke 10:27) We practice learning the "will of God" and set new goals to learn it better, through doing it. We prioritize God more in our choices and actions—doing more God's will and less our own.

Examine yourself

Luke 11:39, Romans 2:29, Romans 7:22, 2 Corinthians 4:16, 2 Corinthians 13:5, Galatians 6:4, James 1:22-24,

We study good and evil to improve our discernment ability for such inward attitudes, outward demeanor, and character. We discuss what we learn about ourselves with others. If we struggle to find ways to grow we ask others close to us for feedback—ideas. We remain open minded to learn from other's perspectives. We read examples and listen to testimonies. We can read stories in the Bible to practice discerning where good and evil impacted the characters involved. We can see the consequences of such choices in the Bible's stories.

Confession

Through self-examination we can discover our inward bitterness, rebelliousness, self-seeking, fear, and other forms of evil we condone or encourage. Once we have identified our errors—how we cling to evil, we can then become able to discuss and confess them. Acts 19;18, James 5:16, 1 John 1:9

We ought to seek an inward attitude that is sincere and honest. We can also evaluate ourselves for the following:

Humble - Are we willing to see and sense errors within us? If we do not see and sense our wrongs, we will be less likely to confess, adjust, repent, correct, improve, or grow in our abiding in God's good. God offers a gift of repentance—growing in God's good. James 4:6

Contrite - We are to acknowledge our wrongs and hurtful behavior within our thoughts and sensations. Sensations can be in the form of sorrow, remorse, regret, or brokenness in spirit. These are good and right to teach us. This has nothing to do with self-condemnation or self punishment. It's more about seeing spiritual truth. We hurt, because others have been hurt, and we are all part of one body. We seek readiness to humbly walk more in the solution of healing. As we walk in spiritual correction better with God's good, the whole body is impacted. Psalm 34:18

Meek - Words used to describe meek are lowly and modest. This of course has to do with an inward attitude and outward demeanor—demonstration. We guard against thoughts focused upon insincerity—pretending, self-seeking, self-image, money, envy, pride, etc. Matthew 5:5

Repent

Matthew 4:17, Matthew 9:13, Matthew 11:20, Mark 6:12, Luke 5:32, Luke 13:3-5, Luke 17:3-4, Luke 24:47, Acts 2:38, Acts 3:19, Acts 8:22, Acts 11:18, Acts 17:30, Acts 20:21, Acts 26:20, Romans 2:4, 2 Corinthians 7:9-10, 2 Corinthians 12:21, 2 Timothy 2:25, Hebrews 6:1, 2 Peter 3:9,

We turn to God. We inwardly turn our thoughts to grow and improve with God. We focus how to respond with Good—readiness to act inwardly and outwardly with it. As we inwardly practice, ponder, investigate, experience, and learn God's good we can grow good works within and around us. The spirit by which we walk impacts souls, whether good or evil. Inwardly, there will always be some mix of good and evil within us, because we all sin. However, we are called to practice repentance through self-discipline and careful correction of our inward choices.

Hindsight will provide better understanding. We cannot see fruit before it is grown. The fruit of our actions can teach us good and evil. We can

evaluate our productivity and learn. We can also learn through other's experiences. Experience brings the fruit, not merely thinking about it. Better results always follow the good and right action we practice.

Restore

When our sinful ways impact others with harm, we can do our part in making amends, righting our wrongs, and correcting our errors. We attempt to make right such damage. We examine our inward attitude to ensure we are humble, honest, and sincere. We ensure we are seeking to serve God instead of ourselves. God's love and grace can heal if we are inwardly right with it. This can have an immediate affect or take time. Regardless, we persevere to stay right and trust God. God is good.

Goal

Philippians 3:12-16 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do,* forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

We are to grow and purify. James 4:8. Do concordance searches using the words pure & purify. Read the verses and look for patterns. Seek to understand it enough to be able to explain it. Then explain it to see if you really understand it that well. Inwardly we all sin. We will never be completely clean and pure from evil and its affects. The idea that we should be perfect is based upon misunderstanding. The idea that we can improve with love and peace ought to stay with us. Growing, improving, correcting, and abiding more in God is the goal we can continue to set our minds upon each day. Our conscience is being cleansed as we walk more into the light and God's goal for us. Hebrews 9:14. Our confidence will grow through continued experiences. Hebrews 13:19 We will become content. Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:6,

May the peace and love of God always be our focus to think and sense in all situations. May it dominate who we are each day. Let us talk about it and teach through powerful experiential testimonies. Let us always share the good we witness. Grace can abound more and more as we go.