

How?

Proverbs 12:1 Whoever loves instruction loves knowledge, But he who hates correction is stupid. NKJV

We can read countless books on the subject, many of us have, yet without purifying our hearts, cleansing our conscience, and restoring our souls through God's Character/Grace we can remain lost. The way to know God is to love God, and to do it with all our heart, all our mind, all our soul, and all our strength. God's truth and love can be unattractive when we are enslaved to sin. Correction of our misaligned beliefs and attitudes is essential to grow spiritually.

Identify, Confess, & Correct

Thoughts, beliefs, and actions which hurt, hinder, and destroy our souls:

Fear

Resentment

Selfishness (Pride, greed, lust,
vanity, etc.)

Dishonesty

These we must let go as we align with God.

Confess

(Admit wrongs to our self, God, and another person as they occur.

These are wrongs done to anyone including ourselves.)

Repent

(Seek God's ways for correction and restoration, turn away from sin and toward God. We ought to build love and peace in line with God's Grace.)

Restitution

(Correct wrongs done to self and others while seeking to restore and heal spiritual hurt wherever it may exist)

Practicing spiritual correction over time provides healing to many.

We teach others by demonstration of God's Character and sharing our inward journey.

Learn, Experience, Persevere, & Endure

Thoughts, beliefs, and actions which heal, restore,
and enrich our souls:

Love
Compassion
Mercy
Forgiveness
Peace
Patience
Spirit
Truth
Justice (impartiality, fairness)
Generosity

These ought to be our ever present focus

Learn & Experience God's Character

(We seek, act, listen, observe, reflect, meditate, pray, sense, feel,
and communicate with God's Spirit continually.)

Persevere & Stand Firm

Having a new experiential understanding of God's Character we
resist our habitual ways and strive to continue in it.

Endure a New Identity

We are renewed in thought, attitude, heart, and soul. Adapting to a
new experiences and understandings enduring many changes.

Progress not perfection

We only compare ourselves with ourselves. We continuously
evaluate ourselves to see how we are growing in God's Character,
Righteousness, Goodness, and Grace.

Identify our wrongs

Wrong and right can be difficult to figure out and each one of us has a completely different view or interpretation of it. What is right for one person may not be right for another. Because of such differences we must individually go to God and learn our own spiritual course of action to move in a continued path along God's Character for correction.

It will be valuable to develop some skillful thinking to better discern what is spiritually wrong and right for us. Self-deception exists and to deny its existence is to feed it. We will discover and learn much more as we grow wiser through our own spiritual development.

Discerning wrong and right will improve as we continue upon this journey. It would be best to first write down what we believe to be wrong and right. We can read books on self defeating behaviors, character defects, and negative attitudes or enroll in philosophy classes. There are many ways to learn wrongs and rights. Yet we each have an inward guide to help us sort out our wrongs if we are willing to seek it out. This is a very personal journey and to avoid getting personal will be to deny ourselves this inward spiritual truth.

If by chance we are clueless and have developed within us a mindset which blocks us against accepting and taking responsibility for our wrongs, then we ought to seek out guidance toward humility and learn to rigorously follow simple continued structure that can illuminate our self deceptive tendencies. Every day we ought to humbly seek out our wrongs. We will need to surround ourselves with others who can point out our errors and we will need to accept our wrongs and correct them. We cannot improve if we do not see how we can improve. Unless we can see where we are wrong, we will not be able to move into correction.

We can begin discovering spiritual growth opportunities by asking those around us how we may have hurt them while evaluating closely our own inward responses throughout the entire process. We may become defensive, as this is a normal response to criticism, but it stems from pride which is spiritually destructive. Humility must become our friend for us to grow.

The more we do not see or wrongs, the more people we will need to listen to, to help our ignorance or unwillingness. Our inward structure sometimes can be so guarded against accepting our wrongs we can become irrational and

unwilling. The bottom line is that we must give into the process of looking at ourselves and accepting how we may have hurt others. And this is a process we must choose to do for our own spiritual growth. Others cannot choose it for us and if we choose to do it for winning others approval we will be doing it incorrectly.

First, we must agree on some basic Godly Character traits to help us navigate together and stay on a similar path toward unity and having a similar mindset. Understanding through the experience of God's Character traits we can better discern right and wrong. Since God's Character traits are spiritually right then its opposites are often times spiritually wrong. We can look for what is oppositional to God's Character Traits for wrongs. See the following examples below.

<u>Probable Wrongs</u>	<u>God's Character Traits</u>
Hate	Love
Don't care	Compassion
No Mercy	Mercy
Resentment	Forgiveness
Anxiety, restless, chaotic	Peace
Rushed, hurried, intolerant	Patience
Superficial, material, worldly	Spirit
Lies, manipulation, exploitation	Truth
Selfish ambition, cheating, stealing, Miserly	Justice (impartiality, fairness) Generosity

Inward identification

Within us lies a set of beliefs based upon our unique experiences. We have developed habits which we rely upon consciously or subconsciously to navigate our decisions and choices. We form traditions, customs, rituals, and manners which we get used to, comfortable with, and dependent upon. We expect them, anticipate them, and can be easily upset if they get canceled for whatever reason. These can easily lead us into a form of favoritism and idolatry.

Someone who is left handed will favor left handed devices. Someone who speaks english will prefer the english language. When we get accustomed to a form of sin, which often involves rituals, we will rely, expect, prefer, favor, and look forward to our participation in it. Our thoughts will not be with God nor God's Character. We will selfishly be hoping to participate in our self-deceived self-gratification. We will seek out to fulfill our dependency upon our ritual for our anticipated 'good feeling'. There may be times when seek out the ritual, because it is our ritual and what we do. Our identity can get completely caught up in our ritual to where we feel enslaved by it.

James 1 **14** But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. **15** Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. NKJV

We each have preferences within us that almost instinctively move us into judgements and rationalizations in favor of such preferences. Unfortunately, some of these preferences are spiritually unhealthy. And when we have trained ourselves over and over to perform rituals our bodies will lean us toward repetition of it. If we do not do it, it will feel very awkward and perhaps even wrong.

Just like our outward rituals, customs, and traditions, our inward thoughts and attitudes can become habitual to deny, excuse, avoid, complain, blame, hurry, fear, be dishonest or angry. Many of us may be inclined to move quickly or say things that are not true. It is essential that we choose to not let our habits, preferences, and leanings control us away from God's Character. On the contrary, we must choose to let God's Character control us away from our preferences and favoritism. Instead of half truths or white lies, we speak the truth. We do it because it is the spiritually right thing to do.

We must agreed to let go of our worldly ways and seek the development of God's Character. We must begin to recognize our attitudes, thoughts, habits, and beliefs that are out of alignment with God's Character and begin making correction with it. Our instruction is to align ourselves more and more with God's Character traits.

We can evaluate ourselves and our relationship interactions. Here are some sample evaluation questions to evaluate dishonesty: Have we lied to avoid conflict, used false flattery for encouragement, or manipulated conversations for comfort? Did we lie for some selfish gain? Have we lost trust or hurt our

own integrity due to our dishonesty? Are others upset, resentful, or disappointed due to our lies?

Here are some sample evaluation questions of being hasty: Have we been hasty with others cutting conversations short, interrupting people, or finishing their sentences? Are we quick to speak and slow to listen? Do we value our pace more importantly than others? Do we become angry or frustrated when we have to slow down or when we do not get things as fast as we want? How do we feel when we have to wait? Do we see others as slow? If others are slow do we think lowly of them?

These are some example ideas which we ought to deeply reflect upon daily. We ought to meditate on God's Character to help us better see and understand the opposing thoughts, beliefs, and habits we will need to begin correcting.

In the process of learning about our faults, wrongs, and imperfections we can have an inclination to defend our preferences and habitual leanings often without much thought. We can instinctively deny accusations, avoid facing our wrongs, and quite the process of correction with believable reasons or justifications. This is a dangerous fact for many of us.

Facing and correcting our misaligned development will require personal sacrifice and denying ourselves. This is the process of admitting our ways are wrong and God's ways are right. We must learn to deny our self interests for the sake of growing in God's interests. Our sinful rituals and traditions must be let go and God's Character traits or principles must be practiced.

We have choices to make, which can involve thinking in a manner that can appear to be self defeating. The choices we need to make each day, will involve acting contrary to our preferences and leanings. These rituals and traditions may have been deeply developed into our personality. It can feel as though obedience to God's Character is killing our identity. This is a very good thing. Our personality has been attached and linked to spiritual destruction. The discomfort and suffering we can experience can be similar to drug addicts denying urges to use. Still, many drug addicts find a new way of life and identity away from their previously developed rituals, customs, preferences, and traditions.

Every day we must deny our selfish ways and seek God's ways. We must make the choice of denying our personal preferences for God's. Over time as we purify our hearts we will learn more and more of God's Goodness and Grace. We will slowly develop new preferences with God's ways and be more and more in God's favor and/or favor God.

We can go back and forth with good days and not so good days. Our denial and avoidance can conjure up fear, pride, resentment, many forms of selfishness/self preservation, and dishonesty. We may rationalize and justify ideas to keep ourselves from choosing Godly correction. Every day we ought to carefully examine our thinking and attitude to see that it is moving toward God and God's Character or we will easily be tricked back into our previously developed spiritually destructive ways. Avoiding or skipping days of this personal spiritual responsibility can be detrimental toward our spiritual growth. If we are not growing with God we are probably moving in the direction of sin.

Each day we ought to get our thoughts focused upon God's Character and identify prompting thoughts toward misalignment. At first it will require extra effort, but if we can continue doing it consistently, it gets easier and can become a habit requiring less effort. Recognizing error and better understanding correction improves our discernment abilities.

As our discernment improves we can learn to sense spiritual wrongs and God's Goodness while building our inward ability to quickly address old destructive patterns and make corrections more quickly and smoothly. We will fear the suffering of self-denial less and look more forward to the experience of God's Peace and Love. We can learn to see more our gains with God and less our loss of self. As we learn to experience love more and more we can build new rituals, customs, and traditions with sincerity, truth, compassion, justice, mercy, forgiveness, peace, and generosity.

Identifying Fear

Fear is involved in most, if not all, of our inward difficulties. Most of our anger stems from a perceived threat of some variety which has to do with fear. Fear delay, fear betrayal or being taken advantage of, fear of losing money or not having enough, fear of losing _____ (fill in the blank), fear death, fear life, fear children, and we can add an almost endless list of identified phobias.

Fear exists within us all every day and when it is used correctly it helps us to discern and keep us safe. Spiritually healthy fear would develop from perceiving a threat which God views as a threat. A threat to God's purposes and Kingdom would be a form of healthy fear. Learning healthy forms of fear will come gradually to us as we pursue our own development of God's Character within us.

Similarly, resentment and anger which moves out of God's Character, ought to be removed from our participation in it. Instead of focusing and reliving within our minds over and over the event which we resent, we shift our thinking toward God's Character of Mercy, Forgiveness, Peace, etc. We accept responsibility of our obsession or persistent holding on to issue at hand and seek God's Grace/Character to let it pass and fade away. We can understand this more as we participate in it.

Selfishness occurs when we consider our plans, ideas, preferences, expectations, and entitlements ahead of or more important than God's. We want it our way and we don't want to wait. Again, we ought to shift our thinking to trust and rely upon God's Character for the benefit of God's Kingdom.

The devil is about dishonesty. Manipulation, exaggeration, distortion, half-truths, and white lies are dishonest and of the devil. Truth can be evil when it comes from anger, selfishness, and/or fear. Truth spoken in sincere love and compassion befitting all of God's Character is never evil. It is truth which sincerely encourages others to improve spiritually.

We ought to take time each day in the morning and at night to reveal and identify our misaligned attitudes and beliefs. In the morning we ought to set our minds toward staying alert with our inward activity to assess and discern what thoughts are guiding us into action. When we notice a thought pattern prompting us into an activity which moves us away from God's goodness we ought to write it down.

Most of us will have plenty of items to write down. For many of us, it may be overwhelming. It's overwhelming because we have decided in our minds how wrong and off we are from God's Character. Let us end our self-judgment of where we ought to be with God. Instead, simply begin seeking new Godly thoughts and actions and let God do what God does. Our self-judgement can

poison our motivation and is not of God. Self-judgement which lowers our motivation to seek God has to do with fear. Let's turn that over and shift our thoughts into faith and trust with God's Character each time fear creeps in. And if it takes all day, which is often not the case, then so be it. All day shifting our thoughts towards God can be a very good thing to do.

Confession

We confess our wrongs by sharing our identified and acknowledged wrongs with ourselves, another person, and God. This is a spiritual task involving mind, heart, and soul. We are sharing our wrongs with the full intent of correcting them through repentance and restitution.

When a confession is done correctly it is done with a humble, sincere, and honest attitude that what we did was wrong. If we do not believe it was wrong then we are simply speaking empty words devoid of spiritual value. Our hearts and minds both must be involved and present in order to sense God's Goodness. If we are hardhearted, walled up, stiff necked, and insensitive we may block out the hoped for end result of forgiveness.

Choosing someone to confess with ought to be done with some thought and consideration. We ought to remember our goal is to admit and share our wrongs. If we confess with someone who does not understand what we are doing or why we are doing it may have little affect or impact. It would be best to meet with someone who has a fair understanding of spiritual values and God's Character. Our goal is to reduce our wrongs and improve in God's Righteousness, so being with someone who can better point the Way will be quite helpful.

When we confess we ought to avoid rushing the process. It's best to search ourselves as we share for our inward message about what is right and wrong. We can learn to sense right and wrong in new ways. Asking questions and listening to feedback can raise our awareness.

As we share our wrongs our minds and hearts can be in a position to see the value of restitution. This would be a good time to touch on the process of restitution. We must not jump into restitution with the goal of winning back approval from our loved ones, employer, legal issues, etc. This would be involving selfish ambition and would come to little spiritual growth if not bring spiritual destruction. Haste is often of the enemy. Patience is of God.

Like any other learning, we ought to soak in the confession process. We ought to sit a while and think about what we have learned and sensed in the experience. It would be of high value to write about it with as much inward sensing detail as possible. We can keep what we have written in a safe place for future reflection as we learn more about spiritual values on our journey. Reading some spiritual material about Character or guidance in life may affirm what we sensed in the experience. Also, conversing with others about the experience can help us even further answering their questions and getting their feedback. Their different mindset can help us see things outside of our own awareness.

Many of us may still feel confused about the spiritual side of us and the world. Yet the confession is a beginning to experience the process. As we continue experiencing God's Ways and Character we will, through evaluation, reflection, and examination, learn more and more about God's kingdom present with us. Yet only if we continue with regular pursuit of confession, repentance, restitution, and Godly Character engagement.

Here is a story that provides an example of how to identify, confess, and correct spiritual wrongs.

"I was at work thinking about all the inefficiencies within the work place. I was becoming angry and hurt by the irresponsibility and unprofessionalism. I would focus on the damage the lack of training caused everyone including the clients. My anger began to hurt my relationships and my sanity. I was quite unsettled and the severity of my disposition brought fear. I went to God and began seeking God's will. I realized God was patient and I was not. God was forgiving and I was holding grudges. God was merciful and I was inwardly wanting others to suffer.

My character was way out of line with God's will. I reached out to a support group and discussed my struggles (confession) and new focus with God. I met with a mentor to get some ideas on how to better connect with God. I learned about God's Character traits and how I could better practice them throughout my day.

I needed to begin making changes in my thinking and in my attitude. I began setting my thoughts each morning upon God's love and peace. I prayed for strength to become more merciful, patient, and forgiving. As I practiced this

new focus and attitude I became less angry. As I imagined in my mind peaceful things I became more patient and helpful toward others. I practiced thought statements which guided me to slow down and use words that better aligned with God's Character traits. I stopped looking at how wrong others were and instead focused on how I could help them spiritually.

I learned to recognize when my thoughts were focused on fear, resentment, or selfishness, and to shift them toward God's Character. I realized that whatever problem I believed existed, the solution for me was to set my heart, mind, and strength in the direction of God's Character. Humbly praying for help toward such things was the beginning of spiritual wisdom.

As a result, my relationships improved, my attitude improved, and I became far more productive at work. I also became more willing to speak toward changes at work which helped management improve. I began to enjoy my job more and appreciate the work I was able to do. My home life improved and I felt closer to God. Stress had dropped significantly and I could think more clearly. The more I aligned with God's Character the better my life became."

Repent

Repenting is turning to God and God wants our heart, mind, and strength to be with God. This action is spiritual correction. Once we have identified our wrong we can begin participation toward corrective action. To turn from means we are cease participation in one thing and begin participating in another: Instead of lying we speak the truth, instead of harboring resentments we forgive, instead of not caring we have compassion, instead of being hasty and pushy we become patient, etc.

In order to repent we must change our thought attitudes. Our minds conjure up many different reasons to justify our attitudes and actions. We ought to begin practicing turning away from justifying spiritual destruction and finding justification for God's Character. We need more thoughts to support our participation into God's Character. Instead of thinking fearful thoughts, "I'll do it tomorrow," or "nobody else is doing it," we can think to ourselves encouraging thoughts, "I'll do it now so I can feel better later," or "I can be the one who begins which can help someone else."

There are many thought strategies that can help. Here are some common expressions used in recovery; One day at a time, easy does it, first things first,

and keep it simple stupid or keep it simple sweetie - KISS. We all benefit from motivation and encouragement. We ought to encourage ourselves more and more into God's Goodness, Righteousness, Character, and Grace. Repentance involves change. We ought to continuously seek out conforming and aligning more and more into God's Character.

Restitution

Restoring spiritual damage is extremely healthy for our spirit and soul. Spiritual damage can develop quickly and easily, sometimes without our awareness of it. We can be surrounded by others who are deeply hurt and not even notice. Our actions, inactions, habits, manners, preferences, appearance, friends, family, and even how we dress can upset people. It is paramount that we do not seek to please others for what they want, expect, insist, or believe they need. We must seek out God's Character and anything contrary to it can quickly and easily lead to destruction within us and around us.

We ought to assess carefully what we have done to hurt others. We ought to be thorough each day to learn and discover more about ourselves which can illuminate wrongs we have done. When we become aware of wrongs we have done we can write them down and think of how to bring restoration. If we have broken something we replace it. If we have stolen money we pay it back. If we are uncertain of the amount It's better to pay more than pay less.

Often times there are scenarios where we cannot restore the damage so specifically. The person may have passed away or the item is irreplaceable. We may not know how to locate someone. The goal of this restoration is not black and white. We have hurt the spiritual kingdom and our path is to restore it. When we create distrust by our dishonesty we must then pursue ways of creating trust through honesty. When we steal and deplete others from material we must then give to others material needs. It is essential that we are bringing to the spiritual kingdom more goodness each day.

We have before us an opportunity to cleanse our conscience, purify our heart, and bring peace. As we practice God's Character not only do we benefit, but everyone benefits. The peace we experience inward by our outward engagement of God's Character produces a similar affect in those who receive and/or witness it. There is a ripple effect in our thoughts, attitudes, choices, and actions. What we do today will certainly shape our tomorrow.

Through our restoration process we ought to at first experience humility followed by love. Our love of God's Character and Ways demonstrated to heal and restore our spiritual damage through various forms of restorative actions can bring with it a new confidence, faith, peace, and joy. It can reduce fear, shame, anger, and selfish ambition. We will gain much insight into the spiritual world within and around us making us more efficient with God's Character. This only comes through our participation, practice, and experience.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." NKJV

The process of developing a new attitude with new character requires our steady thinking and regular participation with it. We must also have our hearts invested fully to the experience with a willingness to endure the discomfort of change.

Mark 12:30 “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment.” NKJV

Learn

We learn by doing

1 John 4 7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. NKJV

Spiritual learning is an inward experience. Something happens when we kneel down. The process of humbling ourselves has a direct affect upon our inward condition. With a humble attitude we can experience more effectively God’s Character. Participation in God’s Character with sincerity can humble our attitude. God’s Character and our humble attitude seem to work well together.

There is an expression that is used, “you had to have been there.” This means if we were not part of the event we cannot understand. If we are not part of the spiritual transformation process, we cannot understand.

Can anyone who has never given birth to a child understand the experience of it? Can anyone who has never been married understand what it is like to be married for 50 years? Can someone understand prison who has never been there? To understand poverty, we must experience it. To understand war we need to have served in it. To understand forgiveness we must participate in both forgiving and being forgiven. And the depth of the forgiveness affects the depth of the experience.

Luke 7:47 Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” NKJV

There are times for books and then there are times to put the books away and begin to practice doing what they say. For our purposes, it is time to move into experiential training of our heart, mind, strength, and soul. Each day we ought to seek out deeper spiritual experiences of God's Character with others to better learn and understand the intangible nature of God's spiritual tools God desires us to use.

The spiritual kingdom is unseen. Love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, truth, justice, peace, and generosity all are qualities we can learn more about through engagement and practice. They are intangible qualities that require some skill to assess, sense, and understand. Our skill at sensing and evaluating God's Character can improve with willingness, truth, humility, effort, perseverance and endurance.

Willing to learn by experience

John 5:39 You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. 40 But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life. NKJV

There will be days when we will not feel like serving and obeying God. Are we willing to persevere through trials toward God's Character, Goodness, and Grace? Are we willing to suffer as a Biblical Christian? Are we willing to obey and follow God's Ways and Purposes no matter what? This is the kind of willingness needed to understand the spiritual kingdom. Sacrifice of our old self, ideas, desires, and habits will be required.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. NKJV

Willingness is not just agreeing to go through the motions and do what others do. The willingness required for best results spiritually is that our heart, mind, soul, and strength align with God's Purpose and Character. Acting like we love is far less involved and helpful than actually loving with all our heart, all our mind, all our strength, and all our soul. Many of us have never even tried it, yet it is the most central and basic instruction for every Christian and Jew.

If we are willing to give it all to God, then we will put forth everything we have in our heart, mind, soul, and strength to love God and all God's

Character. Our belief about our willingness may be different than our actual willingness. If we believe we love God, but do not, then our beliefs are in disagreement with our actions. Many of us intend good things and then for whatever reason we do not follow through with our intentions. And it is easy to justify our goodness by our intentions, but the truth is that intentions without action are rarely helpful at all. Let us judge ourselves by our actions.

There are no justifiable excuses to delay, postpone, or reduce our efforts to be less than God clearly requires. One common expression used in recovery circles is, “Are you willing to go to any length to stay sober?” Our God is what we serve and many times our God can be comfort. We want to do things that will make us feel good and avoid things that create discomfort. We must be willing to move into discomfort to experience God’s Character.

Effort & Diligence

In the process of changing we can experience our habitual ways influencing us to act on them. Change will require us to hold off against the habitual influences while paying attention and practicing the new Character. Struggle is part of the journey. Let’s look again at the inward character traits we ought to be remembering and continuing to struggle against and toward on a daily basis. We ought to struggle away from hate and toward Love, away from resentment and toward Forgiveness, away from anxiety and toward Peace, away from dishonesty and toward Truth and away from selfishness and toward generosity. Redirection is a common activity. As we grow more and more in our abilities to seek out and humbly participate in God’s Character we may realize that what was once new experiences are becoming more habit forming. God’s Character can become more the norm requiring less effort to experience. We must continue to see how we can grow and improve without decreasing our effort and diligence.

Although experiencing God requires effort and diligence, we will increasingly be developing ourselves toward peace. We will move from pride to humility and from hurry to patience.

Truth

As described previously we all have false assumptions based upon our culture, traditions, habits, and customs which lead us into self-deception on a regular basis. We justify our actions, choices, and thought-life due to comfort

levels, fear, and our limited understanding. If we can't see our self-deception then we are blinded by it.

We ought to progressively be moving in the direction of deeper honesty and sincerity in ways that influence others. If other people are not being affected by our sincerity and honest love, then it probably isn't very deep and we will have much work yet to do. Most of us live in a shallow society that would be confused around sincere love. It can become socially awkward and deviant. So we can, to some degree, gauge our demonstration and involvement with sincere love by noticing how others respond. If others are not responding abnormally then its probably safe to assume we are behaving at normal levels of superficial engagement or hiding Grace. Neither of these responses seem to be in line with God's will, at least generally speaking. There may be circumstances where its the safest thing to do.

However, if we are noticing great abnormality in responses by others in ways of compliments, appreciation, and affirmations of our sincere caring from our heart then we are most likely in the process of shaping spiritual truth. Of course there are other reactions as well by those who may be envious, jealous, or uncomfortable by such truth and sincerity.

Whatever the case may be of social responses we ought to always remind ourselves it is God that we serve and not people. We ought to seek out participation with God's goodness to grow the experience in ourselves and others. Let's look at the list of God's Character Traits again.

Probable Wrongs

Hate
Don't care
No Mercy
Resentment
Anxiety, restless, chaotic
Rushed, hurried, intolerant
Superficial, material, worldly
Lies, manipulation, exploitation
Selfish ambition, cheating, stealing,
Miserly

God's Character Traits

Love
Compassion
Mercy
Forgiveness
Peace
Patience
Spirit
Truth
Justice (impartiality, fairness)
Generosity

Embrace Humility

Pride can often be what gets in the way of asking for help. It's easy to get the idea that asking for help is to say we are weak. In a world moving more and more in the direction of self-sufficiency our minds may already have an understanding that asking others for help is wrong. Asking for help can be the best starting point, but we must be willing to follow the instructions.

If we go to the doctor and he says to do certain exercises or sets up a diet for us to follow and we don't do it, then we are the problem. Sometimes it seems as though people ask for help, but are quick to refuse the help. This is an attitude of denial and destruction.

We may face disinterest or hesitation when we ask for help. The other person may be assessing your readiness. They may be evaluating how much time they have because they already work with others. We ought to be careful not to judge hesitation. We ought to keep our hearts and minds focused upon God and not swayed by responses from people. If we only seek out help by asking one person and stop, what does that say about our willingness or effort? We continue to ask for help and take corrective action.

God opposes the proud. If we try to show others how great we are or even how great God is with pride and boasting, then we are missing the mark. Sincere Love for each other can come through humble service. Being humble is to not know the answers, but with an open mind and willing heart seek the truth while accepting our faults and inadequacies.

Our concern has more to do with influencing others hearts and spirit than minds. Humble communication is best done nonverbally through action then words alone. When we approach others first with sincere empathy to understand and relate with how they feel, we can bring Godly Compassion which can set our hearts and minds correctly. When we embrace the attitude of God's Love our thinking aligns more correctly with God.

Read the prayer of St. Francis below for more instruction on humility:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.

Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.
O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer_of_Saint_Francis

This prayer can be a great tool to help us grow toward humility, if we do what it says with our hearts and minds. Remember that we are self-deceived whenever we are self-seeking because self-seeking is the problem. We ought to question ourselves constantly and aim for objectivity. Asking for feedback from others and observing their responses and reactions can help us to assess ourselves more truthfully. Do others see us as humble and objective or defensive and arrogant? These can be good questions for increased self awareness.

Perseverance and Endurance

Growth and development takes time and it ought to include the rest of our lives. The condition of our heart, mind, and soul will always be contingent upon what we seek, follow, obey, experience, and put into practice. Are we willing, willing for change? We ought to continuously assess our condition, watch for temptation, and seek out improvement toward God's Character.

Complacency can easily develop within our hearts and minds. After a time, which varies for each of us, we can reach a point where our thoughts will wander away from God and we will seek out something else; money, relationship, sex, sports, material things, prestige, education, career, etc. Other interest can sneak in and take us away from pursuing God like the tide in the ocean can sweep us away from the shore. We get distracted like a dog

chasing a shiny light. Before we know it we are asking ourselves where God went? Yet it was ourselves that let our thoughts drift away from persevering and pursuing God's Character and Grace.

Did we stop meditation, sincere and honest prayer, or examining ourselves for improvement in God's Character? Have we reduced our attendance at supportive groups, groups that are actively growing in God's Character? Are we spending time with others who are stagnant in their growth and blending in with their stagnation?

The solution for stagnation is a steady and focused engagement to love God with all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. It is easy to be swept away into conforming with the world. We must always be watchful for its tempting and persuasive tactics. The world speaks all day long to follow it. We must be careful what we choose to listen to.

Resentment of groups, churches, pastors, mentors, congregations, family, and even self can sneak in with justified reasons to leave. Resentment is not from God. It is best not to let resentment make decisions for us. Let us make decisions with love, peace, truth, justice, mercy, and forgiveness. Then it will be better aligned with God's will.

We are all self-deceived and no one is perfect. It can be easy to judge others as stupid, lazy, hypocritical, dishonest, or falling short of perfection. If we get discouraged by others when they are selfish, dishonest, or unwilling and decide the group is no longer helpful, then we may be falling for temptation of arrogance, impatience, and pride. Can we claim humility and sincere love with such an attitude of judgement? We must be careful with our hearts to ensure we are not dissuade by others who fall short of perfection. Instead, we can help others and perhaps in the process learn more about our own handicaps.

Even our closest friends, family members, pastors, and mentors can drift away from God's Grace and Character. These situations as they come up can be challenging and our path can involve many difficult challenges. We must continue and persevere to remain in God's Goodness no matter what the challenge we may face. When others drift away or become interested elsewhere we must continue with God for God's Grace.

Sometimes the group we are with can split or move in a different direction. It takes effort and intention to not partake in the collective expectation of others. When a group decides something is right and beneficial and we believe God wants otherwise, there can be fear of conflict, disapproval, disregard, resentment, frustration, and mistreatment. We can face losing social status, financial gains, and friends. Will we sacrifice God's Character to fit in with a group or will we endure with God's Character? Everyday we are faced with a choice of what or who to serve. Avoiding the choice is still a choice. If we choose to follow a group then we are responsible for that choice. The solution for poor choices lies in forgiveness and repentance back into God's Character and Grace.

It's helpful to keep our focus on what we can gain from choosing God. Instead of viewing the loss of friends, family, job, etc. due to our improvement in God's Character we can look toward the possibility of new relationships focused more on sincere love for each other.

God's Character together

Let's imagine for a moment the possibility of being united with a group of spiritually broken people who are actively seeking healing and restoration through the development of God's Character. The goal of the group will be to seek out God's Character more and more. Each person will have different strengths and be at different points along their journey of perseverance and endurance. Some will be rather new on their journey with much confusion, fear, and impatience. While others will be much further down the road guiding and encouraging others to persevere and endure with sincere love and patience.

Such a group can become quite close, spiritually, as they make their spiritual development the highest aim of each day. Sincerity, Truth, Compassion, Justice, Love, and Peace practiced together in conversations, study, and prayer over time and holding true for Grace and Goodness. Having the goal of humbling themselves, eliminating pride, acknowledging their wrongs openly with forgiveness and mercy, repenting at each gathering, all to experience God's Goodness more and more. Such an entity can evoke a wide spread of emotional experience with each other. Hearts that were once calloused will be able to sense intimacy again and mourn freely, grieving past repressed pain and spiritual harm.

In order for people to be together in Spirit they must become more unified with the mind and the heart. Secrets can lead to spiritual destruction and anything which stimulates fear of sharing secrets, like gossip, put downs, belittling, condescending communication, and even sarcasm, ought to be discouraged and corrected immediately with sensitivity toward those who are sharing.

Sharing out to focus on the process of experiencing God's Character in mind, heart, strength, and soul. We must be actively involved in producing Godly thoughts and action each day. Any day we choose to avoid God's Character is the day we choose not to follow God.

Love - First and foremost we ought to love God with all our mind, heart, strength and soul.

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. NKJV

If we look at what is required to lay down a life for a friend we might first see self-sacrifice. Understanding that Love is a heart activity we can assume the self-sacrifice comes from the heart and compassion. It might be good to pause here and reflect on what we would be willing to lay our life down. Do we have a friend we love enough to be willing to die? Do we have a friend we love enough to make a great sacrifice? What great personal sacrifices have we made for a friend?

1 Corinthians 13 **2** And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. NKJV

Love is essential for all things spiritual. We can memorize the entire Bible, have the largest following of people in the world, and still be nothing to God. We must thoroughly examine ourselves each day for God's Love in our heart, mind, and soul. Otherwise we just be fools following common practices of self-deception. Love encompasses all of God's Character together. It is the essence of God's Grace. To deny or resist Love is to deny or resist God.

1 Peter 4:8 And above all things have fervent love for one another, for "love will cover a multitude of sins." NKJV

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins. NKJV

Sin is anything that is not in the direction of God's will. Love corrects and is repentance in action. Our first thought and action in any situation ought to carry with it the experience of Love. Love is an active, healing, and spiritual developing tool that can restore and improve minds, relationships, families, churches, and much more.

Proverbs 15:17 Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, Than a fatted calf with hatred. NKJV

Let's ponder for a moment hatred, then love, then hatred, and then love again like someone judging wine or food. Let's experience each in our minds and hearts taking time to understand what they evoke within us.

Imagine joining people we despise for the benefit of money, status, or food. How does it affect our hearts and minds? What does hatred do to our physical body? Is there stress? Do our muscles tense? Do we become more anxious? Are we uncomfortable? What if we did this each week? How would such a condition affect our mind, body, heart, and spirit repeated over and over with persistence and endurance? Wouldn't this be a slow course of death or journey to hell? Can we imagine the misery that would be produced over years of such experiences?

Let's imagine now the experience of living simple with deep love and affection. Imagine joining others we love and feel connected with for the benefit of mutual affection and understanding. How does it affect our hearts and minds? What does love do to our physical body? Is there peace or joy? Do our muscles relax? Are we relieved or calmed? Are we comfortable? What if we did this each week? How would such a condition affect our mind, body, heart, and spirit repeated over and over with persistence and endurance? Wouldn't this be a slow course of spiritual healing, restoration, encouragement, and journey into heaven? Can we imagine the blessings, beauty, and Goodness that would be produced over years of such experiences?

Let's breath deep the truth in this contemplation without self-deceptive thinking, rationalization of fear, etc. Our choices will lead us down the path of our future toward spiritual life or death. Let's choose carefully and knowingly what we are to develop with our activities and with what we participate.

Romans 13:10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. NKJV

Proverbs 11:12 He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, But a man of understanding holds his peace.

Read Luke 10:25-37 (preferably with a group, if not with a group imagine your are with people you know as you answer the following questions, imagine their possible responses)

Who is “your neighbor?”

Would a neighbor be someone we see on a regular basis?

Would a neighbor be someone we see in distress or need of help?

What does Jesus mean in verse 37 “Go and do likewise”

Have we done “likewise?”

Do we know someone who has done “likewise?”

How can we “do likewise” this week or today?

1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. NKJV

Love is God’s gift of Grace that can set us free, bring us peace, and heal our inward spiritual condition more and more as we grow and participate in it. To do so, we must set our minds on it consistently and persistently each day while giving continuous attention to our heart. Our minds and hearts ought to work together in Love outward toward others for spiritual unity, healing, restoration, encouragement, support, empathy, understanding, and belonging. This is the essence of being a follower of God and/or Christian.

Thank God for Love.

Patience and Peace

Slow down. The mind can easily become filled with conflicts, fear, frustration, and selfish motivations. When conflicts occur we ought to submit ourselves toward the process of resolution ensuring we are taking appropriate action and then give the results up to God. We can make decisions as to where and how to invest our thinking to ensure our thoughts in moving in a direction in agreement with God’s Character. Some days we may need to live one thought at a time guiding our moments toward how we can better serve God by God’s Character. A simple prayer can be, “God, please help me focus on your love

and peace and trust in you. Please remove from me any desires or beliefs which interferes with your Peace.”

Meditation can help us to slow down. Our restless expectations and the replaying of worrisome events in our life within our minds can get our racing thoughts going like a wheel spinning round and round. Each time we think about an unmet perceived need our bodies can react in agitation. In meditation we can practice thought control to stop thinking about the unmet perceived need and realize God’s Goodness. As we stop spinning that wheel with our worrisome thinking the wheel can slow down and our bodies can eventually relax. For some people this might be accomplished in 5 minutes while others it can take 5 days. The more we practice it, the better we get at it.

2 Corinthians 10:5 casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ