

DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?

ALLOWING GOD TO HEAL BROKENNESS
IN YOUR LIFE



TOM MANN

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By Thomas W. Mann

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Acknowledgements

I know this is usually a part of a book that nobody reads! But, I have some people I'd like you to meet.

Having worked as a political consultant, I know the importance of polling and focus grouping an idea or product. This book was no exception. I chose a group of people to read the drafts of this work who are quite diverse in their backgrounds and relationships to me. Not unexpectedly, they all came back with a different set of comments, unrelated yet comprehensive. As with any such group, I agreed with some of what was said and stayed pig headed about other comments. But without their encouragement and help, this book would suck. Let me introduce you to some folks:

Lisa Mann – my wife of 20 years. She probably had the hardest job because husbands are so bad at listening to the critiques of their wives. She was gentle with comments and even convinced me to change the title of the book. She is my partner in every sense of the word and I could not do what I do in my life without her by my side.

Donna Weeden – is my eldest sister. Not having known her or grown up around her, it is amazing how alike we are. I chose her because she is as cynical as I am so I knew her critique would be tough, which is what I was looking for.

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Nicky Cribb – and her husband, Sam, are some of our closest friends. Nicky worked with me in the newspaper business as a reporter and later in politics. Sam was a Marine Corps Presidential Guard and protected Ronald Reagan among other duties. Nicky knows me pretty well, having worked with me, been friends with me, and even choosing Lisa and me as the godparents to her children. I figured she would give me honest feedback, which she did! I also think she was getting back at me for all the editing I did to her newspaper stories!

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message held within the book and if they thought there was any truth to it. I appreciated their discernment very much.

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Jesus – has been my personal therapist since 1988 and the driving force behind this book. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, including share with you the gift Jesus has given me – healing and a life worth living.

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Introduction

If you're reading this, you or someone you know is suffering and you're looking for something – anything – that will help ease the pain. I get that. In fact, I tried all sorts of things to try to ease my pain, ranging from alcohol to relationships to work – anything to relieve the brokenness in my soul. None of it worked.

If you read the New Testament, it seems that Jesus spent quite a bit of time healing people. Most my life I just took it on faith that these things happened and they were just part of the story of His ministry. Then one day I was looking at a particular healing story and it just hit me out of the blue. Did Jesus just ask that guy if he *wanted* to be healed?

The story is in John 5:1-18. Here's the *Reader's Digest* version: There's a pool just outside the gates of the city called Bethesda. People go to it for healing. For 38 years an invalid has been trying to get into the pool to be healed but nobody helps him and he can't make it there on his own power. So, for 38 years this guy just sits on the perimeter of the pool helplessly watching as others go into the healing waters. Jesus shows up, asks the guy if he wants to be healed, the guy says yes, and Jesus heals him.

On its face, it's a pretty simple story. But here's the question that hit me: If the guy's been there for 38 years trying to get into the water, wouldn't *everyone* know this guy's story? Surely it would be common knowledge. Yet, Jesus shows up at the healing pool and asks the guy if he wants to be healed. What a stupid question! Of course, he wants to be healed! He's only been trying for 38 years! That's the entire reason the guy's there! Then I asked myself, why would Jesus ask a question He obviously already knows the answer to?

I figured it out. Okay, that's not true. God revealed it to me – I'm not that smart on my own! Here it is: Jesus will heal us but we have to be ready and willing to accept that healing.

I thought about that for some time and realized that I had asked for God's healing many times in my life without result. But when I was honest with myself, I knew that I wanted God to heal me *my* way – a way in which I could hang on to my stuff and be in control yet get healed in areas I chose. When Jesus would ask me, "Do you want to be healed?" I'd say, "Yes, please, but let's do it this way!" What Jesus heard was, "No thank you, I'm not ready to be healed yet."

Here's the secret to healing: It has a cost.

You have to be willing to submit yourself fully to God in order for Him to work in your life and bless you to the full. When Jesus asked me if I wanted to be healed, most of the time my answer was, "Of course!!" I should have been more thoughtful because I wasn't ready and I proved it by hanging on to my drinking, and anger, and manipulation, and defense mechanisms, and blaming, and emotional abusing, my insecurities and the rest. It wasn't until I learned that you can't have it both ways – you can't expect God to heal you while you keep one foot firmly planted in your dysfunction – that I came to an understanding of why Jesus asks that question.

Do you want to be healed?

Are you willing to pay the price?

This book is about how God can and will heal you, but you have to be willing to pay the price. And believe me, there is a price. However, the difficulties you will face paying those costs will pale in comparison to the freedom you will be gaining through your personal sacrifice. I know, because I've done all the things I'm going to ask you to do in the following pages.

What am I going to ask you to do? Take a look!

1. Get your faith life straight – understand your relationship with God
2. Get your prayer life straight – understand how to talk with God
3. Seek and give forgiveness – swallow your pride and do the right thing
4. Allow God to transform you – learn to let go of the false defenses and hang onto God
5. Get ready for a fight – Satan has you by the throat and doesn't want you to be healed
6. Get your perspective straight – understand just who you are in the Lord
7. Stop making excuses – the time is now to accept Jesus' healing

I don't know about you, but when I was challenged to take these seven steps I was terrified about what it would mean. I was scared I wouldn't be able to protect myself anymore, as well as constantly hurt without my defense mechanisms and walls to keep people out. I was afraid I would lose me – the person I like – to whatever God was going to turn me into. I was nervous about admitting my guilt in all of this. Then I realized that I was living my life in fear, which is no life at all.

I'm not going to lie – this stuff is hard. And, it may get more difficult before it gets better because these seven challenges will force you to open all those boxes in your head where you've been keeping all those demons locked up and compartmentalized. But, it will get better. Once you commit yourself, God will do amazing things.

I've added a workbook in the appendix of this book that may help you move forward as you grapple with these issues. There are 12 exercises I think can really make a difference in your life by showing you where you are and where God wants you to go!

Do you want to be healed?

If so, read on.

Glossary of Churchy Words

There are a number of words used in this book that I consider “Churchy” words. You know, words thrown around in church circles that are only used by churchy people. Well, this is a Christian-based book so I kind of got stuck using some of them. But I thought I’d provide a glossary so when you run across them in the text, you can figure out what I am saying!

Agape

Greek word for unconditional love. Agape is the love we are to have toward one another. Love your neighbor as yourself, and as Jesus taught, love each other as I have loved you.

Atone

To atone or the term atonement is similar to saying something has been paid for. If I atone for my wrong doing, I have paid a price or made it right. Jesus was our atonement for our sin.

Baptism of the Holy Spirit

Upon accepting Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are placed in the body of Christ (believers) as the Holy Spirit enters your life. Afterward you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and given spiritual gifts.

Christ like

Christ was the embodiment of God on earth. As followers, we strive daily to be like Christ – think and act as Jesus did when He walked the Earth. To be “Christ-like” is to do as Christ did and to do as Christ commands.

Guilt Offering

In the Jewish tradition, the priests would make an offering to God in order to confess the nation’s sins and seek forgiveness. The offering had to be a “blood” offering – an animal had to be sacrificed to show just how serious sin is. Jesus was our “Guilt Offering” in that He offered Himself at the cross, confessing the world’s sin and seeking eternal forgiveness for those who believed unto Him.

Heroes of the Faith

Biblical characters who were faithful to God’s calling and did what God told them to do.

Indwelt by the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit actually is “in” you as a believer. You are supernaturally engaged by the Holy Spirit living in you, also known as “indwelt” or indwelling.

Inspired Word of God

The concept that the Bible writers used their words, but were inspired to write what they did directly from the Holy Spirit, meaning that the Bible is, indeed, God’s word to us.

New Creation in Christ

Accepting Jesus as your Lord and Savior really means you are willing to allow God to change you – to transform you from what you were to what you are meant to be as a child of God. Jesus taught that when you accept Him as your Lord and Savior you will be a new person in Him, meaning you will be reconciled to God fully who will see you as holy and righteous in His eyes due to Jesus' sacrifice for you.

Nominal Christian

A person who is a believer that Jesus Christ is their Savior, but does not follow God's commands or Jesus as their Lord and instead chooses to live a worldly existence instead of a spiritual existence.

Orthodox Christianity

There is quite a variety of doctrines within the Christian faith. Orthodox Christianity or Orthodoxy contains the main tenants with which most denominations agree.

Pharisee

Religious leaders of first century Israel. Experts in the Law (Old Testament scripture) and created a system by which to follow the Law that included 613 rules to follow daily. Turned worship and relationship with God into a check-the-box system. Jesus opposed the Pharisees, because they had lost their way. The Pharisees plotted to kill Jesus.

Propitiation

This means the price was paid – a legal term meaning the punishment for an offense has been satisfied. God declares us “not guilty” because the price of our sins was paid by Jesus. We are now holy and righteous in God's eyes because Jesus paid the penalty for us!

Redemption

The concept that all the things you've done wrong in your life are corrected through God's forgiveness, your acceptance of that forgiveness, and your change in attitude and actions.

Sacrifice

As used, denotes Jesus taking our place and being crucified for the sins of the world when it should have been us who died due to our sins.

Theology

A term used to describe the tenants of what we believe as Christians.

Transformation

A supernatural change in your life that completely changes your outlook, your actions, your thought process, and your desires. More than just changing an action, transformation is done by God to you and through you to make you more Christ-like in your life.

Triune God

The Bible recognizes three persons in the Godhead, each equal in nature, separate in person, and subservient in duties. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the most

difficult piece of Christian Theology. One non-theological way of looking at it is to discover that you yourself have a three-in-one existence, too. You have your mind, your body, and your soul – each different and separate, but all one.

- **Father** – God the Father, the first person of our “Triune” God. Timeless and creator of all things.
- **Son** – Jesus Christ, the second person of our “Triune” God. Born of a virgin, both man and God in one. God incarnate in human form to share in our sufferings to die in our place so that we could be in perfect relationship with God the Father.
- **Holy Spirit** – The spirit of God the Father. Convicts the world of sin (shows you your wrong doing); reveals God to you through scripture and in thought; prays for you the things you don’t know how to pray; guides you in your daily life.

Worldly

Living by the standards and social norms of your culture instead of living by the standards set forth by God. Often our worldly standards and culture are in direct conflict with God’s standards, and when we choose God’s standards over worldly standards we will be mocked or even persecuted.

Chapter 1

It Takes One to Know One

I remember my first prayer. I was about four years old and I prayed that God wouldn't let me wake up in the morning. Things got worse from there.

Have you ever heard God's voice telling you to do something you just didn't want to do? Several years ago, God called me to be "Vulnerable and Transparent." It would have been easier for me to stick a pencil in my eye than be vulnerable and transparent. What God wanted was for me to share my pain in an open and potentially dangerous way. God called me to expose my life's pain to others as an example to bring others closer to Him. It's so typically God! He wants you to do the thing you least want to do.

I learned to overcome my self-consciousness of sharing my pain in front of smaller groups first, such as a Bible study. Then God helped me overcome my embarrassment of doing it in front of a large group, such as a church congregation. The first time you share your pain in front of a group and your voice cracks and you clench your jaw to keep the tears from flowing is a moment that is extraordinarily difficult. You feel weak and stupid, and in that moment, you are indeed quite fragile. But I have found that when I am weak He is strong, and that when I trust in God the message can be used by Him in powerful ways.

God tells us He is a God of redemption and can use all things for the good of those who love him. I'm a bit of an expert in emotional pain (physical, too, but the emotional pain is much worse). From my perspective, it is pretty dang hard to see God's hand moving to make good out of a crap sandwich when you're eating it. I have to admit I didn't see God's hand when as a child I felt so alone I wanted to die. I did not see God's hand when we did not have food to eat. I did not see God's hand when we were kicked out of apartment after apartment into homelessness. I did not see God's hand as the kids at school made fun of me for being poor and having only one set of clothes. I did not see God's hand as my paralyzed mother lay in a nursing home, rotting away with Multiple Sclerosis. I did not see God's hand as my father continued to commit crimes and go to jail, abandoning us children to the whims of the State child welfare system. I did not see God's hand when I was being physically and emotionally abused in foster homes. I did not see God's hand as I failed time and time again to get my life on the right track as a young adult. And if God's hand was there, it felt more like a closed fist cracking me across the jaw, telling me that I had a cross to bear and hadn't yet passed the tests to prove my worthiness to see those promises preachers, pastors, and priests had talked about during the times I attended church. What I did see was pain and more pain. I saw lying, and cheating, and stealing, and betrayal, and sex, and drugs, (and, yes, Rock-n-Roll!), and manipulating, and abuse, and insincerity, and hypocrisy, and violence, and alcoholism, and abandonment, and, well, you get the idea.

There were glimpses of love – a look in my mother's eye, or presents at Christmas at my grandparents, or decent foster families that truly wanted to care for me. They say that love conquers all – well, I must be the exception to that because the glimpses of love I did have did not conquer the pain, fear, anger – no, rage, and insecurity I had from my experiences. Instead, I became an expert in emotional pain – how to live with it, how to use it to my advantage, and

even how to embrace it as a badge of honor. My pain, and especially my anger, drove me, and I considered them vital to my very survival.

So, imagine my surprise when God said, “Be vulnerable and transparent.” My first response was something like, “You’ve got to be kidding me, right?” I may have used a different word than kidding. But, He said it again and I knew in my heart that God had a plan – one I wouldn’t choose – but one I knew was right no matter the cost.

So here I am writing a book about pain, my pain and yours. I call this first chapter “It Takes One to Know One” because I have found that the only people I would trust to talk to me about pain were ones who experienced pain themselves. There’s a credibility piece to all this. Who can truly understand your pain if they’ve not been through the grinder themselves? It truly takes one to know one. Well, I’m one of you, which is why God directed me to write this book.

I’m going to follow God’s calling and share with you my pain in the next several pages. The intent certainly is not to garner your pity – an idea that disgusts me even as I write the words. No, I am sharing my story to establish credibility with you so that you will read the following chapters knowing that I have the experience to talk into your life. There is one caveat as I noted in the introduction: you have to be ready for healing and the sacrifice that healing will cost. You’ll understand what I mean as you continue through these pages.

Let the Pain Begin

The first time I was separated from my family was in 1968. I don’t actually know the reason, but I suspect it was because my dad went to jail like he would numerous times during my youth. I wasn’t completely separated; my mother and I went to live with her parents in Clearwater, FL – kind of an extended vacation. My three older sisters stayed in the Chicago area and I think they were split up among uncles from both sides of the family, but I really don’t know. What I do know is it was miserable.

My grandparents were German, the kind of German that is not very affectionate and pretty stern with discipline. My mother was paralyzed with Multiple Sclerosis and was bedridden most the time. During the late 1960s, we still could put her in a wheelchair and she could take short trips, but my grandparents and I were her caretakers. Part of my job was helping to change her sheets, as well as help with food. I even remember once changing her bedpan by myself when nobody else was around – I was four years old. My mother loved me dearly – I know this because she kept having kids until she got it right and had a boy – at least that’s what I tell my three older sisters! But, there was no way for her to be a real mother – one who could give a hug or help with really anything because of the MS. The fact is, most my young life my mother was in a nursing home and did not even live with us. I was lucky if I could visit her on the weekends. That said, while I feel I never had a mother, I loved her as much as any son loved a mother, even though I would retain only about 30 memories of her.

The family was eventually reunited. I remember my father coming on the plane, lifting me up to the ceiling, calling me “Tiger” and it being a very joyous moment. That feeling wouldn’t last. During the next 11 years, my father would go to jail at least five more times that I know of and

our family regularly would be separated, living with different family members or in foster homes. Before my 18th birthday, I actually lived in a dozen different homes – family and foster homes when dad was in jail and on the couches of complete strangers my father would convince to take us in when we were homeless, usually just before he would go back to jail.

My father's a bit of a dichotomy to me. It wasn't like he was dumb. He claims he graduated from Roosevelt University in Chicago and worked for All State Insurance at one time in his life. In fact, it was his intelligence that made him such a great con man. On the other hand, he was so very stupid. He was convinced he was a "player" and that he deserved a lifestyle he could not afford. We would stay in high-end hotels, being big shots until the credit card was denied and we were kicked out on the street. Dad would write hot checks everywhere, thinking that some big scheme of his would come through in time to cover them. Of course, none of his schemes ever panned out so the rent check bounced, the utility check bounced, the phone bill check bounced, the grocery store stopped accepting his checks, you know the normal stuff. Before dad would head back to jail, we'd be without food, without electricity, and have a 72-hour eviction notice on the door if the landlord had not already confiscated our stuff and put on one of those realtor locks.

Each time my father went to jail, it was as if he thought it was vocational school where he would pick up the latest white crime techniques, not realizing that his "instructors" were in jail because those techniques didn't work after all. But, like all convicts, my dad thought he was oh so clever and if he'd do this one thing just a little bit differently it would all work out and he'd score big. He went to his grave living in subsidized housing, using food stamps, and living off of Social Security and a veteran's pension. I look back and think his life was a complete waste because it could have been so much more if not for the booze, the womanizing, the crime, and most of all, the attitude that he deserved life on a silver platter instead of having to work for it like the rest of us.

I can't say I am mad at my father, I'm not. Actually, I never really was, except for that time I was mouthing off to him when I was 13 years old and he punched me in the head, knocking me down a flight of stairs. I was pretty pissed off that day. Oh, and the day he came to one of my foster parents' house to shake me down for money. He stopped doing that when I turned from him and punched the garage door so hard it cracked from top to bottom. I was angry that day. But, I never held a grudge about the hunger, homelessness, him never being around because he was out carousing, the foster homes or all the rest. I really can't tell you why. Perhaps it was because he was my dad and the only parent I really had. Each time I was placed in foster care, I was asked if I wanted to go back and live with my father when he got out of jail. Of course, I did! The case workers and foster parents thought I was nuts, because we all knew dad would end up back in jail and I would end up back in foster care. But I can honestly say that living with him in poverty and uncertainty was better than living in foster care, especially the abusive ones. So, I moved back with him every time until the last time.

We had moved back to Chicago from Oregon and dad was living high on the hog. We even lived at the Playboy Club for about six weeks before dad's Diner's Club card was maxed out. (Pretty cool digs for a 13-year-old adolescent!) During about two and half years in Chicago, we lived in at least six places, including with a saint by the name of Gary Ashburn who had taken us into his

home when we were homeless. You hear about having to leave town on a midnight flight? That's exactly what we did! Dad woke me up in the middle of the night and told me to grab as much stuff as I could and that we were leaving. He never told me where, but when the night was over, I was in Bend, OR. Today, Bend is a thriving metropolis that boasts Mt. Bachelor, the high desert, and is a resort destination. In 1978, Bend was the middle of no-where America, and dad must have figured the law wouldn't find him there. It took a couple months but they tracked him down. That was the last time I lived with my father where once again they confiscated our stuff, locked up the apartment and closed all the city's exits. The cops met me at the bus station, but were nice enough to let me go. As the Greyhound was pulling out, dad was being cuffed and put in the car. I was 14 years old and on my own.

I had contacted my middle sister, Doreen, when all this happened. She and her husband paid for the bus ticket and I went to Portland. I split time living with her and my other sister, Diane, eventually picking Diane to stay with because she was in the same school district I had been in years earlier. My freshman year of high school was spent in three places: Palatine High in Illinois, Mt. View High in Bend, and Highland Park Middle School in Beaverton, OR, which had grades 7-9. This actually was the norm; I don't recall ever being in a school more than one full year until I reached high school. It's no wonder I couldn't read or write until the 4th grade.

Before my sophomore year, I had a big decision to make. Diane and her husband had decided to move to Vancouver, WA, which meant I couldn't stay in the same school district which was important to me. Then out of nowhere I ran into a foster sister from a previous family with whom I had lived. I told her my story and the next thing I knew the family was asking me to move back in with them for my high school years. There was only one catch: I'd have to become a ward of the court of the State of Oregon again. To be a foster child, the court has to take authority for you as State property. I hated the idea; my previous experiences with foster care were pretty rough. Sure, you get a case worker but they never believe you when you tell them you're being abused, or the alcoholic husband is beating the crap out of his wife and killing the family pets in front of you. It's just a numbers game; there are so many kids that need homes and only so many homes for them. Once you're placed, that's it. Sometimes it works out, sometimes it doesn't. Luckily, I knew this family from before and they seemed okay. And I understood that if I was going to make anything of myself, I had to go to high school in one place and this was my only chance. I took it.

Those three years were the first time in my life I was in a school for more than a year and was in a home where there was always a roof over my head, food in my stomach, clothes on my back, and the security that it would actually be there tomorrow, too. I am forever grateful for that family's generosity and love, and remain in contact with them to this day.

I graduated high school with a 3.56 GPA, was accepted to several colleges, and had what I thought would be the ticket to a normal life – you know, college, job, marriage, house, kids, grandkids, the whole shtick. I thought I had made it; I had beaten the odds and was going to achieve my dream of going to college and living my life the way I wanted to live it. What I didn't understand at the time was we are all products of our environments and that it is an impossibility to escape the consequences of neglect, abuse, abandonment, violence, torment, and emotional pain. Eventually, it all catches up with you.

The sad part was I thought I was normal! Well, not normal, but seriously well-adjusted! I did well in school, had a social circle I ran around with, was in the symphonic and jazz bands and was Drum Major of the marching band my senior year, was on the yearbook staff, and even held an after-school job at one time. It all seemed pretty normal. However, I just attended my 30th high school reunion and found myself withdrawing from the crowd, being extremely self-conscious about going up to people to say hi. As I looked around the room at the cool kids, the pretty kids, the athletic kids, and the other cliques, that old feeling of being completely alone came over me and I realized that all through high school I was just play acting the “normal” thing, because inside I was a ticking time bomb.

I recently gave a presentation on mental health conditions to a group of veteran advocates. I had to laugh as I was prepping the PowerPoint presentation as I began to see myself in their descriptions.

General Causes of Abnormality

- **Maternal Deprivation** – Especially orphans who are institutionalized and/or abandoned by their natural parents – *Check!*
- **Pathological Family Patterns** – Maladaptive family behavior (e.g. faulty role model) that the child imitates and internalizes; faulty relationships between parent and child (e.g. overprotective, domineering, alcoholic and/or emotionally abusive parents, etc.) – *Check!*
- **Psychic Trauma** – An early childhood traumatic experience is repressed (e.g. abandonment, death or divorce, sexual abuse, etc.) and then resurfaces later as a disorder. – *Check!*
- **Severe Stress** – Extreme pressure on the coping mechanisms that take a destructive toll on psychological processes (e.g. posttraumatic stress disorder resulting from combat, captivity, torture, natural disasters, being kidnapped or terrorized, including child abuse) – *Check!*
- **Separation Anxiety Disorder** – Essential feature is the onset of excessive anxiety upon separation from home or close personal attachments. Anxiety manifest is greater than what is expected of individuals at a similar maturational level – *Check!*
- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder** – Manifested by re-experiencing of an extremely traumatic event accompanied by symptoms of increased arousal and by avoidance of stimuli associated with trauma – *Check!*
- **Personality Disorder** – Indicated by a pattern of pervasive distrust and suspiciousness of others, such that their motives are interpreted as malevolent. Events and the actions of others are interpreted in the most negative light possible, and convictions of other’s hostility are based on little or no objective evidence – *Check!*
- **Borderline Personality Disorder** – Indicated by a pervasive pattern of instability in interpersonal relationships or self-image and affects, accompanied by marked impulsivity with an onset in early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts. Individuals will often be intensely concerned with abandonment and will go to great lengths to avoid real or imagined abandonment. The perception of impending loss, rejection, separation, or abandonment or the loss of external stability and structure can produce profound alterations in self-image, affect, cognition, and behavior – *Check!*

- **Narcissistic Personality Disorder** – Characterized by a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, need for admiration, and lack of empathy, with an onset of early adulthood and manifest in a variety of contexts. The individual has an exaggerated sense of self-importance, often displaying a conceited, boastful demeanor while overestimating his/her abilities and accomplishments – *Check!*

Now I'm not saying I had all this – I never went to a shrink to find out! But, I recognize myself in each of these disorders and I think those closest to me in my life probably would agree.

Have you ever seen one of those Jack-in-the-Box toys? The box has a handle on the side and you wind it and that really annoying song starts playing and as tension builds you just wait for that creepy clown to pop out? My life at 18-years-old was like someone slowly turning my handle and that creepy clown was about to appear.

The Wheels Fall Off

Going to college was a must for me. From my earliest memories, I wanted to be a Journalist. I don't really know why but writing stories about important things that everyone in town would read appealed to me. When I graduated high school, I was lucky enough to be accepted to a number of colleges. I chose the University of Missouri in Columbia. First, their Journalism school was ranked in the top 10 in the country. Second, it was far away from Oregon and all the pain I had experienced – I figured I could start a new life where nobody knew me or my past. Dad was out of jail and agreed to pay my room and board if I paid for classes. I had received a Pell Grant for tuition and with dad's help I could actually go to college. Have you ever said to yourself, STUPID, STUPID, STUPID? I should have known that dad would never pay the bills. He'd never done it before, so why would I think he would start now? In fact, my eldest sister, Donna, got kicked out of school when dad didn't pay her bills 15 years earlier. Had I been thinking straight I would have seen it. Instead, I wanted to go to college so badly I made myself believe that he'd come through just this once.

I joined a fraternity on campus and soon was told the bills were not being paid. I talked to my dad on the phone who promised to pay, but he never did. I lasted from August until December 1982 and then was out of school. I have to say that my brothers at AEPi did take care of me; they held a special initiation just for me before I left so I would be a brother for life. I've always cherished them for that. But it looked like my dream of college was over.

I moved back to Oregon and was pretty much homeless again. I think I stayed with a sister or two, but then I began sleeping on the floor at a high school friend's apartment. I have lost track of Lisa Roberts over the years, but she saved my life, figuratively and literally, by allowing me to stay at her place. I got a job and planned to save up enough money to go back to school. Nice thought, but I think I was making \$3.35 an hour to bake cookies at a storefront in a shopping mall. That was not going to get me back to college. (But I did make a dang good cookie!)

Once again, my foster family bailed me out. There is an aunt in the family I lived with during high school who is fairly well off. She offered to pay off my school debt at Missouri so that I

could attend the University of Oregon. It was EXTREMELY tough to take charity. But, I was out of options, so I ate my pride and accepted her gracious offer for which I am still indebted.

To this point, the Jack-in-the-Box music was still playing and yes, I had some bad luck in my life, but I was going back to college and seemed to be on the right track again. Turns out I wasn't even on the train!

Have you ever wished you could go back in time knowing what you know now and do the whole thing over again? That's pretty much how I would sum up my experience over the next three years at the University of Oregon. ...*Pop goes the weasel*.

- I began emotionally abusing my girlfriend, controlling and manipulating her so she couldn't hurt me emotionally.
- I self-medicated with alcohol and drugs – there are connoisseurs and kind of sewers. I was kind of a sewer, pouring booze down like water. I was extremely functional, but the demons in my head needed to be silenced and booze seemed to do the trick. I also experimented with drugs, including speed and mushrooms. (Note to readers: Don't do mushrooms - they make televisions talk to you when they're off and freak you out!).
- I fought authority at every step, believing they were just trying to keep me down.
- I skipped classes, finding them boring and not useful in the “real” world I was in.
- I focused more on outside activities (college newspapers, Karate, drinking) than school.
- I began not trusting anyone, even those closest to me.
- I had suicidal and homicidal ideation. I actually would think about how I would hurt just about everyone I saw when I wasn't thinking of hurting myself, convinced people were out to harm me.
- Anger for no reason was my constant companion. I was always mad about something and I couldn't control it, picking fights when there was one readily available.

I felt as if I was losing my mind. There were times when I was seeing all this as if I was watching it from above and would say to myself, “What the heck are you doing?” Actually, I used a different word than heck. I'm not saying *everything* was bad; I actually had some accomplishments:

- Helped start a new campus newspaper and eventually became executive editor and chairman of the board of directors.
- Earned a prestigious internship at The Oregonian newspaper as a reporter.
- Began what would be a life-long love affair with the martial arts.
- Continued my joy of music playing the trumpet in jazz bands (music calms the savage beast, right?)
- Made lifelong friends, something I was unable to do in my youth.

But the failures more than made up for the successes.

- I pretty much flunked out of Music School – I cut a deal that I wouldn't come back if they would raise my grades from Ds to C minuses.

- I finished the Journalism School program, but was not awarded my degree, because my GPA was too low (2.35 instead of the required 2.5).
- Lost the girl I wanted to marry due to my anger, jealousy, insecurities and control issues.
- Failed in my true-life goal of bringing my mother out of the nursing home before she died; mom passed during my junior year – I hadn't seen her in a couple years, and during that trip she was so far gone she didn't recognize me, even asking me if I knew her son. Brutal.
- I left school the same way I came: broke, homeless, and with very few options.

So Much for Normal

I left school in 1986 and then lied about having my Journalism degree to get a job as the editor of a weekly newspaper in California, just south of San Francisco. I earned \$1,500 a month (before taxes); it cost more than that to get a studio apartment. I lived out of my car, taking trips to my sister's house 60 miles away for clean clothes and a shower. I lasted six months and quit; I was a good writer, but a lousy editor. Yet another failure.

I was running out of options fast. I could go back to school but it would take two years of straight A's to raise my GPA enough to get my degree, and I didn't have the money for school anyway. I could get some manual labor job but I'm a city kid and have absolutely no physical labor talents whatsoever! I could work at a 7-11! Not quite the dream I had in mind. I was 22 years old, was losing my mind, had failed at everything I touched, and had no direction to turn.

When that happens there's only one choice: The military! My father had served in the Army, which never was a big deal in the family, but his brother had been a gunner on a B-17 during World War II and was shot down on his 9th mission. Uncle Bob was a Prisoner of War at Stalag 17 where he was severely abused not only as a POW but as a Jewish POW – Bob's last name was Goldman and my dad's family was Jewish. Everyone knew about Bob. In fact, my sisters Doreen and Diane and I had lived with Bob during the early 70s when dad was in jail once. I had always admired his service even though I had never thought about joining the military in high school. I did think about it in college. In fact, a buddy and I were going to join the Marines after the Marine barracks in Beirut was bombed. When we sobered up the next morning, we promised each other we would never make important decisions while drinking ever again!

It was different at 22 years old, though. Once again, I was out of decent options, so I went to the recruiter's office. They treated me like it was Christmas and I was their favorite present. They didn't have to do any convincing; I told them I wanted to join and the wheels got rolling. I passed the entrance exam (Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery – ASVAB) and was told I could do anything in the military except touch equipment – I failed in mechanical ability! Then I took an officer's board test, which I passed so I could become an officer someday. Then I took a language aptitude test called the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB) and I passed that with a score that allowed me to learn the most difficult languages. I signed up in April 1987 and shipped out in July of that year for beautiful Fort Dix, NJ for Basic Training.

My friends thought I was nuts joining the Army. What they didn't know was that I was nuts and needed to join the Army! Now, let's be honest – it's really hard to screw up in the Army but I

managed! I got through Basic Training just fine and headed off to Monterey, CA to the Defense Language Institute (DLI) where I would learn Russian for the next year. It was great and when I say great, I mean Freaking Fantastic! I LOVED DLI and everything about the Army. I met great friends with whom I worked hard and played even harder. Most were as messed up or more than me! I thought I had finally found a home and would be a “lifer” in the service – right up until I started having knee pain.

I had been playing intramural basketball for my company; sports are a major deal in the military and company commanders take great pride in having the best team. We were the best team, but my knees began swelling up after each practice, the right knee worse than the left. It got to the point that I could not take enough aspirin or Motrin to kill the pain or knock down the swelling. I also had had my shoulder pulled out of the socket and put back in during a game so I was a little banged up. The docs looked at the knee, did some tests and then decided I needed exploratory surgery. They scoped the right knee and learned that all the cartilage had disintegrated and my right knee cap was cracking in half from the back. They figured the left knee was the same. The right shoulder had what they called “Impingement Syndrome” which means it didn’t work right any more. My military career was over I was medically discharged.

I did get to finish my studies at DLI, which was extremely unusual. Once you’re going to the medical board, you’re usually pulled out of the regular mix and given exciting duties such as painting rocks and guarding empty buildings. My commander and First Sergeant fought for me to stay in school – I had completed nine months and only had three months left to go. Remarkably the brass said yes!

It was great news, but I was still a loser. I had joined the Army because I was homeless and jobless and needed something to do with my life. The previous nine months had been a series of painful episodes. My foster brother from high school paralyzed himself in a motorcycle accident; my grandmother in Florida had died, the rumor being she committed suicide because she was so lonely; and now I was being riffed from the Army because I was broken and defective. I was about at the end of my rope.

But, I wasn’t ready to admit that I couldn’t soldier anymore. I actually wanted to stay in the Army but knew as busted up as I was that I would never be a real soldier and I couldn’t deal with that. One day, I decided to prove I could still soldier and began jogging around the base track. I was going slow, making sure I didn’t push it too hard when I was lapped by these two – um – larger girls. That was it – at that moment I completely broke. I went up to my barracks in tears.

God Steps In

I had always believed in God – heck, I had been praying to Him since I was four years old! My mother was a German Catholic, but she married a non-practicing Jew, who actually was an atheist. I hear the Catholic Church kicked her out, so she went Catholic-Light – Lutheran, the church in which my sisters and I were baptized. I don’t recall any of that. I do remember living with my Uncle Bob whose wife was an Assembly of God parishioner. I swear we went to church six days a week and had the Pastor over the seventh. Bob also was not into God back then, but Aunt Eleanor kept us indoctrinated. I lived with a family that was Baptist and attended service

and youth groups regularly, and later attended Four Square youth events with a friend from high school. I also had gone through the entire Catholic catechism training while living with a Catholic family. I was one of the best students – imagine the nuns’ surprise when I told them I couldn’t go to confession because I was a baptized Lutheran! Turns out nuns don’t have a sense of humor.

That moment when I broke, I knew there was only one place to turn – God. Now my relationship with Him was strong but dysfunctional like all my relationships. I had always been a believer and always had this feeling that God had something in store for me. My life didn’t seem to bear it out. I would rage at God every time life would knock me down, telling Him that no matter how many times *He* knocked me down, I would get back up! In my theology, God was a God of testing and refining through fires and one who believed you had a cross to bear to prove you were worthy. That day on that track, the cross on my back slammed me to the ground.

I got to my barracks and cried out to God, “If you have a plan for my life, you better figure out how you’re going to do it because I am done.” I continued, “I can’t do this anymore. You’re going to have to carry me to make this work.”

In that very instant, Jesus revealed Himself to me. The message was basically, “Tom, all I’ve ever wanted was to carry you but you wouldn’t let me.” When I realized what God was telling me – basically that He loved me, cared for me, and wanted me to rely on Him – it was like a spear through my chest. I could see how wrong I had been in my relationship with Him. He wasn’t testing me and all that other nonsense. He was trying to love me, but I wouldn’t let Him in, just like I wouldn’t let anyone else in. I called myself a Christian and while I believed Jesus was my Savior, I certainly did not follow Him as my Lord. In that moment, I saw that I had been completely wrong about who God is. And for the first time in my life, I made the right decision: I asked Jesus to come into my life, take me over and carry me. My life was about to change; I was 23 years old and was about to be kicked out of the Army, but I was truly a born-again Christian.

Chapter 2

Faith of a Mustard Seed

Faith is a funny thing. There are lots of things in which we have faith. We have faith that when we fly the plane won't fall out of the sky! We have faith that our spouse loves us. We have faith that our family and friends will come to our rescue should something happen to us. But faith in God is different; it's not so tangible. Faith in God means that you believe Him when He says he has plans to prosper you and not harm you, and that you are His child whom He loves. That's pretty much like juggling Jell-O in terms of tangibility. Or is it?

That moment in my barracks where I learned the truth about God's love for me did not mean I wasn't crazy anymore. There was no magical moment where God healed me from the pain of my life and I was all better. Instead, God walked me through a process that started with building my faith and trust in Him. How He did it was pretty amazing.

If I were to take an inventory of my life up to that moment in my barracks, here's what I would come up with:

- I failed in college
- I failed at work
- I failed in relationships
- I failed in humility
- I failed in self-control
- I failed in my faith
- I failed in taking care of my mother
- I failed in the Army

Yeah, I pretty much sucked, and I sucked because I tried to rely on myself in all things. I saw God as an opponent not as my greatest fan. When God showed me who He is, He also knew that I had some things to learn if I was going to really have faith in Him. The Army did indeed medical board me and I was kicked out with a "service-connected" disability, meaning that the Army broke me. Here's where God began His work in me.

I went back to my sister Diane's place in Oregon and crashed there while I thought about what I would do next with my life. The Army had told me that the first place I had to go when I got home was the Veterans Administration. Apparently, if the Army breaks you the VA takes care of you. I filed a claim for disability due to my injuries and was given a disability rating. Then the door swung wide open. As a disabled veteran, the VA would pay for me to go back to college through their Vocational Rehabilitation program. I had interviewed with the Central Intelligence Agency upon leaving the Army and the recruiter told me that if I got a bachelor's degree in Russian they would consider hiring me. The VA agreed to pay for me to go back to the University of Oregon to get that degree which would take about five terms. That in itself was a pretty amazing turn of events!

The Do Over

Remember what I said about wanting to go back in time knowing what you know now? Here's where it got really interesting! I settled into a nice studio apartment in Eugene, OR, got a job as a security supervisor at a local sawmill, and went back to school. The Army had taught me how to study, and I immediately began getting A's on my papers instead of C's and D's Nice! I was actually succeeding in college – thank you Lord!

Then I started to notice something that was a bit eerie. I kept having situations that were almost exactly the same ones I had had my first time through college. The difference this time was I knew God and was trying really hard to do things His way. It seemed that God was giving me a do-over. Here are just some of the situations I got to redo with God's hand guiding me:

- God brought a woman named Karen Engels into my life as a friend so that I would learn how to be friends with a woman without all the sexual overtones. We are friends to this day.
- God brought me back to my old college newspaper as more of an advisor than worker so that I could learn balance and perspective, keeping my school work as the priority.
- Jesus humbled me when the Registrar told me that I need to take more science classes, which I simply added to my schedule instead of fighting their authority as I had in the past.
- Jesus brought a woman into my life who would later become my wife – I didn't do so well with this one, but God was steady and over the years healed me so I could learn to treat a woman with respect and as a true partner to be cherished not controlled.
- God rewarded me with my Journalism degree. One day out of the blue my old J-School undergraduate advisor sent me a letter telling me I had raised my GPA sufficiently and that they were awarding me my degree. I had never in a million years even considered that a possibility.
- I earned my Russian degree and a certificate in Eastern European studies. By following the Lord, I was a college graduate!
- The CIA fell through (the Cold War ended), but God gave me the editorship of another weekly newspaper after college so I could redo that experience with much greater success.

In a word, God redeemed me. He helped me correct a ton of mistakes I had made by showing me how to do things the right way – His way. I learned so much during this time about how to let go of trusting myself and instead trust God. I can't say that it was easy – I think all of us want to trust ourselves when we get in a tight spot. But, I couldn't argue with the results when I did trust God, which in turn built my faith each day.

Faith the First Step to Healing

From a healing perspective, I learned that faith may actually be the first step. How can God start working in your life if you don't trust Him? Honestly, I hadn't trusted Him before because I had a skewed sense of who He was. In return, He couldn't work with me because I wouldn't let Him.

When I finally did let Him in, He was faithful – He wasn't mad at me or unforgiving, He simply smiled and said, "It's about time, now let's get to work."

Let's start your journey into allowing God to heal your brokenness by talking a bit about faith.

When I started writing, I figured my audience would be believers because why would a non-believer pick up a Christian book. But then the thought struck me, "What if you're someone who's not a Christian, but is at the end of your rope like I was and you're willing to try *anything* at this point, even that Jesus guy?" I think that could happen, but whether you're a believer or not is kind of immaterial because God believes in you either way and wants you to have healing in your life! But, if you want that healing you have to pay the price and part of that price is faith.

When we say you have to have faith, the first question that should come to your mind is, "Faith in what?" That might be a bigger question than you think! For our purposes, we have to have faith that there is something bigger than us. To receive the healing I'm suggesting you have to have faith that there is a God who created the universe and everything in it – seen and unseen. You also have to have faith that Jesus Christ is the son of God who was born of a virgin, lived, was crucified, died, was buried and rose on the third day and now sits at the right hand of the Father. This is pretty basic Christian theology. If you're not a believer, don't tune out, because you're going to find out this isn't about religion, it's about relationship and even agnostics and atheists need relationship!

Further, you have to have faith that the Bible truly is the inspired word of God. If you don't believe the Bible or parts of it, how can you believe any of it? And if you don't believe any of it, what's the point? You have to have faith in the promises that God makes in His word. When you Google "Number of Promises in the Bible" you get sites that say there are 1,260 promises God makes in scripture. If you don't know what they are, Google it yourself and read what God has to say to you. You have to have faith that God knows best even if you in your limited sense don't understand or agree with what God is doing. You have to have faith that God will provide for you no matter your circumstances. You have to have faith that God can do what He says He can do. That may seem like a no brainer, but I know all of us at one point or another have put a prayer up to God that we were sure he *would not* answer. And guess what? It's not answered because we already had decided it wouldn't be. You must have faith that what you pray is being heard by God who will be faithful and answer even if that answer is, "No, I have something better in mind for you." You have to have faith that you matter to God. Did you just get that uncomfortable feeling when you read that? One of the biggest issues I face when working with people through their pain is they don't feel worthy of God's love and forgiveness. Luckily, neither God's love nor forgiveness has anything to do with our worthiness – we're not worthy. Instead God loves us unconditionally and you have to have faith in that, too!

The book of Hebrews (11:1) says, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." The two key words in this sentence are *sure* and *certain*. Both mean that we have no doubt. Boy, is that easier said than done, especially when we have an adversary that spends night and day trying to deceive us into having doubts about God and ourselves! So how strong is your faith? There is no right or wrong answer to the question, but it is something you need to know before you start seeking God's healing. If you have no faith or weak faith, it is

difficult for God to work in your life because you don't believe He actually will. If your faith is moderate to strong, can you take it when God has something different in store for you than what *you* want? Are you willing to have faith that God does know best and submit yourself to that no matter what He does, even when He does something totally different than what you expected?

What Does Faith Look Like?

In scripture, Hebrews chapter 11 is often referred to as the “Heroes of the Faith” chapter. In this chapter, God lists the heroes of the faith throughout time as examples to us. So, what does God say faith looks like? Let's take a look at these heroes and what they did to earn that moniker.

- Abel, the son of Adam and Eve, offered God a better sacrifice than his brother, Cain, who becomes jealous of Abel and kills him. Abel is a hero of the faith because he followed God's commands, was obedient and suffered for this obedience.
- Enoch was one of two characters in the Bible to be risen to heaven without dying (the other is Elijah). Enoch pleased God, according to Hebrews, due to his faith. “And without faith, it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” (Hebrews 11:8) Enoch sought God and God was pleased with Enoch's faith.
- Noah obeyed God in the strangest of circumstances. Imagine you live in Kansas and God calls to you and says, “Build an Ark, because I'm going to flood the place.” Would you do it? Noah did not to save his life or that of his family but simply because God told him to. He is a hero because he obeyed not knowing what it all meant.
- Abraham is considered the father of both the Jews and the Arabs (through his sons Isaac and Ishmael respectively). He is a hero for hearing God's voice and leaving his home country of Ur to follow God without really knowing where he was going. He further is a hero for following God's instruction to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac, which foreshadowed God sacrificing His son Jesus. (In case you're not familiar with the story, God intervenes before Isaac is killed and they all live happily ever after).
- Isaac and his son Jacob are considered heroes of the faith for staying true to God and passing the knowledge of God down the family tree.
- Joseph, the son of Jacob, was a hero because he saw that what others meant for evil against him God meant for good – he understood that God can redeem any situation for His use.
- Moses was a hero for his faith and trust in God, obeying God's commands and for leading God's people out of Egypt even though he felt supremely unqualified.
- Rahab was a Canaanite prostitute but hid the Hebrew spies when they were doing a reconnaissance of the Promised Land. She helped God's people and was rewarded. She is considered a hero of the faith and she wasn't even an Israelite!

- Leaders of Israel who were called Judges were heroes and included Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, and Samuel. When God called them to lead, they led. (These people were not perfect, far from it. Worth reading the Book of Judges in the Old Testament to learn their stories, their weaknesses and how God used them anyway).
- King David is a hero of the faith and God even called him a man after His own heart. That might surprise you about David because when you read about him you find out he is a murderer, adulterer, prideful and pretty much breaks a ton of God's rules. Yet, he's a hero not because he didn't sin but because when he did sin he always returned to God in repentance.
- The Prophets – God chose ordinary people to deliver His message to the Hebrews. Prophets were tasked to do very difficult things, such as call kings and the nation to repentance, as well as tell them they were going to be exiled due to their hardened hearts. The people hated the prophets because through them God was telling the people they were doing wrong and would be punished. Most of the prophets were killed by the people for this message, yet they were obedient to God, doing His work before worrying about their own safety.

Do you see a pattern here? Do you see what God defines as faith? Here are the key characteristics:

- Seek God's Face – be in relationship with Him
- Be obedient when He calls – No matter what He is asking you to do, do it
- Trust Him – All these heroes had to, at one time or another, take a risk and trust that God would come through
- Deny your worldly weaknesses and allow God to be strong – these were ordinary people who God used in extraordinary ways. None of them were superhuman; God did all the work through them. Allow yourself to be used by God for important things
- Go back to God in humility and repentance when you blow it

I titled this chapter Faith of a Mustard Seed in reference to the story in Matthew 17:14-20 where the father of a son afflicted with seizures asks Jesus to heal the boy from a demon that is causing the trouble. We learn in the story that first the disciples had tried to heal the boy and were not successful. Jesus then heals the boy. Verses 19-20 have this interesting interchange:

Then the disciples came to Jesus in private and asked, "Why couldn't we drive it out?" He replied, "Because you have so little faith. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

In the context of this story, Jesus is showing his disciples that they really don't have faith. The mustard seed is unique because it is tiny yet grows into this massive plant. The illustration is that if you have even small faith you can make big things happen. The disciples in this story were being told by Jesus they didn't even have small faith because they failed in their effort to remove

the demon. That's a pretty sharp rebuke in my mind. Reading in between the lines, my guess is the disciples tried to heal the boy with their own power as disciples and not through faith in God's healing power, which is why they failed.

There's another similar story in Acts 19:13-16 where Jews were invoking "the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches" to drive out demons. In the story, the demon says he knows Jesus and he knows Paul but says, "Who are you?" Then the demon-possessed man jumps the Jews and beats the crap out of them. Again, the Jews in this story thought they could just say the name Jesus without any faith and make things happen. My friend, it just doesn't work this way. You have to have faith and these two stories show what happens when you don't even have faith the size of a mustard seed – you fail!

Finding and Building Faith

I don't want you to fail, so I want to walk you through some ways to find your faith and tips on how to build the faith you have.

I am blessed that in our church I am allowed to participate in leading worship. I usually perform one of two functions: Open the service with the welcome and announcements or provide the prayer during the offering. I especially like doing the offertory prayer. As I ask the ushers to come forward and before I begin the prayer, I usually tell a story of something that happened to me that week where God showed His hand in my life. The reason is to encourage people to look for God in their own life. I started this a few years ago because I was a little surprised one Sunday by the answer I got to a simple question: "How many of you saw God in your life this week?" About a third of the hands in the congregation rose. WOW! Only a third of the Christian body saw God in their lives the previous week? How depressing for the other two-thirds of the congregation! I couldn't imagine going a day more or less a whole week without God tangibly in my life! So, I started sharing where and how I saw God in my life, hoping to model for the church where they can see God in their collective lives.

In my relationships in the church, I know that a lot of people just don't feel they are close to God. In turn, they don't see Him in their lives in any tangible way. It's not that they're not believers and that they don't have faith and are not seeking – they are and most of them desperately want to see God in their lives. But they feel alone and that God is distant from them. My experience tells me that it's not that God is far away – for believers His Holy Spirit indwells us; how can He be far away when He lives in us? No, the real issue is people don't know God well enough in their relationship and thus don't know where to look for God in their lives. When I find people with this dilemma, I walk them through the following exercise.

You'll need a pen and some paper. I want you to think about your life – go back to your earliest memories and as you move forward write down the memories that come to mind as you retrace your history. These memories may be powerful traumas, happy times, people you love – things that strike you emotionally. Once you've made that list, think about who God is and who He is in your life. In other words, think about what you know about God (Love, Goodness, Omnipotent or all-powerful, Knows All, Always Present, Holy, Righteous, etc.) and think about how you and He relate to one another. Then look at each individual entry and ask yourself "Where was God

during this event?” Pray that the Holy Spirit reveals this to you. For example, when I was six years old I wasn’t very bright and stuck a match in the gas tank of a car and was badly burned. Where was God during this time? I can think of this question in two ways. I could say He wasn’t there because He didn’t protect me so He must not love me. But that would go against what I know about who God is. Instead I understand who God is in my life and say, God was right beside me, ensuring that I was not hurt too badly, did not have lasting scars, got me home and to the hospital safely and showed his love for me by not having me die in that fire. In fact, when I think about it, God was actually in my ear telling me not to do it – I distinctly remember thinking to myself that we shouldn’t be doing this and I now know 42 years later that God was trying to warn me! Man, was I a dumb kid!

Here is a vital point to this exercise: You cannot place God in a box in which He does not fit. You have to have faith that God really does love you and cares about you. You have to have faith that He will redeem everything – good or bad – for His good purpose. You have to have faith that He made you for a purpose. So, don’t try to put Him in the box that says He doesn’t care about you or that He abandoned you. That simply is not true, because it would be against His nature to do so. You must find God where God exists not in the box you try to put Him into.

Now that you’ve written down the episodes of your life and next to it you have written down where God was during these times, do you see any pattern? Does God tend to tangibly show Himself to you in certain places? For example, when I did this exercise, I found that God was always there when I was in physical danger. Not only was He there during the fire, but I remember Him there both times I nearly drowned. And, I had this very powerful encounter with Him personally when I nearly died of heat stroke the summer after my senior year in high school (that’s not just another story, but another book!).

Where was God in your life? Why I’m asking you to find a pattern is because if there is a pattern then you will know where to see God in your present and your future. See, if He shows up in routine spots in your life, He’s going to show up there again! There is nothing that solidifies your faith in God more than actually seeing Him at work in your life. If you never look for Him, you’ll never see Him. But if you can determine if there is a pattern, you can begin to look for Him in those places. Once you start seeing Him there, you’ll actually start seeing Him in different places, too, because once you see Him you’ll know what you’re looking for! Remember, this is not about religion (pay attention non-believers). This is about relationship! God wants to have a relationship with you which means He is going to show Himself to you, but you have to meet Him half way and be searching for Him, too!

Faith and Free Will

Maybe you’re a person who had faith but has lost it due to the circumstances of your life. My experience with people in this position is something bad happened for which they blame God. Jesus told us we would have trouble in this world but it’s not because God is throwing cosmic lightning bolts our way, it’s because people have the choice of either choosing to do good or choosing to do evil. When they choose evil, bad things happen.

Okay, you're saying that might make sense when it comes to murders, and rapes, and child abuse, and other man-made evil. But what about death, and cancer, and heart attacks, and aids, and chronic pain? What choice did man make to cause all that? I'm glad you asked! Man sinned in the garden and the entire creation fell. Let me say that again – the ENTIRE creation fell. When God created man, his intention was we would be in perfect relationship in perfect bodies in a perfect environment with God. When we sinned – and we all sinned when Adam sinned – it completely disrupted God's initial plan. Remember Satan telling Eve that she "surely wouldn't die" if she ate the apple even though God had told Adam and Eve not to eat because they would die? Well, God was right – imagine that! They ate and they screwed it up for the rest of us! Instead of perfect bodies, we get fallen ones that get cancer, and heart attacks, and aids, and chronic pain, and MS, and die. It sucks, but it's not God's fault, it's our own.

God truly understands your pain and if you don't believe me just look at what Jesus went through:

- Jesus was betrayed by an intimate friend
- Jesus lost a close friend to death and Jesus wept over the loss
- One of Jesus' most trusted disciples denied even knowing Him three times
- Jesus was whipped, tearing the skin off His back with every strike
- People took spikes and a hammer and nailed Jesus' hands and feet to wood planks

I think Jesus understands your emotional burdens and your physical pain better than you think. Yet, Jesus teaches us through His modeling that in those moments you turn *to* the Father not away from Him.

If you've lost your faith or know someone whose faith is shaken or lost, know that it doesn't have to be a terminal condition. God really does understand your frustration, anger and hurt and He is big enough to take it; He wants you to come back. My only advice to you who are turning away is this: Stop. Don't let your pain keep you from the one person who can help you. Be mad. Be hurt. Feel betrayed. But stay in relationship with God by telling Him all these things so you can work it out. The only thing you're going to get by walking away is a lifetime of being mad, hurt and feeling betrayed. Time will not heal those wounds if you turn from God. Only working it out in relationship can make things better.

The Key is Relationship

We call God the Father, because He sees us as *His* intimates. We are not His acquaintances or friends. We are His creation in whom He delights and sings (Zephaniah 3:17). We are His children with whom He wants a deep and lasting relationship. He wants that relationship so badly that He allowed his Son Jesus Christ to be tortured and then nailed to a cross. Jesus accepted that fate because He is your brother who loves you so much that He said he was willing to die in your place just as many of you would die in the place of one of your intimates should it come down to it. If you can understand this concept not just logically but in your heart, it may help as you deal with shaken faith.

For those of you with faith issues, I'm not going to blow sunshine up your "you-know-what" and tell you that God's going to kiss your boo-boo and make it all better. That's not how it works. Think of it this way: If you could ease the pain of an acquaintance, friend or intimate, would you do it? Of course you would, unless you're a schmuck. Well, God's not a schmuck and like you, He will help ease your pain and suffering, but you have to be in relationship with Him.

They say that time heals all wounds. That's not been my experience. I have deep wounds from my life and time did squat to heal them. It was only in my deepening relationship with God where I found healing. It was only my faith that He is who He says He is that began the healing process. It was only my understanding that I am indwelt by the Holy Spirit that helps heal me from the inside out. It was only when I submitted myself to the Lord and truly gave myself over for healing that it happened.

When you read the Gospels, you read where thousands of people followed Jesus around, many of them seeking healing. As Jesus heals the multitude, He repeats this line in one form or another: **"Your faith has healed you."** See, first you have to believe God is who He is and then you have to believe that being who He is, He has the power to heal you.

It's Not About You

Has God ever said "no" to one of your prayers? He has mine – lots! In those moments, it is only your faith that can carry you and have you to believe that God must have something better for you! But be careful not to fall into this trap: IT'S NOT ABOUT YOU! What God may have in store for you is about HIS plan and how you fit into it, not about your plan and how God fits into it.

This book kind of illustrates that point. I've had a ton of pain in my life, both emotional and physical. While I was going through abuse and neglect and disability and the rest, God didn't just come down and relieve me of all this, even though, like you, I prayed for that. I've suffered and my soul bears the scars of that suffering. On a daily basis my disabilities cause me pain and significant discomfort. God did not take that from me. I have memories that can be fairly intrusive that are not that pleasant and even in my healing God did not eliminate those thoughts. Does that mean I have no faith? Certainly not! I'm working really hard to have the faith of a mustard seed! Does that mean I have not been healed? Certainly not!

I could not write this book or counsel others if I had not experienced the pain. See, God brings good from everything. He knew before the creation of the world that I would write this book based upon my personal experiences with Him. He knew that He would gift me with the ability to counsel others not based on some extraordinary supernatural blessing, but based on the difficult experiences of my life and how His and my relationship blossomed *because* of it not in spite of it. Sometimes God says no because He will use the very thing you are trying to find relief from for His good purpose! And even though I struggle physically, I am healed emotionally because I know God and He knows me – it's all good!

I truly believe with all my heart and through all my experiences that God has something better for you than what you are living right now. But if you don't have faith in Him, how do you

expect Him to work with you? Spend a little time before you go on to the next chapter and think about where your faith lies, its strength, its weak spots and if you can get to a place in your life where you are willing to submit yourself to God's authority through faith that will result in the kind of divine intervention you've been seeking in your life. I ask you to do this because it is the kind of reflection I did that helped clarify my faith in God and set me on the right path toward healing.

Chapter 2

Faith of a Mustard Seed

Key Points

1. We all believe in something, but faith in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost-- is the only thing that will truly bring healing into your life.
2. Counseling can help you cope, and medication can help you manage, but God is the only one who can heal.
3. Has God been faithful to you? Write down your life's experiences and see where God showed His hand. Was He faithful? If so, are you willing to have faith in Him?
4. If you've tried everything else and nothing has worked, you may as well try Jesus – it certainly can't hurt.
5. God loves you and wants to heal you for His purpose. Are you willing to pay the price of letting go and letting God do His thing?

Chapter 3

Talking with Your Therapist

When I got back to the University of Oregon after the Army, one of the “do-overs” God gave me was a job. I don’t know if I felt entitled or what but I really didn’t work very much during my first time through college. I should have – it would have helped when I didn’t have money to pay the rent! But, I was too focused on the stuff I wanted to do instead of what I should be doing.

I had worked as a security guard before joining the Army. Pretty easy job – you go around a facility with this clock thing and work your way around to a set of keys located throughout the grounds. You “punched” the clock with the key and move on to the next one. The theory is each round will get you to strategic places on the grounds so you can watch for fires and other incidents. Not rocket science. When I got back to school, I took a job with Burns Security and they made me the security supervisor at a sawmill. I went to school during the day, and then worked at the mill from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. Each hour I did a round through the mill. I saw this job as a blessing from God, because for the first time I could actually pay for an apartment and truly be self-sufficient. But God gave me that job because He had something else in mind.

Being by myself all night gave me a lot of time to think. But more importantly, it gave me a lot of time to talk with God. As God was strengthening my faith as part of my healing, He also wanted me to spend some quality time with Him in conversation. For an entire year, I got eight hours a night to talk things through with Him, which was a major key to my healing.

It’s not like I’d never talked with God before. In fact, He and I had some really intense conversations over the years. But like most of us, my prayer life with God was more me talking *at* Him than me talking *with* Him. I heard a great line the other day. Someone said, “God gave us two ears and one mouth, because we are supposed to listen twice as much as we are supposed to talk.” That was really good advice! During this year walking around this giant sawmill, I talked with God and I listened to what He had to say.

Okay, I know what you’re thinking, “Uh oh, it’s one of those ‘God told me...’ guys!” Well, yes and no. When God speaks to you it’s not an audible voice; it’s more like thoughts come to you that you know are not your own. You sense things revealed to you and feel guided in your thoughts and decision making. Yes, it’s supernatural, and yes, I am a firm believer in it not just because of my experiences “hearing” God, but from the tangible results of His guidance.

Talking to God and listening to what He had to say was a vital piece of my healing. I think the most important thing He did for me during those talks was show me His perspective on things, which was quite different than mine. Scripture tells us to not lean on our own understanding, but to turn to the Lord, because His ways are not our ways (Proverbs 3:5-6; Ezekiel 55:8-9). I found that to be true during our discussions, and I also found His ways to be healing and my ways to be destructive.

Everyone has a different relationship with God, ranging from no relationship at all to the highly devout and righteous. It doesn’t really matter where you are in your relationship when it comes

to this chapter. What matters is you commit to talking with God so that you can build the type of relationship where you listen to God as He guides you through healing.

It's Not Religion, It's Relationship

I have been through a lot of different church experiences; I know firsthand why a lot of people who believe in God do not attend church. I was out of the church for 25 years because my church experiences were filled with hypocrisy, judgment, self-righteousness, guilt trips and a shallow message that did not jive with the realities of my life. As I've matured in my faith, I understand the importance of church and worshiping God in a community of believers. Yet, I also understand that you don't find God only in church. I found Him in my barracks! I see Him every day in my home, at my work, in my car, in my meetings, at lunch – everywhere!

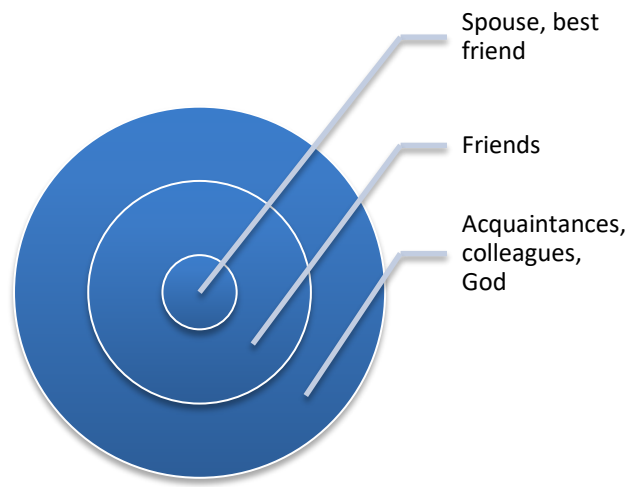
To understand God, you first have to understand that it is not about religion; it's about relationship between Jesus and you. It's not about guilt, punishment, blind obedience, subjugation or any of the other negative ideas that some have attributed to how God relates to you. The Christian theology is about a God who wants so badly to love us and care for us in a personal relationship that He gave His own son to die in our place so that we can spend eternity with God. Both Christians and non-Christians (atheists and otherwise) have twisted that message so badly that many people who truly believe in God are so turned off by what they hear that they simply stop engaging God. Don't let a bunch of nut jobs wreck your relationship with God. Yes, there is some really crazy stuff out there – even from so-called orthodox Christianity. But it's not from God and we know it's not from God when we compare it to God's nature, His Word, and His Son.

That said, here's the hard part: For those of us who are broken, chances are one of the pieces that is broken in us is relationship! So how do we form a relationship with God when we are broken and are lousy at relationships? Seems like a catch-22 doesn't it? Luckily, God will do most of the work here. Scripture tells us that with man things are impossible, but nothing is impossible for God (Matthew 19:26) and that includes building a functional relationship with you.

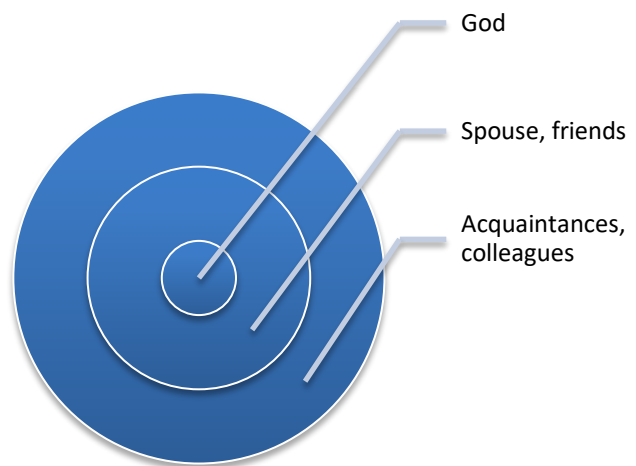
So where do you start with God? The same place you start with anyone else! Think about a time you met a new person and you started to become friends. What did you do? If you're like me, you started by talking to each other, sharing bits and pieces of your history with each other and finding commonalities you had with each other. As time went on, you grew in trust and then began sharing more about your history and then grew even closer and began including each other in each other's lives. This isn't rocket science or deep dogmatic doctrine. This is simply relationship. If you can do it with a friend, a co-worker, a significant other or an acquaintance, you can do it with God. Here's why: God made us! And He made us specifically to have relationship with Him. He put loneliness in our heart so it cries out for relationship with Him and others. The whole reason we exist is to have relationship with Him and our neighbors.

Think about it this way: if we are broken and are dysfunctional in our relationships, the only place we can turn for healing *is* God, because He is the one that made us for relationship and is the only one who can really fix that dysfunction. Make sense? If not, has anything else worked? My point exactly!

So, what kind of relationship do you have with God? Each of us has a set of circles where we keep the people we know. Acquaintances are kept in a circle far from the center. Friends move in a little closer, but not to the center. Intimates hold that center piece, people such as your parents, your spouse, your siblings, and maybe even your BFF (best friend forever). Where is God in your circles? Is he an acquaintance, a friend or an intimate? Or maybe He's not even in your circles and is placed where you put strangers or even farther out where you put enemies! You may be in that place where you do not consider God trustworthy, a friend or someone you can share anything with. I understand that kind of pain. If you have experienced times when you believed God let you down or betrayed you, it would make sense that you would push him out. But at some point, you're going to have to re-examine things and determine if He really was to blame or if it was somebody else or even you.



I'm focusing on relationship so much because it is so important to your healing. God wants to heal you, but He can't do it if you're not willing to be in relationship with Him. It's not going to be good enough to say you believe in God and then ignore Him. What if you did that to one of your friends? What if you said you were friends with someone, but then just ignored that person? Turn it around; what if someone did that to you? Chances are you wouldn't be friends for long! God wants to be an active part of your life. He wants to be the bull's eye of your most intimate circle. Face it, He already knows all your secrets and hidden thoughts – He's GOD! He knows everything. You're not fooling Him by not talking with Him and building the relationship. He wants to help you, but you won't let Him if you're not willing to have a relationship with Him.



I have to admit that I am lucky in this regard. I've been talking to God since my earliest memories. Not that our relationship was always great as you've seen, but I kept on talking, even if I wasn't listening to what He told me! That said, I know that I may be the exception to the rule and that you may be uncomfortable even thinking about talking with God. This is where I have to ask you to pay the price – I have to ask you to step out of our comfort zone and reach out into the void and seek God's voice.

Trust – The Hardest Thing to Give

If you think about it, the most serious barrier to talking with God (or anyone else for that matter) is trust. And, most of us who live in the land of broken toys have trust issues with everyone, including God! But what exactly is trust? I think about it this way: trust is really about expectation. We set expectations on the people around us and when they don't meet those expectations, trust is broken. For example, we expect parents to love, nurture and protect their children. When they don't meet those expectations and are abusive, you lose trust in them, and perhaps others in authority over you, too. We set expectations on our spouse that not only will they be faithful, but they will be discreet with the things we tell them and that they will always put our interests first. When those expectations are not met, we lose trust in them, which often leads to significant marital trouble. We tell our friends a secret and if they don't keep that secret our expectation that they would is broken and we don't trust them again with another secret and perhaps push them out of our friends circle. Growing up, one of my favorite expressions was, "Expectation leads to disappointment." That was my experience with everyone – parents, foster care, people in authority, friends – pretty much everyone, including God, because He also did not meet my expectations. My reality was that nobody would ever come through so I just stop trusting everyone.

I saw God as this bi-polar figure in my life. One the one hand, I was told He loved me beyond measure. On the other, we were taught that he would rain down wrath if we screwed up. My expectation was that if God really loved me as the church taught, I wouldn't be abused or neglected or have a paralyzed mother or an alcoholic father or be put in foster care or be humiliated because I couldn't read or write, or be made fun of because of my last name or the fact I only had one set of clothes to wear or had to use food stamps. You get the picture. But if He was causing all this or even just allowing it, He was either not meeting my expectation of who I learned He was or I was at fault somehow and God was just being consistent by punishing me. I think you can see the problem with this thinking that would lead to a strained relationship. Because I didn't really know God in the proper sense and because some of the theology I was taught was off base, God could not be someone I trusted over my own instincts because He couldn't meet my expectations.

So what kind of expectations have you put on God?

This is REALLY important so pay close attention: God promises us in scripture that He is going to do what is best for us as part of *His* plan. This does not mean that what God knows is best for us is something we are going to agree with from our severely limited perspective. Are you still with me? Let's go further – scripture tells us that God will bring good from everything. That does not mean that everything that happens to you is good, but it does mean that God will redeem it if you let him.

If we expect God to intervene in our lives in such a way that we are never hurt physically or emotionally; and that we are never afflicted with disease physically or mentally; and that people around us and in society will always act on our Judeo-Christian ethics, you're going to be sorely disappointed because God is not going to meet all of your expectations, which may cause you to lose trust.

Let me put this another way – if you are having trust issues with God in your relationship with Him, you need to ask yourself what expectation did you have of Him that He did not meet and was that expectation realistic (e.g. Biblical) or just something you wanted?

I need to address the free will piece again, because it is so important to our understanding of what we should and should not expect from God in our lives. God created man to be in relationship with Him so He did not create puppets that He simply controls. Instead, He gave each of us free will to choose, with the ultimate choice being to choose Him or choose against Him. Those that choose against Him – which is all of us at any given time – commit sins. Sometimes those sins are without significant worldly consequences and sometimes those sins affect the sinner and/or others (usually innocent bystanders) significantly. So, when the alcoholic father turns to violence against his wife, he is choosing against God and His ways and sinning. Does God approve of this? No, of course God does not approve of that! Scripture is clear that God HATES sin, but He cannot simply take away your free will and still call it a relationship. Have you ever tried to control someone in a relationship? Control their actions, their thoughts, their friends, their decisions? Have you had that done to you? How did that work out for you? It wouldn't work out for God so well either. So instead, this fallen human race makes decisions every day to choose against God and His ways and we sin, resulting in murder, rape, child abuse and whatever else you name. God wants us to be in relationship with Him so that we choose Him over sin, but He will never force you into that relationship, because if He did, it would no longer be relationship and it would turn into religion.

A pastor by the name of Francis Chan came up with a brilliant way of explaining how we set expectations on God and why we feel God has broken our trust, thus keeping us out of relationship with Him, meaning He cannot heal us of our brokenness.

Chan puts it this way: We find God's ways unreasonable, because He doesn't do things the way we would do them.

I think this is just genius! We see things in the world every day and we know that if we were God, we wouldn't let them happen. We'd stop wars. We'd stop all violent crimes. We'd stop sex trafficking. In short, we'd stop evil! So, if we are so outraged by it and would take action, why doesn't God? Isn't it reasonable for an omnipotent God to step in and crush all this evil? Certainly, so God must be unreasonable. How can we trust a God that doesn't act reasonably? Let me put it in common terms: If your God is a loving God, why does he allow (fill in the blank). Is that how you look at things? So now let me ask you this: Wouldn't you find it even more unreasonable if you didn't have a choice in life? How would you feel if God *made* you love Him, and *made* you worship Him, and *made* you act righteously in all things? Would that be a relationship you'd want to be in? We always want it both ways, don't we? We want "bad" people's free will taken from them because they misuse it, but we don't want God to touch our free will, as if we are so perfect. Chan hit is right on the head. In other words, there can be no love without the free will to choose.

At this point it is important that you stop for a moment and assess where you are in your relationship with God. Is He the center of your life? Do you find Him completely unreasonable? Or are you somewhere in between? Be honest – there is no judgment here. You have to figure

out where you are with God and what kind of relationship you have before you can start talking with Him and move forward into healing. Take your time, I'll wait.

Okay, let's go a little deeper.

You noticed as I have been writing about talking with God I didn't say I was praying. Some people get skittish if you talk about praying. In more liturgical churches, praying is associated with a very formal setting in a very traditional way. But in reality, praying is just talking with God the same way you would talk to anyone. How do I know this? Because I read the Bible! The entire book of Psalms is songs and prayers to God. Take a look at it sometime and read for content. You'll see some incredibly heartfelt discussions between God and primarily King David. In these Psalms, you don't see the High Priest swishing incense around as he makes grandiose petitions before the Lord. There is a place for that but not in your personal prayer life. Instead you see David saying things like, "Answer me when I call to you, O my righteous God. Give me relief from my distress: be merciful to me and hear my prayer." (Psalm 4:1). How about this one: "O Lord, do not rebuke me in your anger or discipline me in your wrath. Be merciful to me, for I am faint; O Lord, heal me, for my bones are in agony. My soul is in anguish. How long, O Lord, how long?" (Psalm 6:1-3) Any of that sound familiar in your life? Basically, you have David crying out to God, saying, "Help me! I'm in pain here and need your help!!" David's just talking with God, the same way God wants you to do.

Getting Started: Ask, Listen, and Watch

I think the place to start is short and to the point, "God, I have no idea what is going on in my life. Please come into my life and help me get it right."

Remember the quick prayer I said to God in my barracks? Something like, "God I'm done, if you have a plan, take over my life."

Pretty much my healing started with that short prayer. I admitted that I had no idea what I was doing and I asked God to take over my life.

Yes, I know it sounds easier than it is. I get that. But I also get that talking to God doesn't have to be this formal, use-the-right-words, be perfect thing. It can be a simple, "Help!" Here's why: God already knows your needs, your thoughts, and your prayer. Sure, He could act without you actually praying, but again, that's not relationship. Relationship starts by you talking to God, getting to know each other and building a strong bond and trust.

If you're not comfortable starting off with God by asking for help, simply say this to Him, "God, I'm really uncertain right now. Will you work with me on this?"

Now here's the part of getting started most people miss – Listen and Watch!

Most Christians are fantastic at going to God and praising Him, praying for others and praying for themselves. Once the prayer is over though, they tune out and get on with their business. What if you were talking to a friend and once you finished everything you had to say you just

turned around and walked off? Think for a moment how strange that would be if a friend of yours did that to you every time you were with him. You'd think that your friend had a screw loose, especially if he kept asking you for things but never allowed you to actually act on the things for which he was asking! That's the way we often treat God, kind of like He's a secretary. Okay, God, I need Bob to be healed from his surgery, Sally needs a job and Bless the Pastor and his family if you get the chance – amen. Again, it just doesn't work that way. If you want God's healing in your life, not only do you have to ask but you have to listen and watch for the answer, which means you are going to have to put your faith in action by believing God will do what you ask.

I have to share with you the trick of all this. God's kind of funny the way He does things. Sometimes He will answer your prayer just the way you ask it. "God, please heal Aunt Suzy's cancer." Remarkably, Suzy's cancer goes into remission. You see God's hand directly! That is a blessing. But a lot of the times, God answers our prayers in His way not ours and in His timing not ours. When I was medical boarded out of the Army, my number one goal was to somehow get a job with the CIA. I prayed that God would let me fulfill my dream and give me this career. Well, instead God allowed me to get back into the newspaper business and then into politics. Did God ignore my prayer? Seemed like it or at least it seemed as if the answer was no. But 14 years after I left the Army, God determined I was ready and allowed me to be hired by the Defense Intelligence Agency, which is the Defense Department's CIA. Once I got to DIA, I quickly realized that I needed those 14 years to learn all the things I had learned so that I would be successful. Had I gone to CIA right after the Army, I would have failed. There is no doubt in my mind about that. God knew that I needed that extra seasoning before I could be successful in the Intelligence Community so he made me wait. And by the way, the CIA offered me a job and I actually turned them down! Even though I never gave up hope that God would answer my prayer, there were days when I thought the answer was no. God did not answer my prayer the way I wanted Him to, but He did answer it for which I am grateful!

How Has God Answered Your Prayers?

What have you asked God for in your life? Did He deliver? Here's another exercise: sit down with a pen and paper and write out a list of things you've asked God for. Then write how God responded next to each entry. You may see that God answered your prayer directly, which is really cool! You may see how God answered but in a very different way than you expected. In fact, this little exercise may be the first time you see how God *did* answer a prayer, but you didn't see it before or understand how He answered like you do now. There may be some things on that list where God said no, because it was either not in His will or plan for you, or what you were asking for was not good for you, even if you thought it was. The last stuff on your list will be requests that God has not responded to yet. Be patient. God responds to all prayers, but you have to do your part and listen and watch for the answers. Sometimes those answers come directly; sometimes those answers take years to show themselves. All answers are for God's purpose and plan.

Here's something that's even harder than listening for God. When you hear Him, you have to do what He tells you to – period!

There will be times in your life when a thought will come to your mind out of nowhere directing you to do something. A lot of times we simply ignore those things and think it's just our own inner voice. However, it is one way in which God speaks to you. Unfortunately, it also is how Satan whispers to you as well. Scripture tells us to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1) to be sure just who is talking with us! I want to digress for a moment and share how important this is.

I know a guy who has perhaps the biggest servant's heart I have ever seen. He is a strong Christian believer with compassion for people that is unmatched. Yet, I believe he got himself into some trouble by not testing the spirits. During a time of change at our church, my friend shared that when the Bible contradicts what the Holy Spirit tells him personally that he always chooses what Holy Spirit says over what the Bible says. For some of us, this raised a significant red flag. God does not contradict Himself – He would not inspire something in the Bible and then tell you something different through the Holy Spirit. It is not His nature to do that. Think of it this way: If God is good, and love and all that other stuff we learn in church, then telling us one thing in scripture and another personally would mean God is not really God, because He no longer would be good and loving, He would be confusing and irritating and just messing with us! This is why scripture says to test the spirits. It may not be God putting those thoughts in your head! If what you are hearing is not consistent with what scripture says, it's not God in your head.

That said, when God does speak to you and you go to scripture and confirm that what was said is in fact Biblical, then you have a decision to make. Do you do what He said to do or do you do something else? All of us would like to think that when we hear God's voice we'll be just like the prophet and say, here I am, pick me! (Isaiah 6:8) The truth of the matter is we are more like Jonah and run away because we really don't want to do what God is asking.

I just had a meeting with a friend who used to go to our church but has been in a different church for about five years. He attended a Christian leadership meeting about a year ago and God spoke to him. God told Him to move. I love it when God does that because in a lot of cases God does not tell us *where* to move to! He just tells us to move and to trust Him that He'll guide us where. After about a year of trying to figure it out, my friend told his pastor and leadership that he was leaving the church. Their first question was logically, "Where are you going?" He said, "I don't know," at which point they kind of turned on him. In my meeting with my friend, I reminded him that when God told Abraham to move from his country of Ur, Abraham didn't ask where. When God told Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, Moses didn't ask where. When Jesus met Paul on the road to Damascus and told Paul to stop persecuting Him and follow Him, Paul did not ask where. Throughout scripture God tells people to move and the people we consider heroes of the faith don't ask where, they simply say – Yes!

If God asked you to do something right now, would you say "yes" even if He didn't tell you all the details? This is a hard question so be honest. If your answer is no, don't worry about that. It just means you need to work on your relationship a bit. If your answer is maybe or it depends, that's okay – you also need to work on your relationship. If your answer is an emphatic "YES," that's fantastic, but understand fully what that means!

When seeking healing from God he's going to ask you to do things you will struggle to do. He will ask you to be vulnerable and transparent. He will ask you to forgive people who have hurt you physically or emotionally. He will ask you to transform into a new person, which is scary. He will ask you to give up your defense mechanisms, which you feel will put you at risk. He will ask you to give up your sin life, which may mean changing the people or places you hang around. He will ask you to live for Him and not for yourself. He will ask you to go to or return to church (that was a hard one for me!). He will ask you to seek forgiveness from those you've wronged. He will ask you to believe that you are a son or daughter of God. He will ask you to make Jesus your Lord not just your savior. In the introduction of this book, I told you that you have a part to play in your healing. God doesn't just come down and smack you across the forehead like some televangelist and shazam you're healed. This is a relationship and God is going to walk with you and teach you, but you have a role, too. You have to decide if you will say yes to the things God is going to ask you to do and you need to decide that *before* He starts asking. There is a price to pay for your healing – decide right now if you are willing to pay it.

Seeing God's Hand in Your Life

Once you start saying yes to God, you have to pay attention to how He heals you. In my experience there will be things that God will heal in very distinct ways that are very noticeable, and there are things God will heal in very subtle ways that are not as noticeable but just as important. I think we're always looking for God to do very tangible things in our lives because it is easier to believe in Him then. But Jesus said that blessed are those who have *not* seen and believe (John 20:29). The truth is God is at work in your life 24/7 and most of His work you probably don't see.

So how do you go about seeing God's healing in your life? You first have to have a good understanding of where your life is off track and the outcome you are seeking from God's hand. You have to take the time to re-assess yourself often to see if any progress has been made in the areas where you have said yes to God. And then you have to build on that success by becoming more trusting of God. You see, as you begin to progress God will be asking more and more of you. He will never ask you to do more than you can handle and you may not always succeed at first. But the things He asks you to do are building blocks toward your healing.

I want to share a couple stories from the Bible that may accurately illustrate what I think all of us have gone through at one time or another. I think the stories are important because they show a place to look for God in your life that I don't think we always think about looking.

The first story is from 2 Corinthians 12:7-10 where Paul writes, "...I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

The second story is about the blind man in John 9:1-3: "As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born

blind?’ ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned,’ said Jesus, ‘but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

Let’s deal with Paul first. Paul didn’t just ask God to relieve him of his thorn, he *pleaded* with God to give him relief not once, *but three times*! God told Paul no. Instead, God told Paul you’re going to have to live with this and rely on me instead of yourself. You have this thorn in your flesh so that you won’t do things in your own power, but will have to rely on me in this weakness.

I think when this happens to us, we kind of abandon the thought of looking for God. We see the first part where God says no, then we say, okay, I guess I just have to suck it up. But that’s not what God told Paul. He said that Paul was to rely on God’s strength not his own. Here’s the trick for us – when God tells us “No, I’m not going to take away your pain,” He’s not saying He won’t heal you. He is saying that you have to learn to turn to Him for your strength. Did you catch that? You still get strength and relief and healing, but it comes in a different form – it comes in the form of constant dependence on God! I personally know how this works because my disabilities cause me great discomfort and I have no strength of my own to rely upon. Instead, I call on God’s strength to see me through not just each day but on some days each minute.

I love this next story. Here’s a guy who was born blind. In Jesus’ day, people thought that if you had a disability like this you or your parents sinned, causing the malady. Jesus teaches that malady is not from sin, but is for the glory of God. So how is being blind for the glory of God? This is where you really have to focus on relationship. Have there ever been people in your life who are broken in some way physically, emotionally or mentally who have taught you lessons, or been important to your personal growth? I never saw my mother walk but she was a huge influence in my life, teaching me how to accept difficulty with grace. We have a blind kid in our congregation who also suffers from a touch of autism. When he prays I am put to shame by his childlike approach to God and the sincerity of his relationship with God. He is such a role model for me in that area. I know another woman who suffered significant physical and emotional abuse in her life and has had some great healing, but still struggles daily. I admire her ability to fight every day for what God has for her.

If you’re like me, you’ve been around people that some might say are broken but you see as having deep value to you. Why can’t you be made for the glory of God with your brokenness and be able to shine Christ’s light in areas that God chooses not to heal in the way you would like for His own purpose? I know, it’s always easier to see it in others and not believe it for ourselves. But I know that others draw strength from me when they see me come to work every day knowing that I am not feeling well. I know I draw strength from others who suffer through their issues, yet stay focused on their walk with God. Again, it’s about relationship. Jesus told us to love each other as He loves us. If God has told you “no” He’s not going to heal you in the area you are seeking, ask the next logical question: “Lord, how can my pain be used for Your glory?”

Some say life’s big question is “Why am I here?” I think the answer is rather obvious: Because God made you to be in relationship with Him. But we all know that you cannot have relationship without communication. Your purpose is to talk with God. Where do you want God to be in your life? On the outside or right in the middle? This I know: God is waiting for you to let Him in so

He can do remarkable things with your life. In some areas He will heal you like you cannot believe. In others, He will glorify Himself through your reliance on Him. But it all starts with you building a relationship with Him through discussion. Don't be afraid – God can't wait to talk to you!

Chapter 3

Talking with Your Therapist

Key Points

1. God wants you to talk with Him!
2. Talking with God should be kept simple like you're talking with a friend.
3. Communication is vital to any relationships, including your relationship with God.
4. God does hear and answer your prayers
5. Do the exercise – write down the prayers you have sent to God and see if and how He answered them.
6. If you're mad at God, tell Him. Don't give Him the silent treatment – you're not a child.
7. God will answer – listen!
8. Test the spirits – makes sure it is God directing you by checking it out verses scripture.
9. There's a lot of bad theology out there, but that doesn't make God bad, it just means you're listening to knuckleheads.

Chapter 4

The Power of Forgiveness

A number of years ago I ran into one of my old foster fathers. I actually really liked this guy and his wife. But the wife snapped when I told her that I was going to go back and live with my own father when he got out of jail. As she threw me up against a wall and began hitting me, she was incredulous that I didn't understand how much she loved me and how I was betraying her by moving back in with my father. Apparently, she had some issues.

It was really good seeing the guy and he shared that he and his wife had divorced because she did the same thing to another foster kid after me. I didn't know that he actually knew about the beating I took. I remember feeling a sense of vindication and satisfaction that he knew because it was the first time anyone admitted bad stuff happened.

In a way, his admission that his wife beat me and another kid was a way of seeking forgiveness. He didn't come right out and ask for it but the way he framed the discussion was clear that he was looking for forgiveness and I gave it readily. I could see on his face a sense of relief wash over him as we talked. It was as if he had carried this guilt for a long time and when I told him we were good and no hard feelings, I think it set his mind at ease – I hope it did.

Forgiveness is a power tool in the healing arsenal. Unfortunately, I don't think it is sought or given as often as it should be. I know, because it took me years just to realize that I needed to seek forgiveness from people I had hurt along the way and give forgiveness to those who had hurt me.

If you are reflective and working through faith and prayer toward healing, there is a moment when God will reveal to you unaddressed forgiveness issues. For some, it may mean forgiving others, such as the person who emotionally, physically or sexually abused them. For others it may mean reaching out to people they screwed over and humbling themselves before these people while seeking forgiveness. For most, it means both.

My moment came the day I realized that I was the crazy one, not everyone else! For years, I thought I was the smartest guy in the room and it was everyone else who just "didn't get it." Turns out that during my healing process God decided to let me know I was wrong and it was me who was the problem. Here's a little test to keep in mind: If you keep going through the same things over and over again, and you are the only common denominator – chances are it's you! It was a bit stunning when God showed me this. Then He showed me all the people I had done wrong to over the years. It wasn't pretty. I had hurt a lot of people and God was telling me I needed to seek forgiveness from them.

Unresolved forgiveness is a cancer that will kill you spiritually. It will cause you to act in ways you don't want to act and will keep you locked up in your own pain without possibility of healing. The only cure for this kind of cancer is seeking and giving forgiveness, which is the one thing you just don't want to do.

I recently watched a Sunday school series by Andy Stanley who is the son of the well-known Pastor Charles Stanley. Andy has his own church and is a great presenter. He also has a great sense of humor and was talking about forgiveness. He said that most of us do forgiveness like this:

“I forgive so-n-so, but *never* mention their name around me again.”

Now that’s funny, because we know he’s right! God doesn’t ask us to forgive others the way He forgave us just to make it harder on us. God requires that we forgive others the way He forgave us because He knows that if we don’t, the brokenness of not forgiving will eat us alive from the inside out. Without forgiveness you will not be healed.

As we get started, I want you to think about forgiveness like this: Forgiveness is showing mercy to someone who doesn’t necessarily deserve it. Forgiveness is hard because the transgressions are real, the pain is real, the betrayal is real and forgiving people seems like we’re just letting them off the hook – including ourselves when it is us who needs forgiveness. But always remember this: God forgave you through His son, Jesus, when *you* were not forgivable. The transgressions you did against Him were real, the pain you caused Him was real and the betrayal to Him was real. Yet, He showed you mercy and forgave you, and not in the “Don’t ever mention their name around me again” way. He forgave you as in the “It never happened in the first place” way. That is how you are to forgive yourself and others.

Let’s take a look at the various types of forgiveness we need to deal with in our lives.

I think of four different areas of forgiveness:

1. God’s forgiveness of you
2. Your forgiveness of yourself
3. Your forgiveness of others
4. Others’ forgiveness of you

God’s Forgiveness of You

One of the fundamental themes of scripture – both Old and New Testament – is forgiveness. The word “Forgive” and its variations are used 51 times in the Old Testament and 59 times in the New Testament. The doctrine of forgiveness is the very foundation of our faith. Without forgiveness we would still be enemies of God. Without forgiveness we would still be slaves to our sin nature. Without forgiveness there would be no need for Jesus, who died for the sins of the world – or put another way: died so God would erase all our sins. Without forgiveness it would be nearly impossible for us to believe in a loving God.

And that is the point: God loves us. In fact, scripture says He loves us so much that he gave his only begotten son to die on a cross so that His creation – man – could once again be in relationship with Him. And not just in relationship today, but in relationship for eternity. So, the first question we ask when we talk about healing is do you believe that God loves you? Be honest – I know a lot of people who say they know intellectually that the Bible says it, but

they don't feel it emotionally and thus don't believe it. If you are to be healed, you have to get to a place where you know emotionally in your heart and soul that God loves you.

The word "Love" or "Loved" is used in the Old Testament 185 times and in the New Testament 166 times. Did it surprise you that Love is used more in the Old Testament than the New? God's love is not something that came along when Jesus hit the scene. No, it goes all the way back to the Garden of Eden. It's the whole reason God created man – He wanted a relationship with us based in love. Deuteronomy 7:12 says that if we follow God's commands, He will keep his "covenant of love" with us. Wow, the God who created the universe has a covenant with us that is all about Him loving us. Incredible when you think about it. And even more sobering is the fact that God's love is big enough to forgive even your most egregious mistakes.

You may be thinking, "That's all well and good, but I just don't feel it. How do I personally know that God loves me? And the answer can't be, 'Because the Bible says so!'" I think that is a legitimate question so I have an exercise for you!

First, go back to what we talked about in the prayer chapter. If you have a friend and don't talk to that friend, you're not going to be friends for long. If you want God in your life, you've got to talk to Him and if you're not talking to Him, it's not going to feel as if He's in your life. So, let's start with prayer. Go to God and ask him to help you see Him in your life. Ask Him to help you feel His love for you. Ask Him to be the focus of your thoughts and actions. Do this first and rebuild your relationship with Him.

This is not to say that even those who are prayer warriors don't feel distant from God at times. Mother Theresa, the Catholic nun who ministered to the poor in India, kept a diary. Her wish was that the diary would never become public but upon her death it was published. I read the book with mixed feelings, wanting on the one hand to honor the final wish of a pious woman, but on the other very curious about her faith walk.

As I read the book, I understood why she didn't want it published. Mother Theresa writes about how after her call from God to minister to the poor in India as a young woman, she never really heard from God again except maybe a time or two. For more than 50 years, Mother Theresa sought God's face and says she never really saw it. Stunning! This woman of God who was so faithful to her call says she didn't *feel* God in her life! How can that be? And how incredibly faithful she was to follow Him even when she didn't feel He was there.

So, if you faithfully pray and still don't feel God, you're not alone. Some of the giants in our Christian faith have had the same issue! But that doesn't mean God isn't there. Go back and grab that paper I had you do with your life's memories and where God was in them. Now pull that other paper out – the one with the prayers you've made to God and wrote down how He answered them. Together these two exercises prove something quite profound: if you see God's hand in your life – whether it be your activities or your prayer – you know He's with you and can be assured that he's forgiven you, because if He hadn't forgiven you, he wouldn't be there, right?!

I think one of the keys to understanding God's forgiveness is also understanding it's not your choice whether you're forgiven or not, it's His. God knew you before you were born and knew every action you would take, good and bad. He knows every sin you committed, every sin you're committing and every sin you will commit in your life, and He knew it before the creation of the world. Yet He decided He loved you so much that He would forgive you all of this through Jesus. The reality is if you believe Jesus died on a cross for the sins of the world, you then **MUST** accept God's forgiveness because it's the entire reason Jesus went to the cross! If you don't accept God's forgiveness, you're not really accepting Jesus.

There's a woman we work with whose famous retort is, "Yeah, but..." I'm hearing that in my head right now. You might be like her and are filling your head with all your "Yeah, but..." arguments so let me put it this way. God is not unreasonable just because He forgives you when you would not forgive yourself. In fact, it is you who is unreasonable not to accept Jesus' gift of Himself and of God's mercy, grace and love in your life by grabbing this forgiveness and making it the center of your life. There is nothing you've done – and I mean nothing – that God can't handle. He's GOD! It's not like you're going to surprise and shock Him in some way. He is giving you something you don't deserve – mercy through forgiveness. And He's giving it to you because He loves you. Deal with it!

Your Forgiveness of Yourself

My wife had some issues in her life where she needed God's forgiveness. As we worked through those issues, she was more than willing to accept God's rule in her life and His loving forgiveness. The problem was she wasn't willing to forgive herself even though God had forgiven her. This is a problem I see routinely in my church and among my friends, family and co-workers. And it is a significant barrier to healing in their lives. It may also be one in yours.

There are several reasons we don't forgive ourselves even though God has forgiven us:

1. **Pride** – we know better than God what should be forgiven and what should not
2. **Guilt** – even with God's forgiveness, we cannot overcome our own guilt and shame
3. **Fear** – we are afraid to forgive ourselves due to what it may lead to (accepting bad behavior; letting ourselves off the hook; the elimination of the punishment we think we deserve)
4. **Confusion** – equate consequences of transgression with God's punishment of you
5. **Spiritual Warfare** – Satan has a foothold and continues to whisper in our ear that we are not worthy of God's forgiveness

Pride

When my wife and I got married, our verse for the wedding was Proverbs 27:17 "As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another." Some thought it odd for a wedding verse, but if you knew Lisa and me, it made perfect sense. God clearly put us together not only as help-mates and companions, but as each other's sharpener.

When Lisa was going through her issues with God, I made a comment that kind of struck home with her. I asked, “Why is it that if God can forgive you, you think you’re bigger than God and are deciding not to forgive yourself?” I continued, “You’re kind of insulting Him. He made you in His image and He’s the one who gets to decide whether to forgive or not. You’re trying to take His place and play God with yourself.” What I meant by that was Lisa was being selfish. She was deciding that she was actually the center of the universe not God and that God’s forgiveness was not enough in her life; her views of the matter took precedence over what God had to say. Welcome to the world of pride.

In short, pride is playing God. Satan was the first to exhibit this horrible attribute when he decided that he should sit on God’s throne and rule instead of God. Satan was the angel of light and according to scripture was beautiful. He may also have been the highest-ranking angel in heaven or at least as high as the Archangels Michael and Gabriel. Satan had a following too; a third of the angels in Heaven supported him. He had just one problem – Only God is God and Satan and his supporters were cast out of Heaven onto earth for their rebellion. And in His pride, he will not repent to God of his sin and is still ticked off, taking it out on God’s favorite creation – man.

So apparently pride is a bad thing and leads us to rebel against God. This may be a new way of looking at it for you, but not accepting God’s forgiveness in your life because you know better than He does is rebellion against God. Now I don’t want you to freak out about that; in our sin nature we’re *constantly* rebelling against God! This is why we need Jesus. What I do need you to do is to get straight about this. You don’t really have the right *not* to forgive yourself for what God has already forgiven.

In my life, I’ve known murderers, pedophiles, sex addicts, liars, wife beaters, drunks and every other kind of unsavory person you can imagine, but not one of them is beyond God’s forgiveness. There are no throw away people because God loves all His creation – including you! There is nothing you have done that is too big for God’s forgiveness and thus your forgiveness.

Want me to prove it? Okay, let’s go to Scripture.

I always like looking at King David when we start talking about God’s forgiveness because here is a guy that needed a lot of it!

In the Book of Hebrews chapter 11, David is listed as a hero of the faith. In fact, God says that David is a man after God’s own heart (Acts 13:22). This is the same David who:

- Committed adultery with his friend’s wife, Bathsheba
- Had this friend killed by purposely ordering him to the front lines in battle, knowing he would die
- Took a census of his fighting men when God had told him not to, because he wanted to rely on his own power instead of God

At first glance, this seems contradictory – a sinner like David was a man after God’s own heart? How can that be? The answer is simple: David *always* repented when he recognized his sin. In

other words, David always went to God and sought forgiveness for his transgressions and that was good enough for God. In fact, that is what God demands of all of us. David is considered a hero for admitting to God that he was a sinner and accepting forgiveness. You know what David did after admitting each of his mistakes and going to God? He moved on. You don't see David wallowing in self-pity or self-flagellation because even though God forgave him, he didn't forgive himself. Nope, David accepted God's forgiveness and moved on as if it never happened.

I'm not saying there are not consequences for sin, there are. If you read about David you will see he suffered the consequences of his actions, or put in Biblical terms – he reaped what he sowed. Being remorseful over consequences is different than being guilty and not forgiving yourself. David had plenty of remorse. But he didn't have an unforgiving heart toward himself. He accepted that God loved him so he could love himself.

Do you love yourself enough to forgive yourself? That's really the key, isn't it? It's easy for God to forgive us; He loves us. You don't love yourself so you can't forgive yourself. My friend, God knows you inside and out. He knows every thought, every secret, every step you've ever taken. If He can love you and forgive you, give yourself a break and recognize that you can love you, too. That doesn't mean everything about you is great – like me, you probably have work to do. But, think about doing it with the light of Christ shining on your face as you look up toward God instead of doing it in the shadows as Satan tells you to look into the darkness.

We know that the greatest commandment was to love God and then Jesus said the second is like the first, meaning there is another commandment that is just as important – Love your neighbor *as you love yourself* (Matthew 22:39 – emphasis added). You can't love anyone – God included – unless you love yourself. You matter to God – He made you on purpose. Revel in the fact that you are His glory and show Jesus that you accept the work He did for you personally on that cross 2,000 years ago by forgiving yourself.

Guilt

This is a harder one.

Let's start by defining what guilt is and is not. Most of us would say that guilt is what happens when you do something you're not supposed to do and your conscience gets the better of you. That's not what the Bible teaches, however.

Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit is in this world to convict the world of sin. When we say "convict" the world of sin, we don't mean make the world feel guilty because it has sinned. Instead we mean "convict" as in make known, so the Holy Spirit makes known the sins of the world. When we sin, the Holy Spirit makes known to us that we have rebelled against God's ways.

Certainly, we feel badly and inadequate when we become aware we have rebelled against God's ways because we don't want to disappoint God and we've even vowed to follow him. But guilty is not something we should feel.

I've known a number of people who couldn't move forward toward healing because of guilt not realizing or accepting that they are not guilty, but are responsible, which are two entirely different conditions.

The Apostle Paul tells us in Romans chapter 8 that those in Christ Jesus are no longer under condemnation. We're no longer under the penalty of sin because Jesus paid that price for us long ago. If Jesus already paid the price, we are no longer guilty. Think of it this way: In a fit of rage you kill someone. You're guilty and your sentence will either be life in prison or the death penalty. Just then someone comes into the courtroom and says, "I'll take their sentence – I will take their place in jail or in death. Please note in your records that I am taking the guilt on myself and you are no longer guilty." That is exactly what Jesus has done with your sin.

People living a life without personal forgiveness often believe that their sins deserve a much more severe punishment than they receive from God and that there is no justice for what they've done if they simply forgive themselves as God has forgiven them. But I believe they have mistaken guilt, which is a negative, for responsibility and accountability, which are Biblical.

When I sin, I feel badly. Like the Apostle Paul, I feel like I can never do the things I want to do for God and always do the things I hate in opposition to God (Romans 7:15). It's very frustrating to be so weak when it comes to sin. However, no matter how many times I have to go to God and repent, I know that while I am *responsible* for my actions and the consequences of those actions, I am not condemned by God. He doesn't hate me because I sinned and He doesn't abandon me because of my sin. He walks with me and through the work of the Holy Spirit tries to transform me into the person He wants me to be. I will, indeed, reap what I've sown, but I am forgiven.

Certainly, God wants you to be accountable for your actions. Scripture is full of stories of people making decisions and having to live with the consequences, both good and bad. But our entire theology is crippled if we live by guilt because it negates God's forgiveness through grace and mercy. If you are too guilty to forgive yourself, you do not actually believe that God should forgive you either, which then negates His forgiveness. Further it implies that you have to do something to *earn* forgiveness from God, which cuts directly against the fact that our forgiveness is through God's grace based on Jesus' death on a cross and **cannot** be earned – it's a gift not a commodity. You will never earn God's love, grace, mercy, trust, respect or loyalty. They are things that no man can attain through works. However, you can have them just the same by accepting them as gifts from God simply because He loves you.

- Should you feel badly when you fall short? Yes.
- Do you have to live with the consequences of your actions, which sometimes can be incredibly hard? Yes.
- Does God love you any less because of what you've done? No.

Guilt will keep you from forgiving yourself, because you don't believe you deserve it. You're right, you don't deserve it, but God gives it to you anyway! Accept the gift. Be responsible for your actions. Live with the consequences, but don't allow guilt to negate God's forgiveness or your own. You can be forgiven and still be responsible.

Fear

Are you afraid of forgiving yourself because of what it might mean? Do you think that if you forgive yourself you'll think it is then okay to do it again or do even worse? If you forgive yourself are you letting yourself off the hook without punishment, and without punishment you have no discipline so you'll strike again? If you forgive yourself will that mean you're okay, which is something you've never been so it scares you?

Forgiving yourself can be a scary thing because it has serious repercussions. When you live in the dark world of fear and guilt it is difficult to see past them to the freedom that comes with self-forgiveness. Instead all you see are the negative things that *could* happen if you *were* to forgive yourself.

Lisa and I had just started working with a woman and we were explaining the concept of self-forgiveness and transformation and she looked uncomfortable. I asked what she was thinking. She responded, "I like me, I don't want to be someone else." It was a great comment; she was afraid that if she actually forgave herself (and accepted God's forgiveness) she would transform into someone else and not be the person she is. I know exactly what she felt like because I thought the same thing when it was my turn to experience all this.

Let me first say that if you are one of the people fearful of forgiving yourself you're being blinded by Satan. He doesn't want you to see or even know that by forgiving yourself you're not going to morph into Ned Flanders (if you don't know who this is, look up the Simpsons cartoon). You will be the person you are today, just wiser and able to make better decisions. Oh yes, and one who feels the love of God in their life (forgot that small bit!).

With God there is nothing to fear. I'll be honest and say that it may not be the most comfortable fit at first, but there is no fear from a God who loves you. God will provide the strength you need to break your sin habits. God will provide the mental self-discipline and discernment you need through the Holy Spirit. God will show you that you're not being "let off the hook," but instead you are being shown mercy even as you suffer the consequences of your actions and grow in your faith.

You know this: fear is a negative motivator and you don't need that in your life, especially your life with Jesus. Fear is of Satan and he wants you to feel it so it immobilizes you from reaching for Jesus. Tell the devil to pack sand and cry out for Jesus – His arms are opened wide for you!

Confusion

It's amazing how many Christians live in confusion about who God is, what Jesus' death on the cross really means, and how it all applies to forgiveness in their lives! There is so much bad theology out there that it is no wonder we don't understand God's love for us.

Okay, raise your hand if you've been taught that the reason you are suffering in your life is because God is punishing you for your sins!

Now let me ask a question: If Jesus died on the cross for your sins (past, present and future), why would God be punishing you for something Jesus already suffered for? In other words, if God is punishing you for your sins, what good was Jesus' death?

See the problem here?

Where Christians get confused is the difference between God punishing you for your sins and God allowing you to suffer the consequences of your sins. They are two different things.

I keep going back to Romans 8:1: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." It is so important we understand this. **YOU'RE NOT GUILTY!** In theological speak, there was "propitiation" through the death of Jesus – He paid the price that we should have paid for our sins and by doing so made us righteous and holy in the eyes of God.

Jesus' death means nothing if our sins were not forgiven and God still holds them against us, punishing us for the things we do. No, Jesus died for the sins of the world – all sin for all time – so that God who is timeless can see His children as clean through the blood of Jesus.

So why do some say that God is punishing us? First, bad theology. Second, consequences for sin are very real and very scriptural. In the Book of Galatians 6:7 it reads, "Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows." Man reaps what he sows – you will get the consequences of your actions.

We've spoken about free will and how God is not a puppet master controlling everything you do. However, God is clear when He warns you that your choices have consequences so choose carefully. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 7:12 "All things are permissible, but not all things are good." I've always contended that there really are only two choices you have to make in your life: Choose God or Choose against God. In your life, you can choose to do things in a Godly or Christ-like way or you can choose to rebel against God and do things against how He would like them done. There are consequences for both. Scripture speaks of rewards in heaven for those who are obedient and scripture clearly depicts the consequences for those who disobey, including lost blessings for believers who rebel!

So, let's put this in practical terms. If you had premarital sex, got pregnant and had an abortion you may have some pain in your life. That pain is not God punishing you; it is the pain you suffer for disobeying God's word and suffering the consequences of your choice. Here's another one: you go out and drink too much and drive your buddy home. You crash and your buddy is killed. God is not punishing you for the pain you will feel. You are, however, going to suffer the consequences of your bad decision.

There's a Christian song whose lyrics say, "God is not mad at you." I really like that line. God is not mad at you, but He's also not going to be mocked by you making bad decisions and getting away without having to face the music. Sometimes we get lucky: when I was a drinker, I drove home dozens of times without an accident though I was clearly too inebriated to drive. But as I think back, I know how stupid that was because I could have hurt someone due to my bad decisions. I was lucky and I am repentant before God. I don't feel guilty, but I do feel remorse

for being so stupid – see the difference?

You may be lucky in your life as well and may not have had to face the consequences of your actions. But, luck runs out! If you hurt and you think you deserve that hurt because God needs to punish you for what you did, I'd encourage you to read the Book of Romans and rethink your position. God is not mad at you and you are not under condemnation as a believer in Jesus Christ. You are suffering the consequences of your actions which God will allow you to do. But, He is always there just waiting for you to turn to Him and ask Him to help you through your pain. He wants you to learn through your mistakes and consequences to choose Him; make decisions that are Godly and Christ like. If you do, you will experience joy instead of pain. It's pretty simple.

Don't fall into the trap of bad theology. Jesus died on a cross for your sins. Let that sink in.

God cannot punish you for a sin that has already been redeemed through the atoning blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ. However, you still can be a knucklehead and make disobedient decisions that can result in some really bad juju. That's on you, not God. But you can forgive yourself while still suffering those consequences – the two are not the same thing.

If you're not forgiving yourself because you think God is punishing you, go back and read your Bible. Test what you are hearing in your head against scripture and then realize you're being deceived. Forgive yourself as God has forgiven while accepting the consequences of your actions as God would expect.

Spiritual Warfare

Of all the reasons you cannot forgive yourself even though God has forgiven you, spiritual warfare is the most difficult to address.

Simply put, Satan is a crafty little bugger. As we will discuss in the chapter on spiritual warfare, Satan's words are filled with half-truths and that's why he's so successful in making us believe his lies. Here are some of his greatest hits that he whispers in our ears:

- God could never love someone who has done the things you've done
- You deserve to suffer the consequences of your actions – you cannot simply forgive yourself and let yourself off the hook
- God is holy and you are not, so He cannot forgive you
- You're just a hypocrite, claiming to be a Christian and sinning like everyone else
- You are worthless and weak; you'll never have the discipline to overcome this sin
- God says to hate sin, so you have to hate yourself for sinning
- God's mad at you, because you keep disobeying Him

There are literally hundreds more that he uses, hitting us in our weakest spot, and causing us not to embrace the forgiveness God gives us, which in turn keeps us from forgiving ourselves.

The first thing you have to do in order to win a fight against Satan is understand how Satan is attacking you. What kinds of things is he telling you? Can you discern which parts of his attacks are lies? Why do you want to believe the lies? Once you figure some of this stuff out, it gets easier to figure out when he's in your ear. You see, scripture tells us to resist the devil and he will flee from us (James 4:7). The trouble is sometimes we don't even know we're under attack so there's no way to resist! First you have to recognize the attack and then you can resist it.

I always find it amusing when Satan is depicted in a really scary way, like in the movie *The Exorcist* (That movie still freaks me out!). But if Satan showed up in my house in the form of a little girl floating in the air and spitting green pea soup at me, chances are good I'd recognize him for what he is *and not listen to him!* No, Satan is much cleverer than that. Instead, he shows up in a way where we will embrace him. Look at how he tempted Jesus. He didn't do all the scary stuff to try to intimidate Jesus into sinning. No, instead Satan appealed to Jesus' physical needs and human desires just like he did in the Garden with Adam and Eve. Jesus, of course, did not sin. We are not so disciplined.

Spiritual warfare is real, but it is not what is depicted in movies. Satan will attack you, trying to get you to believe his lies about you and your relationship with God. **The first line of defense is truly knowing God!** Understand that God loves you, is not mad at you, that Jesus paid the price for your sins and you are forgiven, and that anything you think or hear to the contrary is not from God. If in doubt, search the scriptures and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you.

I'm not going to tell you that you will be able to resist the devil every time – you won't, and neither do I. But I can tell you that if you know God and understand how Satan attacks, you have a significantly better chance of resisting and defeating Satan in all areas of your life. Here's a rule of thumb you can live by: Any time you hear Satan tell you that what you've done is not forgivable or that you're just letting yourself off the hook, know immediately that it's him and not God speaking. When you hear this stuff or more like it, tell Satan to leave and go to prayer asking for God's help and protection. When you feel Satan leave and God step in, at that moment forgive yourself! You'll be glad you did!

Your Forgiveness of Others

Now let's talk about how we forgive others. I think this is one of the hardest commands in scripture. We are told that if we do not forgive those who sin against us, God will not forgive our sins. (Matthew 6:15). That's pretty harsh! But think about it for a minute. Consider for one moment all the things you have done against God. How many sins have you committed in your life? Why should God forgive you for hurting Him the way you have? But, He did. God gave YOU his only begotten son to suffer and die in YOUR place so that YOUR sins could be forgiven. Don't you think you can suck it up just a little and forgive others for the things they've done to you?

Here's the truth of the matter: We are all sinners and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We all hurt each other and we all have pain from those experiences. The only way to healing is through forgiveness. The people that have hurt you made decisions that were sinful. That is between them and God. **You are called to forgive – period.**

I hear the words in my head right now: What about justice? They should have to pay for what they did! Yes, you're right – and that's God's job not yours. When all is said and done in this world, God's justice will be perfect. Everyone will reap what they sowed. But when and how that happens is God's decision not yours. Your job is to trust in the Lord and let Him do His job.

In our worldly sense of things, it seems so unfair. We see people every day who apparently get away with everything! It makes us angry. It makes us vengeful. We hold a grudge. And Satan wins. When we feel this way, we are out of step with God. We no longer feel the fruit of the spirit (Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Gentleness, Faithfulness and Self-Control – Galatians 5:22-23). Instead we feel the exact opposite, which means we are not in the spirit but in the world. And when we're in the world we are not being the people that God created us to be.

Forgiving someone is hard, especially when that person has hurt you deeply and there seems to be no justice in sight. However, God wants to heal you and that's why He calls you to forgive. You cannot be healed of your trauma and pain if you hang on to all the negatives associated with the person and incident(s). It's poison in your system. God knows this and has given us a way out that seems crazy on the surface, but does so much for the soul.

There are people God puts in my life that have deep, deep pain. The things that have happened to them in their lives are unthinkable, yet have happened. And God calls me to walk them through forgiveness because their pain is literally killing them.

We start by making a list of the people in their life who have trespassed against them. Then one by one we start talking about what happened, why it may have happened, and how we will strategize forgiveness for that person. Forgiveness does not happen overnight. Sometimes it takes years to get to a point where someone can forgive another. But the key to their healing is understanding who God is in their life, that He will redeem the situation, and that you don't have to hold onto the pain. Instead, you can "Let go and let God" by showing your trespasser mercy and grace through true forgiveness.

This is a hard exercise because it brings up all the demons from your past that you probably are trying desperately to keep in their little boxes. But, you know as well as I do that the boxes don't stay closed and the demons always get out and screw with you anyway. Instead, try forgiveness. Get a piece of paper and pen and write down all the people who have done you wrong somehow. Then prioritize them – I prefer easiest to forgive to hardest. My strategy is always to take care of the so-called "Low Hanging Fruit" and then as you get more comfortable with the concept of forgiveness, you take on the tougher ones.

Don't do this alone! First and foremost, seek God's counsel through the Holy Spirit! Pray and ask God to enable you to forgive, to give you a forgiving heart. Then, if you have a pastor who can help you, seek his/her guidance. If you have a counselor, ask them for help. If not, find a friend and make that friend an accountability partner who will help you stay on the path and encourage you in those tough moments when you really don't feel like forgiving but you know you have to.

As you forgive others, God will bless you. I know this first hand. Not only will God lift the pain from your life, but He will guide you through the hard parts in such a way that you will look back and be amazed at how easy it really was. I know that you may be afraid to do this or maybe just too angry to do this. Get over yourself – obey God and He will take care of you.

Other's Forgiveness of You

God thinks seeking the forgiveness of others is really important! In fact, He tells us in Matthew 5:23-24, "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift."

God thinks it is so important to seek forgiveness from others that he places it *before* offering gifts to Him! Think about that for a second – be reconciled to your brother or sister and then come to God. Wow!

Raise your hand if you are good at reconciliation? Me neither! But, I've gotten better since I've understood this verse. This is not a suggestion by God, it is a direct order. God does not just think it's a good idea that we seek forgiveness from others; He tells us that we need to do this before we seek Him.

So, if you're like me, you're running through a list of people in your head from whom you may need to seek forgiveness. Grab that piece of paper and a pen and start making the list!

I shared earlier that I had to do this in my own life and I'll be honest that when I started I did it more out of obedience to Christ than a heartfelt need to seek forgiveness. In fact, there were one or two people on my list that I had to swallow hard before I could humble myself enough to ask forgiveness, as well as provide forgiveness to them. But as I wrote, the Holy Spirit softened my heart toward these people, showing that I did truly love them and that seeking forgiveness was not just my duty but something I wanted to do. Most didn't respond to the letters I sent seeking forgiveness and those that did had some words that struck me like steel. But, the burden that was lifted from my soul was amazing.

It takes a lot of energy to hold a grudge. It's emotionally draining to carry around the baggage of past conflicts and traumas. But more importantly, God cannot bless you fully until you make things right. That is what He is saying in scripture. He cannot accept your gifts at the altar before you are reconciled to your brother or sister. The reason is you have conflict in your life that needs to be cleaned up first before He can bless you fully. Do you see this in your own life? Do you see where God wants to shower blessings on you but you are blocking those blessings because of unresolved issues with your brothers or sisters?

I'm not going to tell you it's easy. It's not. In fact, I routinely see unresolved issues between people – even in church. I had a guy that was mad at me for something I had said so he stopped talking to me. I didn't even know it until another member of the congregation shared that the guy was upset. He never did talk to me about it and told others he refused to talk with me. Finally, another member told him that he misunderstood what I had said and the next thing I know the

guy's talking to me like we were long lost friends. Strange, but true. Had that man simply come to me and said he was upset we could have worked it out months earlier, but he held a grudge and decided that he couldn't be reconciled. Satan wins.

We are all full of pride and it will be our undoing. Seeking the forgiveness of others means you have to humble yourself before God and them. The Apostle Paul tells us in Philippians 2:3 that we are to consider others better than ourselves. His counsel is meant to keep us humble toward our brothers and sisters so we don't end up having a problem in the first place, but if we do, we are to seek forgiveness.

I want to note that seeking forgiveness does not always mean it will be given. Whether someone decides to forgive is between them and God. Jesus teaches that if someone transgresses against you seven times, you are not just to forgive them seven times, but seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22). What Jesus is saying by using inferences to Hebrew numerology where different numbers have different meanings associated with them is forgive each time completely! You are to always forgive no matter what! The people we have offended may not have matured to that place in their walk yet and may not forgive you. That is not your decision. Once you have been obedient in seeking forgiveness, you can approach God at the altar with your gift! God will deal with the hearts of those who are not ready to forgive. You just do your part!

Forgiveness – The Key to Healing

I think you know intuitively that forgiving is a major piece to your healing. I think in our hearts and souls we want to forgive people but we are afraid of getting burned again. Because forgiveness is of God and from God, we need to stop thinking like the world and instead see things the way God sees them in our lives. As far as God is concerned, forgiveness is not an option – you must forgive and others must forgive you. That is His way.

Forgiveness takes trust – trust not in other people, but in God, that His justice is perfect and that He will protect us and heal us when we forgive and are forgiven. We forgive others because God first forgave us when we, too, were unforgivable.

Forgiveness takes courage – you have to suck it up and take a chance even if it means the one from whom you're seeking forgiveness instead gives you a piece of their mind...or worse!

Forgiveness takes understanding – you must understand that you are a child of God, holy and righteous in His eyes, but as a child of God you must do what He tells you to do even if it's hard.

Forgiveness takes mercy – you must show mercy to those who have harmed you the same way God has shown you mercy through Jesus Christ.

Forgiveness take humility – you must humble yourself before God and others to find the peace you are seeking.

Do you want to be healed? Then forgive and seek forgiveness.

Chapter 4

The Power of Forgiveness

Key Points

1. There are four areas of forgiveness that you must seek:
 - a. Forgiveness from God
 - b. Forgiveness of Others
 - c. Forgiveness from Others
 - d. Forgiveness from Yourself
2. Forgiveness is hard, but you have to trust that God knows what He is doing when He asks you to forgive even when you don't want to.
3. Unforgiveness is a poison in your life – a cancer that will kill you from the inside out.
4. You don't have a choice; if you want healing you must be willing to forgive and be forgiven.
5. Do the exercise: Make a list of the people you need to forgive and the people from whom you need forgiveness, and then work on both!

Chapter 5

Change or Die

That day in my barracks, I knew that I had to change or I would die. I couldn't live like I was any more. I know it's cliché, but I really was at the end of my rope – despondent, hopeless, and broken physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Something had to give.

Thank God (literally) for stepping in when I needed Him most.

What I didn't know then and only learned through the years is that the kind of change that will transform your life is not an overnight thing. God doesn't just come down, smack you on the forehead like some televangelist and shabalee-doo you're healed. No, the kind of change I'm talking about – the kind that God walked me through – is a process. I had to learn to trust that God's way was the best way. I had to learn that God would protect me when He asked me to do hard things. I learned that change has a cost that you have to be willing to pay before God can work in your life. And I learned that the kind of change God wants you to have in your life is AWESOME and will really blow your mind.

Let's start out with an exercise! Grab that paper and pencil again and make two columns. Title the first column on the left "Who I Am." Title the column on the right "Who God Wants Me to Be." See if they are the same. If they are, feel free to put down this book and go bake some cookies or something. But if you're like me, those columns look a little different. Let me share what mine would look like if I had done one of these before my healing began.

Who I Am

Ambitious
Self-Centered
Scared
Angry
Paranoid
Irritable
Untrusting
Conflicted
Fighter
Egoist
Coarse Language
Violent Thoughts
Manipulative
Closed Off
Unloving
Self-Serving
Wrong Motives

Who God Wants Me To Be

Submissive
Humble
Vulnerable
Transparent
Care About Others
Love Others Unconditionally
Generous with Time, Talent and Treasure
Obedient
Patient
Joyful
Content
Serve Others
Be an Example of Christ in Action
Trust God Completely
Calmness, Peacefulness
Counselor
Leader

Pretty different lists, huh? Now imagine what it would take to go from the guy on the left to the guy on the right – nothing short of an act of God, which is exactly what we're talking about here!

This is one of the most important things I can tell you about changing your life and finding healing: You cannot do it in your own power. Let me tell you why: there are places in your life where you are broken that only God can fix. And scripture tells us God will indeed heal you:

- Psalm 30:2 – O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.
- Psalm 34:18 – The Lord is near the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit.
- Psalm 55:22 – Cast your burden on the Lord, and He will sustain you; He will never permit the righteous to be moved.
- Psalm 147:3 – He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.

Is your spirit crushed? Is your heart broken? Are you wounded deep in your soul? These are the areas that God can heal, because God is the one who created these things in you! Are you willing to let Him work in you? Are you ready to be healed?

The Price of Change

Here is where the rubber meets the road. Right here right now I need you to be completely honest with yourself and me and tell me what you're willing to pay to go from the person you are to the person God wants you to be. Do not answer this question lightly. I've met plenty of people who said they were willing to do anything God wanted them to do only to run away when it got too hard. And trust me, it's going to get hard.

I was 23 years old that day in my barracks when I told God I would do anything He wanted if He would help me. But, I didn't quite keep my commitment.

- I didn't stop drinking until I was 33 years old, and that was only because an ulcer cost me half my stomach and God forced my hand because I wouldn't do it myself.
- I didn't *fully* give myself to God until I was 40 years old – 17 years after that barracks experience. I remember that day clearly; I was praying and God asked me, “Now that I've let you do everything *you* wanted to do, are you ready to serve *me* yet?” Ouch. But as always, He was right – even in my healing I had been self-focused instead of God-focused.
- I didn't start truly loving others as Jesus taught until I was 42 years old. God is still working on this one with me – it's my weakest link, because it involves trust, which I'm not great with yet.

Had I been willing to truly submit when I was 23, God would have healed me much more quickly. However, I wanted to keep one foot firmly planted in my world in my control and one foot planted firmly with God. I wanted it both ways and while God did absolutely remarkable things with me during this time, He could not bless me to the full until I gave myself fully to Him. The AWESOMENESS didn't happen until my 40s and now I kick myself, because I know I could have had it in my 20s had I been ready to be healed. This is what I want to save you from – I don't want you to blow years of your life in this transformation process, because you want to

do it the way I did by trying to have it both ways. I know that most people don't learn from the mistakes of others, but trust me, you DON'T want to go into this healing thinking you can have God heal you but hold on to your life as it is. This is why Jesus told us in Matthew 16:25, "For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will find it." You have to be willing to throw away everything in that left column and step boldly (and faithfully) into the right column or you won't truly be healed.

Yes, there is a price. You're going to have to do something that is perhaps the hardest thing for people like you and me to do. You're going to have to trust someone – I mean really trust someone. And therein lies the problem. Most of our dysfunction comes from people we trusted actually hurting us. If our experience is being hurt by people we should have been able to trust, then how can we ever trust anyone again, including God?

I need to challenge you here. Answer this question for me: Knowing what you know so far from this book, did God hurt you or did people abusing their free will hurt you?

As I've shared, I always thought it was God punishing me, testing me, putting me through the "refining fires" of life to purify me. If He is God, He could have stopped the bad things from happening, so if He allowed it He must be responsible for it, right? **WRONG!** God didn't do anything to me; my father did, and my foster families did, and my own decision-making did. But God did not. It was the free will decisions of others and myself that caused all the havoc in my life and thus all the dysfunction as well. God did not do the horrible things that happened in your life either. In fact, you are here today reading this book, because God actually sustained you so you could have this very moment in your life! Can you trust people? Unfortunately, not all the time. Everyone is fallen and falls short of the glory of God, including us. People are knuckleheads and will abuse their free will to hurt others. But that is not God – it is not who He is. We can trust God in all things, including allowing Him in your life in a very deep, personal, and intimate way so He can move you from who you are to who He created you to be. If you get one thing from this book, get this: God is not to blame, we are – people who do dumb things to hurt others! God is not at fault that we all suffer the consequences of our own and other's actions. This is not how God intended it to be and it is not what He wants for you.

Right here is the part in a book where the author usually says something like, "Say this prayer right now and you can begin your healing!" I'm not going to do that. I think you need some time to do a cost-benefit analysis of what I am asking of you. Instead, I'll ask you to take a look at that left-hand column of your list and think about what your life would be like – both good and bad – if none of those things were there. How much freedom would you have? How would you protect yourself physically, emotionally, and spiritually if you got rid of those things?

Now look at the column on the right. Do you want those things? Would you like to be that person? If so, are you willing to give up the stuff on the left to gain the stuff on the right? What price are you willing to pay for change? I can't answer that one for you – it's completely between you and God. But as we go forward, I am going to assume you said "YES" that you want to be those things in the right column and are willing to begin giving up those things in the left.

Transformation

Okay, your cost-benefit analysis is done and you've decided that you really do want to be that person in the right-hand column. You want to be the person God created you to be! Great, here's where you go to God! Remember, prayer is just talking to God, so if you want to give this a try and are willing to become the person that God created you to be, simply go to God and ask Him to help you change. That's it. No long prayer, no complicated supplication before the Lord. Just go to Him with the right motives and ask Him to help you escape from your current life into a life you honestly cannot even imagine right now.

Is that it? Is that all you have to do and you get that right column? Yes and no. I've told you that you can't do it in your own strength, and the truth of the matter is God does most the work through the Holy Spirit acting in your life. But, you do have to partner with God and you do have your work to do. Let me walk you through an important exercise.

The technique I am going to teach you comes from my years as a student and instructor of the martial arts. One of the first things they teach you when you start learning how to fight is to breathe out when you get hit. The reason is simple: by breathing out you won't get the wind knocked out of you if you get hit in the body. But what they're really teaching you is to replace your natural reaction with an action. See, our natural reaction in a fight is two-fold. When someone throws a punch at us we automatically flinch and we breathe in. The phrase "getting the wind knocked out of you" actually is the exact opposite of what happens. When you breathe in and get hit the wind actually gets trapped in you; your lungs are full of air which stops you from getting another breath. We teach fighters to breathe out when hit. That way the air will not be trapped and no matter how hard you get hit, you can always get one more breath.

This exercise of replacing your natural reaction with an action is the key to your part in the transformation process. Let me walk you through some hypothetical examples that may help explain what I'm talking about.

Depression – When it comes to emotional distress, anything that triggers depression will start a spiral downward that is hard to stop and can become dangerous. That's why it is so important to understand your triggers and replace your automatic reaction with a positive action because it is very difficult to come out of depression once the spiral has spun you down past a certain point. Another difficulty with depression is you don't enjoy things that you normally enjoy when the depression hits, making it difficult to feel as if you want to do something else. That said, it is vital that you make a list of things you like to do and when you first get any inkling that your depression is being triggered, **IMMEDIATELY** go do one of the things you enjoy, even if you have to force yourself to do it. Don't give the trigger time to develop. If you are struggling with depression or some other type of emotional issue be sure to consult your physician and/or counselor. If you're not seeing someone, think about doing so. Remember, all good things come from God, including the knowledge God has given to counselors and medical providers to help you. Don't make the mistake when the trigger begins and think you can handle it. No matter what you're doing, stop and replace the reaction of the trigger with a positive action so the trigger cannot spiral!

Negative Self-Talk – This is a biggie! Just about everyone I know falls into the trap of trash talking themselves at some point or another. But for some, negative self-talk becomes habitual so that the person doesn't have any belief in themselves and loses their self-esteem and self-worth. Again, you have to figure out what triggers this negative self-talk. For some, it's the feeling of being judged by others. Some people think of themselves negatively when they perceive they've failed at a task. Still others get into negative self-talk when they think they've not met an expectation or let someone down. There are literally dozens of triggers for negative self-talk, which is why it's important you know yours. Make a list (I'm big into lists!). The big issue with negative self-talk is what you are hearing in your head isn't true, or at a minimum is a gross distortion of the situation. You may say, "I'm so stupid!" every time you make any little mistake. The truth is you are not stupid; you made a mistake just like everyone else does every day. But you put yourself down totally out of proportion with the reality of the situation. That is negative and destructive self-talk and has no foundation in reality.

My answer to negative self-talk is to replace your reaction of buying into the negative thoughts with the action of asking yourself one question: **What is the truth?** Not just for that situation, but take it a step further and include God's truth about you. The truth is this: God loves you, made you on purpose, and has plans to prosper you. You are a forgiven person who is deeply loved and cared for by God. You may not feel that way at the time, but absolute truth is not dependent upon how you feel; you can feel crappy but the truth is the truth! Hang on to it instead of the negative thoughts. When you tell yourself the truth, then go to God and talk with Him. Ask Him to help you believe the truth so that the truth becomes your habit when triggered not those negative thoughts.

Self-Medicating – Many of us may find that when the pain gets to be too much, a drink, or pill or joint, or a line will help settle us down. As you've used this method over the years, it's become habitual – when you feel emotional pain, you self-medicate. As with most of our reactions, we always believe we can control them and stop doing them whenever we want. I actually believe that but the problem is we don't really *want* to control them and stop doing them. The reason we're self-medicated is we want to stop our minds from focusing on the stuff that's tearing us up and the drugs and alcohol seem to work. Why would you want to quit? The answer to that one is pretty easy – it's not actually helping. Sure, you can mask your pain for a while but it always comes back and then you need more and more drugs and alcohol to knock it back the next time. Not so effective. Instead, you have to replace your reaction of using substances to dull the pain with an action that will do a better job. I have to be honest and tell you that the only thing in my experience that works better than drugs and alcohol is God. Sure, I could tell you to use avoidance techniques to stay away from the booze and drugs when you get down. I could tell you to replace using drugs and alcohol with some activity. But my experience is even those replacement strategies only work so well – and when you get home, you still want a drink! There is always going to be that time when you are home alone – usually at night – and the walls start closing in on you. Then you start to think, and then you start to drink. Self-medicated is one of the toughest reactions to replace. So, here's what you should try: First and foremost is prayer – you have to go to God and ask for strength to get through the initial desire to grab a drink or whatever you do. Just ask God to give you strength. Second, pick up the Bible and read just one or two verses of scripture. It can be anything in any book. Just read some

scripture or say a verse in your head when you want that drink or joint. You have to think about replacing self-medicating with God. Only He is strong enough to overpower your urges. If you are talking with Him or reading His word, you can fill your mind with His stuff instead of your stuff. Scripture tells us in Philippians 4:8, “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.” Don’t fall into the trap of meditating on your pain, your losses, your failures, and your doubt. Instead, go to God where you will find truth, purity, righteousness, and praiseworthy things.

As I re-read this last part, my mind hears you screaming at me, “Yeah, but this will never work for me.” Yes, you’re right – it will never work for you *in your own power*. By yourself, you will fail. That is why I think it is so important that you realize that this is a partnership between you and God. He is not expecting you to do this on your own. He is going to do most of the work, trust me on this. All I am asking you to do is your part – work on replacing your habitual reactions with a positive action. That’s all. You can choose what that action is going to be – it doesn’t have to be any of the things I suggested in the examples. I know your situation is unique and there is no such thing as a one size fits all approach to this stuff. That said, you do have to pull your weight in this partnership. You have to meet God half way by giving an effort He can use to heal you. You have to use your free will decision making to show God you are serious about wanting healing in your life, and by replacing bad reactions with positive actions God will bless you in surprising ways!

Seeing Your World Through God’s Eyes

How do you know if the transformation is taking place? A stunning thing will happen in your life: You will start seeing your world through God’s eyes instead of your own. What do I mean by that? Let me show you.

One of my more enduring qualities is I have a quick wit. Unfortunately, that wit also can be very sharp when aimed at people. I used to love making fun of people. It didn’t matter who – the guy on the street, the gal in the car in front of me, my co-workers. Anybody and everybody was fair game. I wasn’t really meaning to be mean-spirited about it; I just found much of the world around me really funny! It used to drive my wife nuts how I would just pick on everyone I saw, but I had been doing that for as long as I remembered and I didn’t really mean any harm so I figured it was okay.

As I went through my transformation process, I noticed that when I would make a crack about someone I would get this twinge of guilt and know in my head that what I said was unkind. Weird – I never had that happen before. The more I noticed this little voice telling me I shouldn’t do that, the more I realized that God wanted me to see these people differently. Slowly, I stopped making the jokes. Then I found myself seeing some unfortunate souls walking down the street – a homeless person or a mentally challenged person – and I would actually pray for them out of the blue. Weird – I never had done that before either. And the weirdest thing about it was it was coming from inside me not from me consciously making the decision. I was being transformed by the Holy Spirit who was guiding me to a better way. It’s a silly example, but one where at

first, I was seeing things through my own corrupt eyes, and then I began seeing things through God's eyes.

I actually could tell you dozens of stories from my life where this happened. There's this Christian pop song called "Open the eyes of my heart Lord." That is pretty much what God does – He lets you see this world of yours a new way, a life-changing way. That is how you know that God is working in you to heal you.

The key to this kind of transformation is listening to the Holy Spirit. You have a choice to make when you hear that little voice in your head tell you that you should or should not be doing something. You can follow that voice or you can ignore that voice. And let's be honest with one another – we ignore that voice most the time. My challenge to you at this point is to stop ignoring the Holy Spirit. He wants to guide you to a better way of life. If you get the urge to let the person with fewer groceries go before you in line, DO IT. If you get the urge to give the pan handler a buck, DO IT. If you get the urge to leave a group of friends on a Saturday night, because their plans don't feel right to you, DO IT. We're talking about changing your life! If you want change, if you want to be that person in the right-hand column, you must act. You must do what the Holy Spirit guides you to do! You must start experiencing God not just in prayer and in scripture, but actively in your life! Just Do It! (with all due respect to Phil Knight!).

Baby Steps

I love the movie *What About Bob*. If you've not seen this Bill Murray flick, go out and buy it tonight! Bob is a guy who either has or thinks he has every known psychosis imaginable and bludgeons his psychiatrists with his antics. He is referred to Richard Dryfuss – Dr. Leo Marvin – who has just written a book called "Baby Steps." The premise of the book is to take incremental "baby steps" toward healing. Bob baby steps right into Dr. Marvin's life and it's a riot! But, the idea of baby steps fits here for us!

As you work toward transformation, you should think about it incrementally and take baby steps. Look at your left-hand column. Don't try to transform all those things at once. Pick one or two at the most and start thinking about how you will replace your reaction with a positive action. Think about how you want God to change you and what that thing in the left column transforms into in the right column. Talk to God about helping you with this change and ask Him to help you hear the Holy Spirit and do what the Holy Spirit says. Just one or two things. Once you have them down, pick another one or two and do it again. Baby steps!

Transformation is a process not a destination. I've been working on it for 25 years now and the closer I get to the things in the right-hand column the more I realize how far I have to go, and that's a positive thing! Like you, I'm baby stepping and know that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)

Chapter 5

Change or Die

Key Points

1. You have two choices – change into who God wants you to be or die the way you are. Ouch!
2. Do the first exercise – who are you today and who does God want you to be? Think about the differences between the two lists.
3. Do the second exercise – make a list of the things that “trigger” as well as your reaction to those triggers. Then list the action you want to have instead of the reaction. Start slowly with one or two at a time, but work your way through replacing negative reactions with appropriate actions.
4. Do the third exercise – make a list of all the negative self-talk you say to yourself. In a second column write the truth. Begin to internalize the truth instead of the lies.
5. Think about the price you will have to pay for transformation in your life. Do a cost-benefit analysis to determine if becoming who God wants you to be is worth it in your life.
6. Learn how to replace your reactions with an intentional action as a method of transformation.
7. Look for how God changes your worldview as you begin to see things through His eyes and not your own.
8. Keep on Baby Stepping!

Chapter 6

Enemy on the Prowl

Raise your hand if you actually believe in the devil? For those of you who believe in the devil, you may think this is a silly question. For those of you who don't believe in the devil, you also may think this is a silly question. In April 2009, the Barna Group released the results of a survey it had done with 1,871 American Christians and what they believe. According to Barna, 59 percent of these self-identified Christians believe that Satan, "is not a living being but a symbol of evil." Only 35 percent of respondents said they believed that Satan was a living being. That leaves about six percent who are just plain confused and don't know what to think! For me, the numbers show that Satan is winning his battle with Christians!

Why do I believe that Satan is real? Simple, the Bible says he is and I believe the Bible. Yes, I believe everything in the Bible. That's not to say I think everything in the Bible is literal – there are many forms of literature in the Bible. But the parts that describe this fallen angel are not poetry, metaphor, simile, parable, or song. It's pretty much historical narrative – reporting – that God expects us to take at face value. I take God at His word that there was an arch angel named Lucifer who believed he should sit on God's throne and was cast out of heaven with a third of his followers who now call our world home. (Isaiah 14:12-22, Luke 10:18, Revelation 12:4)

What does all this have to do with your healing? So far, you've read that you have to have faith, you have to talk to God, you have to have forgiveness in your heart, and you have to be willing to transform to find true healing. Now I'm going to tell you that there is somebody out there who is going to do absolutely everything he can to stop you and his name is Satan.

For many years, I was what churchy people call a "nominal" Christian. I believed all the church doctrine about heaven and hell and salvation. I believed in the Holy Trinity and that Jesus was the Son of God, born of a virgin and sent to die on a cross for my sins. I believed he was crucified, buried and rose again on the third day, overcoming death and thus giving me eternal life. I believed His sacrifice paid the price for my sins and that I now could come before my God and be seen as holy in His sight. That all sounds so good, right? But the fact is what I believed had very little bearing on how I *lived*! Satan was alive and well in my life, influencing me to choose against God at every turn.

I want to stop right here and make an incredibly important point: Satan does not *make* you do anything! He doesn't have that kind of power over you. All Satan can do is tempt you; the rest is up to you. You can choose to follow that temptation and act on it or you can deny and fight that temptation. Either way, you are responsible for what you choose...as well as the consequences of those choices good or bad.

In my life, there were serious temptations to which I fell. Satan is an arch angel and he's really smart. Remember scripture saying we (man) are made a little lower than the angels (Hebrews 2:7). Spin that the other way – the angels are made a little higher than man. That means Satan is probably a little smarter, faster, cleverer and stronger than I am. I believe I've proved that many times. Here's how.

It started when I was very young. We were poor and back in the day food stamps came in these booklets, kind of like today's car or mortgage payment booklets. If I remember correctly, the stamps came in \$1, \$5, \$10 and \$20 increments. However, they did not look like money. They looked more like monopoly money – clearly not real money and certainly intended to let everyone in the store know you were poor and on welfare. Today, thank goodness, people get a debit card that looks just like other people's debit card so there is no humiliation when you use food stamps so being poor is not accompanied by disapproving looks from the people behind you in line. But back then – even as a young child – I was mortified to have to use food stamps. Why? Pride. I was too prideful to want to exhibit my poor state in life. This is where Satan stepped in. Nobody ever taught me how to shoplift, but I figured it out with the help of Satan who introduced me to the concept. Stealing became the lesser of two evils for me. Satan convinced me that being poor was beneath me and that I shouldn't have to be embarrassed like that. Instead, if I just stole what I wanted, nobody would know that I was poor and it wasn't really hurting anyone – the store had plenty of stuff so it wouldn't miss what I took. So, I would steal and did so for many years, even when I had the money to pay for things.

Satan also taught me about anger. According to Satan, I couldn't trust anyone. See what they had done to me when I couldn't defend myself? How could you trust people who said they loved you and then beat you? How could you trust someone who said they cared for you and then abandoned you? You can't trust those people and you know that everyone is like that. It sounded pretty reasonable to me, so I stopped trusting anyone, even those people I considered my intimates. But, people still tried to get close to me. Satan had an answer for that, too. Anger scares people, he told me. If you rage at people, they will stay away. Even better, you can control and manipulate people through anger. Sounded good to me, and Satan was right – it worked! Funny thing was I still was getting hurt, so Satan told me just to turn it up a few notches.

As I discovered girls as all young men do, Satan was by my side. If you loved someone you show that love through physical contact and sex. Women were a possession that you protect fiercely. Jealousy is a good thing, because it shows how much you care. The tighter you hold on, the more you love someone. That seemed to make sense to me, too.

But the pain in my life was immense. Satan had an answer to that as well. Alcohol and drugs will ease the pain. He was right about that, too. He didn't tell me that the pain would still be there when I sobered up, but his answer to that was simply drink more! Kind of like that old joke: "Avoid hangovers, stay drunk!" I used alcohol, speed and mushrooms to stop the intrusive thoughts in my head. Mostly alcohol though.

Not once while I was holding Satan's hand did I consider what scripture taught. I wish I had looked, not for my sake necessarily, but for the sake of all the people I hurt along the way. Scripture would have set me straight. The way we get angry is wrong (Proverbs 29:22), but more than that, scripture teaches about forgiveness and healing so that you don't have to be angry (1 Peter 4:8). Premarital sex is wrong – scripture teaches there are other ways than sex to show love, like respect and true relationship (Hebrews 13:4). Drinking to the point of intoxication is wrong (Ephesians 5:18). Scripture teaches that drinking in and of itself is okay, but drunkenness is not. Again, scripture teaches you can be healed from those things that you think the drink is keeping locked up tight inside you; basically, I blew it. For all the churching I had, I missed the

entire point about relying on God. Jesus may have been my savior, but He wasn't my Lord. In fact, I was following the ways of Satan and until I let go of his hand and reached out to God I would remain a broken, miserable person.

Satan won in my life for many years not because I wasn't a "Christian" but because what he said to me – the things he tempted me with – seemed so plausible. This is the first thing I have to teach you about spiritual warfare. The things Satan will tell you *always* contain half-truths that to our way of thinking sound pretty reasonable.

If you study scripture, you'll see that there's nothing really tricky about Satan. He's actually pretty predictable. He's going to tempt you at your weakest points, tell you half-truths to make it sound as if what he wants you to do is reasonable, and then laugh and accuse you before God of being a sinner when you choose to fall to his temptation. Let me show you how he did it in scripture.

The most obvious battle took place in the Garden of Eden. Let's take a look at Genesis Chapter 3.

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.'" "You will not certainly die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it." (NIV)

Round one to Satan! He's so clever. He starts by making Eve question the command God gave her. He phrases the question in such a way that he knows that it was not what God actually commanded. "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden?'" Of course, that's not what God said, but that is how Satan framed the argument. Eve replies with what God did say and then Satan retorts that God didn't tell you the truth – you're not going to die from eating of that tree. Satan was right, of course, Adam and Eve did not drop dead from eating the fruit of the forbidden tree at that moment. They just died spiritually that day, physically later, and messed it up for the rest of us with sin until we are all perfected in heaven! Satan's half-truths convinced Eve that the tree did look enticing and that eating it would not have the consequences God said it would. So, she ignored God and chose temptation. Sound familiar in your life? It does mine!

The truth is scripture is full of stories of people ignoring God's commands and ways and instead falling to temptation. Not all the stories so blatantly show Satan's role in these temptations, but I think you'll be able to see his hand in them:

- Cain succumbs to his anger and pride and kills Abel.

- Abraham doesn't trust God to protect him, so he says his wife Sarah is his sister...*twice*.
- Abraham and Sarah don't trust God to keep his promise and give them a son so Sarah gets Hagar to sleep with Abraham so they can have a child.
- The Israelites – including Aaron – decide to make a Golden Calf while Moses is on Mt. Sinai getting the 10 Commandments.
- Moses kills an Egyptian and later disobeys God by smacking a rock with his staff instead of talking to the rock as God commanded, falling to his anger in both cases.
- The spies sent to Canaan don't trust God and report that the land cannot be taken (all but Joshua and Caleb).
- David – what can you say about this guy?!? Doesn't go to war when he's supposed to, spies Bathsheba bathing, sleeps with her and then ensures that her husband is killed in battle – a man who was one of David's top 30 friends also known as David's Mighty Men.
- David again when he takes a census of his fighting men, trusting in their worldly strength instead of God's protection.
- Solomon tried everything under the sun only to realize God was what he needed.
- Samson did not use his gifts as intended and eventually was stripped of his power by Delilah.
- Jonah ran away from God, because he didn't agree with what God wanted to do – he thought he knew better.
- The Pharisees – they were scriptural scholars, yet perverted the relationship the Israelites were to have with God replacing it with 613 rules.
- Ananias and Sapphira – told the community they were giving all the proceeds of their land sale when in fact they were holding some back for themselves. They did not give themselves totally to God and thought what they were giving was good enough – in essence deciding for God what God needed. It's the only smiting in the New Testament.
- The Church at Corinth how it abandoned sound doctrine and questioned Paul's authority.

These are just a handful of the better-known stories of people falling to temptation in scripture, but there are more in there. On the one hand, it is comforting to know that the Bible characters weren't perfect either and just like us, they fell to temptation with serious results to themselves and others. On the other hand, it's frustrating to see how 5,000 years can go by and we're still no closer to controlling our sin nature; Satan still can convince us so easily to fall to his tempting.

Satan and Our Healing

I've spent the four previous chapters outlining how faith, prayer, forgiveness and transformation are vital components to your healing. Guess where Satan is going to attack you? Yup – in your faith walk, in your prayer life, in your effort to forgive and receive forgiveness, and in your work to transform your life. Let's walk through these areas and see how Satan may try to fool you, keeping you from God and his healing.

Faith Walk

I'll be honest, faith can be hard. We read scripture and we think, "Sure, it was easy for the disciples and apostles to have faith because they saw Jesus in person!" Even Paul had an

encounter with the risen Lord on the road to Damascus and was at one point brought up to heaven. Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29). We have not seen God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, His angels or really any tangible showing of the divine world. Yet, we are called to believe. So, let me ask you a question: Is it easier to believe in something you cannot see, touch or even prove, or is it easier to listen to Satan when he whispers in your ear that there really is no God and that you're just making all this stuff up? Satan tells you that the guidance you think you're getting from the Holy Spirit is just you talking to yourself and that science has proved that God did not create the universe. Satan will try to make you believe that much of what you read in the Bible actually did not happen and that it is mythology. If Jesus said that it is our faith that heals us, you can be assured that Satan is going to attack your faith so he can keep you in bondage to your suffering.

The way he will attack you is pretty much the same way you would do it if you were trying to wreck someone's faith. Attack the weak points. For some, the weak point will be their belief in scripture. Here's how Satan once attacked the church I attend, turning it into the World Wrestling Federation over belief in the Bible.

Our senior pastor decided to leave for another church so a search committee was formed to find a new pastor. They ended up picking a great guy from a church in Colorado whose focus was Discipleship. As he settled in, he began holding discipleship classes, teaching foundational orthodox theology to our congregation both from the pulpit and in evening classes. He had to return to Colorado to move some of his belongings and asked me if I would teach the evening course that week. Of course, that was the week we were going to discuss inerrancy and infallibility of scripture. Inerrancy and infallibility means that at the far end you believe the Bible is without any error and at a minimum you believe that God's truths held within the Bible are absolutely infallible. I agreed to teach the class but warned him that there would be a brawl. I knew that our church was split over this idea but I dutifully prepared for the class.

We had about 45 people that night and I went through the concepts, history, apologetics and reason for our faith in the Bible. Everyone was well-behaved but at the end the questions came flying in. About half the group simply did not believe everything the Bible says. In fact, those folks did not believe that the Bible was God's inspired word at all, just wisdom that is a "guide" for a Christian life.

I reported all this to the pastor when he returned and I am sure others bent his ear on the topic as well. The council met and had a robust discussion as to if the church would actually believe scripture is God's word. For someone like me, even having to ask the question seems ridiculous. But, this issue had been boiling underneath the church for decades and it was time to settle it. The council voted unanimously that we would be a Bible-based church and that the Bible was indeed God's word and infallible. However, the pastor said that the church had to vote on this given it was a congregationally-led body. He could not in good conscience pastor a church that did not believe in scripture. What happened next was a joy for Satan. The place imploded!

Those who did not believe that scripture was infallible began a heated campaign to vote down the concept. Let's just say that the tactics that were used were less than what Christ would have

us do. I met routinely with people who opposed the vote and the infallibility of scripture – friends in the church who vehemently argued against the Bible being God’s word. During these discussions, some argued against scripture based on the flaws that scholars have thought they’ve found in scripture. Some argued based on contradictions they personally saw in scripture. Battle lines were drawn and the vote was a showdown – a referendum on God’s word. As you imagine, our church became a bit of a laughing stock to the church community in our town. “You’re really going to vote to see if the Bible is God’s word?” Yes, we were.

The night of the vote, I think every voting member of the church showed up. The conversation was intense. Then the vote took place. Sixty percent of the congregation believed the Bible was God’s word and 40 percent did not. Not what you’d call a mandate. While we may have “won” the vote, Satan won the day. He had caused a church to fight among itself, distracting it from the work of God over faith in scripture. He further won, because friendships and relationships were lost in the battle. People that I had called friend completely stopped talking with me because they disagreed with me over God’s word. This is why Jesus tells us that families will be split due to Him. I’m glad to report that a couple of years have gone by since those ugly times and the church has moved on. Many of those who disagreed so strongly have found new church homes where the theology is more of a fit for them while we continue to have faith in scripture.

I can’t say I am surprised about this fight. History is filled with wars over scripture and faith. And it is all the work of Satan. He’s going to attack your belief in the Bible. He’s going to try to make you think that stories like creation, the burning bush, the Ten Commandments, the parting of the Red Sea, Jesus’ healings and more are just myths and didn’t really happen. He’s going to tell you that the places in scripture that vary from your belief or experience are simply wrong and that you are right. He’s going to tell you that the Bible can’t be trusted because things like stoning homosexuals as commanded in Leviticus are just stupid. Of course, he’s not going to tell you how to do proper Biblical interpretation that would discern the difference between cultural applications versus God’s moral laws. That would wreck his point. No, Satan just wants you to believe that the Bible is intolerant and as such doesn’t fit our enlightened society.

Satan wants you to lose faith in the Bible. The reason is simple: If you don’t believe God’s word, you won’t do as God says to do. And when you don’t do what God says to do, you’ll do what Satan says to do, just like I did for all those years.

But Satan doesn’t just stick to the Bible to attack your faith. He’s going to attack your very belief in God Himself.

Many of us learned about God in one of two ways. Either He was explained to us as a loving, caring and compassionate God, full of mercy and grace, or He was explained to us as a wrathful God who is looking to zap you every time you sin because the only way God can’t keep you from going to hell is to punish you back into compliance. Satan uses both teachings to his advantage. Let’s look at the second example first.

Recently, I was talking to a couple of my bosses and colleagues at work about God. My agency director had sent me a YouTube video from a Presbyterian church that was really funny. The video was making fun of how cell phones go off during Sunday services. This church said that

you'd be charged \$25 if the phone went off during announcements, \$50 dollars if it went off during prayer time and that you were going to hell if it went off during the sermon. It was a cute video. As we talked about our experiences in church, one person in the room noted that she doesn't go to church because she was told enough times that she was going to hell that she just didn't need that in her life anymore.

I cannot tell you how many times I have heard that. Perhaps you have, too, or that's your own experience: Pastors in the pulpit preaching a fire and brimstone message about sin and hell. Now don't get me wrong, I think there is a place to preach about the realities of sin and hell. But there's a responsible Biblical way and then there's what some pastors actually do, which is use the message to manipulate and control their congregations.

Satan loves it – and I mean LOVES it – when churches plant themselves on the theology of hell. When preached in a vacuum, the hell message discourages believers. The hell message scares believers. The hell message paralyzes believers. It's no longer about relationship with God through Jesus Christ, it's about trying to avoid hell through your own actions and power, which we know doesn't work anyway. The hell message isn't about God's blessings in your life, including grace, mercy, forgiveness and spiritual gifts; instead, the message is about judgment and guilt and failure and all the things Satan wants you to feel. The hell message moves you away from God, which is exactly where Satan wants you. Satan doesn't want you to know the true God who loves you so much that He gave His only begotten son to die for you so that you could have eternal life through him (John 3:16). Satan wants you to believe that God does not love you and sees you as a complete failure and is so disappointed in you and your sin life that you are no longer lovable. The sad part is Satan uses preachers preaching bad theology to deliver his message. That is why scripture tells us that the accountability for preachers and teachers of the Word is significantly higher than for the average believer – mess up the handling of His Word and you may find yourself in a world of hurt.

That said, Satan can use the love message just as effectively to challenge your faith.

Just like there are preachers who camp out on hell, there are preachers that camp out on love. Everything's going to be okay, because God loves you. Every sermon is about God's love. And just like the hell message, the love message is biblical. But just like the hell message, the love message in a vacuum can push people away. Here's how Satan does it.

A pastor will be preaching on how much God loves you and Satan will come along and say, "Really? Where was God and His love when you were (fill in the blank)?" For some that blank is physically and/or sexually abused. For others, that blank is the death of a loved one to cancer who you prayed fervently that God would save. Still others ask where is God's love when they struggle with mental illness. Satan attacks God's love for you in the very places where your experience does not jive with what the pastor is preaching. Now of course, God does love you beyond what you can imagine and He has never let you out of His hand no matter your circumstances. But, when love is preached in a vacuum, the pain of this world does not resonate with that love message. Ever heard somebody say, "If there is a loving God, why is there so much suffering in the world?" It's a great question and scripture has the answer when the whole gospel is shared (Love, Grace, Mercy, Forgiveness, Truth, Righteousness, Holiness, Justice).

But, when the love part is shared in and of itself, Satan jumps right in and starts tearing it down, telling you lies about who God really is and using the love theme to do it!

Have you ever met someone who says they have never questioned their faith? I have and I admire them. But they must be a lot stronger than I am, because Satan is constantly banging on me in these faith areas. If Satan can test Jesus' faith, he certainly is going to attack ours. And it's not a one-time thing. I believe your faith is constantly under attack – mine is. And, the closer I get in my relationship with God, the harder Satan fights me! It's not like I get to a point where I simply win and Satan gives up. No, the more Christ-like I become, the more ticked off Satan gets and the harder he comes at me. I know, not very encouraging, huh? Well, here's the part you're looking for. The closer we get to God, the more He enables us and gives us the tools through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to defeat these temptations. And, we know how the book ends – God wins!

Prayer Life

Let's talk now about how Satan attacks your prayer life.

A woman I work with is a good Christian, but one who struggles with some emotional issues in her life. I was talking with her the other day and asked about her prayer life. She confided that all she can get out is, "God Help!" That's as far as she can go talking with God. It breaks my heart, even though I know that the Holy Spirit is praying for her those things she does not know how to pray. (Romans 8:26). I think Satan may have gotten a hold of her prayer life.

The first way Satan attacks our prayer life is to make us think that God either doesn't hear our prayers or doesn't care about them. Here you are pouring your heart out to God, begging him to help, yet He doesn't seem to respond or at least He doesn't respond in a way that is recognizable. This is where Satan steps in. Jesus tells us that the devil is full of lies. The lie he tells you is that God doesn't care about you, because He didn't answer your prayer. And how can you even believe in this invisible God when He won't even respond to you? You're just talking to the ceiling. That's a very seductive argument, especially when you're in pain and really need God to help you out. Theologically, we know that sometimes God's answer to our prayers is, "No, I have something else in mind for you." Sometimes His answer is, "Not now, but later." Sometimes His answer is, "Yes, but not the way you think I'm going to do it." The fact is most of the time we don't actually see God answering our prayers the way we want Him to. That's because His ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8). The fact is God hears and answers all our prayers, but my experience is that it is very rare He does so the way I expect. I already shared with you how I didn't think God was answering my prayer regarding my career in the intelligence field, when 14 years later He did! Where was Satan during those 14 years? Right beside me, always in my ear telling me what a loser I was, because I didn't finish my first army tour.

Two years after I left the Army Iraq invaded Kuwait and the Gulf War was started. All my army friends went to war and I was stuck on my couch watching it on CNN. I was incredibly miserable. I should have been there with my buddies. I shouldn't have been a quitter and left the Army. I missed a war, something a lot of men feel is important to participate in to prove themselves. This was my war that was happening in what should have been my first tour and I

was sitting at home instead. As if I didn't feel badly enough, Satan was constantly bashing me for being a coward and for letting my friends down, trying to convince me that I could have stayed in the Army (true) and would have been sent to fight (not necessarily true given my disabilities). When it was all over, I spoke with my friends who went. One told me he had done 1,400 interrogations (I was training to be an interrogator). Another told me about going door-to-door in Kuwait, driving out Saddam's army. I still get that twinge of regret and guilt over not being there. And Satan's never let me forget it, either!

Another way Satan attacks your prayer life is to make your prayers seem petty and unworthy of God's attention. I have a friend who was in a Bible study I lead. One class we were talking about prayer and he told the group that he doesn't bother God with the little stuff, just the important stuff in his life. When I asked why, he just shrugged and said he thought God had better things to do than to worry about all that little stuff. Wow! Talk about a win for Satan! By making this man believe that his so-called "little stuff" didn't matter to God, Satan had interrupted the man's relationship with God. Now this man only talked to God when something big came up. This is a classic Satan strategy.

Remember what Satan's job is. He is here to disrupt your relationship with God and if possible, get you to end your relationship with God. The less we talk to God, the better Satan likes it. So, he convinces you that God really doesn't have the time or the inclination to hear you whine about the person at work who is giving you a hard time. God doesn't want to hear about the guy who cut you off in traffic today and made you mad. God doesn't care about the pain you're feeling in your left knee that you just twisted. Once Satan has you thinking like this, he then drives you deeper, trying to get you to believe that more and more stuff in your life is little stuff that you don't need to share with God. This is a slippery slope because if Satan has his way, nothing in your life will be worthy of bringing to God. That's his ultimate goal – he wants you to stop praying. Obviously, this is just the opposite of what scripture teaches. We are to bring all things before our Lord. Philippians 4:6 says, "Do not be anxious about anything, but in *everything*, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God." (emphasis added) The key word here is "everything." Present all your requests to God. Don't let Satan fool you into thinking that God doesn't care or doesn't want to hear about what Satan has convinced you are petty things. God is about relationship and in this relationship, we talk to God about everything!

There's another way Satan attacks our prayer life; he convinces us to blame God for our situations, making us too mad at Him to actually pray to Him. Have you been so mad at God that you stopped talking with Him? Be honest!

I find that this is a big sticking point in people's lives. Some trauma has happened to them and because God did not intervene as they believed He would or should, God is guilty and they don't want to talk with Him anymore. Seems reasonable, right? If God allowed you to be molested by a relative when you were a child, why would you want to talk to Him as an adult? Satan is nothing if not clever.

Like any relationship, your relationship with God is based on trust, loyalty, respect, and friendship. If you feel that any of these areas has been breached by God, your relationship

suffers, just as it would with anyone. Satan works to convince you that God has indeed breeched these areas of the relationship and thus you cannot stay engaged with Him. Satan will tell you that you can't trust God because He allowed some bad thing to happen to you. Satan will say that God is not loyal to you because while He demands your complete loyalty and obedience, God will do as He pleases in your life, including hurt you. Satan will tell you that God doesn't respect you and that you are just His creation with which He can do as He pleases. Lastly, Satan will tell you that God is no friend of yours because friends don't do what God has done to you. As you read these words, does any of it hit home with you? I know Satan has whispered these things to me in my moments of distress and crisis.

There is one thing we all know about relationships – they are work. It is no different with our relationship with God. Like our human relationships, we must work to know God better and understand Him to such a degree that we are not surprised by what He does and why He does it. Satan works against this. The less we know about God, the weaker our relationship with God is and the easier it is for Satan to drive you away from this relationship through lies, half-truths and accusations. And Satan always hits us where it hurt – our emotions. Face it, we are emotional beings. If a friend tells us that he saw our spouse cheating with another person, we don't process that information logically and come to some neat conclusion. No, we react emotionally, which can look like several different things and even several different things at once! Same with Satan. He attacks our relationship with God and we respond emotionally, not logically. When Satan tells me that God is not loyal to me, my instinct is emotional; I'm hurt by the thought. If I were to process that logically, I would certainly know better and I would come to the conclusion really quickly that Satan is wrong based on a clear set of facts. But that is not where Satan gets us. He hits us in our emotions where our first instinct is to be hurt and then think about the truth behind it. Even when we find that the statement is a lie, we're still damaged by what was said thus hurting our relationship. And Satan laughs. We have to work on our relationship with God and that means we have to get to know God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit as deeply as we know the most intimate people in our lives. And then we have to work even harder to go beyond that level of understanding! We're talking about knowing our God here! Work as hard as He has worked to know you!

Satan is going to try to mess up your prayer life. Don't buy it. God loves you and does hear and respond to your prayers. It may not always be the way you expect or the timing you want, but He will always answer. There is nothing too trivial or unimportant to bring before God. He wants to know you completely so don't hold back! Everything is important to God, not just the stuff that Satan wants you to think is important. And, God is not the problem. If you're mad at Him over something, go to Him and tell Him so. What you will find is He will reveal to you that He is not the cause of your anger; you're mad for the wrong reasons, because you really don't know Him the way He wants you to.

Forgiveness

If you haven't figured it out by now, I think forgiveness is the absolute lynchpin to our healing. If we don't forgive, we have a poison in our system that will slowly kill us. If we don't accept forgiveness, we're slowly killing ourselves with guilt and condemnation. Satan wants to kill you and he'll try to do it by keeping you from forgiveness. I know I've already written an entire

chapter on forgiveness, but bear with me while I show you how Satan tries to destroy you in this area.

Satan is going to try to convince you that you are right to be angry, hurt, mad, or whatever and there is no way you should forgive someone because that's like letting them off the hook for their actions. See, this isn't rocket science! But we are stupid and buy into that argument. Here's why: secretly, we don't want to forgive people. Instead, we want instant justice for their transgression.

In our fallen state, forgiveness is counterintuitive or cuts against our grain. Satan knows this so he offers an alternative to us that is more in line with the way we naturally think. Instead of forgiving, we must hold that grudge and make the person pay for their transgression. He'll tell us those people have to reap what they sowed using pieces of scripture out of context to fool you. They sowed discontent and now they'll reap the end of my friendship. Satan will always remind us how wrong the person was and how wronged we were by them. If I had a dollar for every person who has told me that forgiving someone is like letting them off the hook without punishment I'd quit my job and just watch ESPN all day. Satan appeals to our darker side of selfishness, pride and ego, self-protection and revenge. When he has us thinking of these things, we are not in a place where we can show the mercy of forgiveness.

Satan doesn't just focus on you not forgiving others. He saves his best tricks for keeping you from forgiving yourself.

Raise your hand if you've never done anything you're ashamed of. If you raised your hand, you need to write your own book because I want to know your secret! I've not met anyone that didn't do at least one thing that they knew was wrong. Again, scripture tells us that we all fall short of the glory of God and we all sin (Romans 3:23), which really means we all choose against God every day. This is where Satan camps out and attacks us on a more personal level.

Satan has a lot of names in the Bible, but the one I think is most accurate is "The Accuser". Satan spends a great deal of his time accusing you of being guilty of sin and showing you how worthless you really are. Before I get into the details, I think it is important to stop right here and give you a quick theology lesson. Remember how I said that Satan always speaks in half-truths? Well, when he's attacking you he's doing just that. Satan is right that you sinned and that you're guilty. However, he doesn't tell you the other half of the truth, which is this: Jesus died for your sins; He paid the price for you. God knew every sin you would commit in your life and Jesus took those nails for YOU so that when Satan accuses you, even though he is right, you can say that you are free because of what Jesus has done. This is why we all need Jesus. We all sin and fall short, but Jesus took our punishment and we no longer can be condemned for it (Romans 8:1). If not for Jesus, Satan would be right – your sin would keep you from God who cannot be around sin. But Jesus fixed it with his work on the cross, which allows us to have relationship with God once again!

But that's not how we feel when Satan is attacking us. Instead he uses that negative self-talk we discussed earlier. He also attacks us in our weak spot, such as childhood trauma, divorce, addiction, and literally thousands of other places.

For each of us it's different. My weak spot growing up was insecurities involving abandonment. That is where Satan landed in my life. Any time I would get close to people, Satan would tear me up with thoughts about how they were going to leave me so I'd better hang on as tight as I could. Satan told me the only way people you care about will stay with you is if you control them and make them stay. When my grip on people became so tight that they did leave, Satan explained to me that those people really didn't care for me in the first place, and the best way to get over stuff like that was to man up and have a drink or two or eight. Satan attacked my trust of people and so distorted my perception that I would drive out those closest to me for fear of them leaving. Crazy, huh? Yes, but it's what I did when I listened to him instead of reading scripture and learning about how God wanted me to have relationship.

What is your weak spot? Come on, you know. Do you see Satan's hand guiding you along in that place? Do you see how he keeps banging on it to make sure it's always irritating you? Are you seeing the evil fruit that comes from Satan: Anger, Hate, Hopelessness, Depression, Irritability, Vengeful Thoughts, Self-Harm Thoughts, Abuse of Others (Physical and Emotional), and Dysfunction? If these are a part of your life, you may have a spiritual warfare issue.

Transformation

You've seen how Satan attacks you in your faith, your prayer life and forgiveness. He does the same when you're trying to transform into a new creation in Christ. Honestly, he doesn't have to work too hard with this one. Every time you don't do what you're supposed to do as a new creation in Christ – a believer in Jesus – Satan is there to stab you in the ribs. "See, you're no Christian! Hypocrite." As we are transforming, we will have those moments where we fall to temptation and take that proverbial step back before we take our next two steps forward. God knows and loves us anyway. But, Satan will try to make you feel like crap every time you do it. He'll tell you that there is no way you can transform your life – just look at yourself. You're still the same sinner you've always been. And each time you fail, he hits you a little harder. His goal is obvious: Satan wants you to be completely discouraged in your walk with Christ and to stop trying. He'll tell you that you'll never be Christ-like and that you're not (pick one: good enough, smart enough, strong enough, disciplined enough, etc....) to do it. When you are new to the transformation stage, don't be surprised when you hear Satan in your ear telling you this kind of crap. In those moments, always remember that God loves you regardless of your performance! Only Satan wants you to focus on performance; God wants you to focus on Jesus!

That said, Satan has other tactics I want to share with you. The one I'm still working out in my head is the one in the Book of Job. In Job, the scene starts off with Satan talking with God. That in itself seems odd to me, because I always think of the two being separated after Satan was kicked out of Heaven. But Job 1:6-7 has this exchange: "One day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them. The LORD said to Satan, 'Where have you come from?' Satan answered the LORD, 'From roaming throughout the earth, going back and forth on it.'" The exchange continues in verse 8: "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'" Satan then argues with God that the only reason Job is

God-fearing is because of all the blessings he has and if you took those away from him, Job would turn against God.

The Book of Job teaches us perseverance during trouble. But there may be a deeper learning here. See, God turns to Satan and says in verse 12 that Satan can do anything he wants to Job, but he cannot take Job's life. Did you get that? God is going to allow Satan to attack Job! And attack he does. Satan kills Job's children and afflicts Job so terribly with physical ailments that Job wants to die. In fact, Job's wife asks him why Job doesn't just curse God and get it over with!

Here's the part I wrestle with: Job was considered upright, righteous and blameless in God's eyes. Yet, God allows Job to suffer just to prove that Job will keep his faith and that his faith is not based on blessings, but on the Lord, Himself. Here's the obvious question: Does God do that to me, too? Am I suffering spiritual warfare because God is allowing it?

I think the answer is yes. See, God is omnipotent, which means He is all-powerful and in control of everything - sovereign. What we learn from the Book of Job is even Satan has to ask permission to act. This, of course, leads to the bigger question: If God is in control of everything, is He at fault for evil? Let me answer that question with a question to see if we can shape it a little more. When you sin, is it your fault or God's fault? Obviously, it's your own fault. You made the decision, you took the action. God had nothing to do with you doing what you did. Same is true with evil. God gave his creation free will, including the angels. Lucifer, aka Satan, used his free will for evil. After tempting Adam and Eve, they used their free will to choose sin. God may have allowed these free will choices and He may have even allowed Satan to do the tempting, but He wasn't the one choosing. In our Job story, God allows Job to be afflicted. Why? Well, the Holy Spirit has revealed to me an idea as to why.

Think of it this way: God chose Job not Satan. Satan did not come before God and say, "What's the deal with your guy, Job?" No, God said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job?" But what was God choosing Job to do? Well, He chose Job to go into the ring and fight Satan! To win, all Job had to do is stay faithful – that's it. He didn't have to rebuke Satan, or defeat him in any other way. Just stay faithful. God was placing all the house money on Job to win. Job was God's champion! And, Job did, indeed, win, although there were a couple rough rounds!

When we're in deep spiritual warfare, perhaps God has chosen us as His champion! "Have you considered my servant (say your name)?" God has chosen you to take on Satan and all you have to do is stay faithful! There are going to be some tough rounds – you're going to get banged up! But in the end, God trusts you so much that all the house money is on you! Isn't that incredible??? I wouldn't bet on me against Satan most the time! But God does! And like any good fighter, each time we come out of that ring – no matter how bloody and battered we may be – we've learned something and grown! It's really a very cool thing in my mind, but perhaps that's just me!

Let me enumerate some of the lessons I think we can learn from Job when it comes to Satan's attacks:

- God is in control and although what I am going through stinks, God will see me through it so long as I keep my faith.
- God will not allow Satan to harm me more than what is God's will.
- When I win the spiritual warfare battle, God will completely restore me physically, spiritually and emotionally!
- Satan will even pick on those who are strong in the Lord.
- Satan believes that material and physical things matter to me, but doesn't understand the spiritual things, such as my relationship with Jesus.
- Scripture says God will test me and refine me through the fires; apparently some of those fires are spiritual warfare where I am God's champion!
- I can do anything through Christ who strengthens me.

The spiritual warfare you are experiencing right now may be one that is being allowed by God for His purpose, which is always good even if we don't understand it.

Fighting Back

God did not leave us empty handed in this warfare. No, instead He gave us tools to fight back against Satan. Let's explore how to fight spiritual warfare.

After his baptism, Jesus heads to the desert to do battle with Satan. Jesus spends 40 days and 40 nights being tempted by Satan. Scripture notes three of the temptations and how Satan tries to twist scripture to provoke Jesus. Matthew 4:1-11 tells us the story: Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil. After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Jesus was in a weakened state from fasting (not eating). Satan tempts him first by placing doubt on him being the Son of God – If you are the Son of God – trying to provoke his pride. Then Satan tempts him to take care of himself physically by misusing his authority to turn stones into bread. Jesus responds by quoting Deuteronomy 8:3 – "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD."

Next Satan tempts Jesus to throw himself from the heights to prove his authority: Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

Satan takes Psalm 91:11-12 out of context to try to get Jesus to prove himself to Satan? Again, Jesus responds with scripture: "Do not test the LORD your God as you did at Massah." – Deuteronomy 6:16.

Finally, Satan tempts Jesus a third time, saying he will give Jesus all the kingdoms if he will bow down before Satan: again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Again, Jesus responds with scripture – this time Deuteronomy 6:13 – “Fear the LORD your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name.”

Three times Satan tempts Jesus and three times Jesus rebukes Satan using scripture. What Jesus **did not** do is get into some intellectual, theological, or emotional argument with Satan, trying to convince Satan he was wrong as if this was some debating society. The Word that became flesh turned to the power of the word to defeat Satan. Do you find yourself debating Satan? Stop it! Do what Jesus did: turn to scripture and wield the power of the Word!

David is our model for the next weapon we have against Satan – prayer. I love reading the Psalms because they are full of raw emotion. Let me give you a sampling of how David turned to God in his times of spiritual warfare:

Psalm 4 –

Answer me when I call to you,
my righteous God.
Give me relief from my distress;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

Psalm 5 –

Listen to my words, LORD,
consider my lament.
Hear my cry for help,
my King and my God,
for to you I pray.

Psalm 6 –

LORD, do not rebuke me in your anger
or discipline me in your wrath.
Have mercy on me, LORD, for I am faint;
heal me, LORD, for my bones are in agony.
My soul is in deep anguish.
How long, LORD, how long?
Turn, LORD, and deliver me;
save me because of your unfailing love.

Psalm 10 –

Why, LORD, do you stand far off?
Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?

Psalms 13 –

How long, LORD? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I wrestle with my thoughts
and day after day have sorrow in my heart?

How long will my enemy triumph over me?

Look on me and answer, LORD my God.

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death,
and my enemy will say, “I have overcome him,”
and my foes will rejoice when I fall.

What David teaches us is that we are to cry out to God in our pain and weakness and seek his face when we are attacked by Satan. Don't be shy – tell it like it is; God's big enough for your troubles. If you read the rest of those Psalms (4,5,6,10,13) you will see how God calms David's soul, answering him with love and grace. You too can have this if you will turn to God in prayer when the battle with Satan starts.

Lastly, God calls us to act against Satan.

James 4:7 tells us: “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

So how do we actively resist?

First, we have to know when we are under spiritual attack! I have a litmus test that I use that lets me know if I'm right with God or if I am in a bad place. I turn to Galatians 5:22, which lists the spiritual fruit that we have when we are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. The spiritual fruit are: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness and Self-Control. If I am not feeling this fruit and am instead feeling the evil fruit I noted earlier, then I know that I am in the wrong place and under attack or will be shortly! When you are missing this good fruit in your life, you are right where Satan wants you because you'll respond to him with anger, pride, selfishness, depression, and other emotions that take you away from your relationship with God. If you're missing the fruit of the spirit in your life, chances are good Satan's coming.

Another way we resist Satan is to do what Ephesians 6:10-18 tells us to do:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the **full** armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. Therefore, put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to **stand your ground**, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, and

with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the **gospel of peace**. In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the **word of God**. **And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.**" (Bold emphasis added).

God gives us the tools we need to protect ourselves, but we have the responsibility to use those tools in our fight.

Lastly, we defeat Satan by practicing the greatest commandment:

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matt 22:37-40)

Love and don't hate. Love and don't react. Love and don't seek vengeance. Love and don't be offended. Love and don't be prideful. Love and don't be selfish. Love and don't get angry. Love and don't be jealous. Love and don't believe the lies Satan tells about not being good enough. Love and overcome yourself. Love – show the world *Agape* (unconditional brotherly love) and Satan can't touch you!

My friend, Satan is going to attack every one of us because Satan does not want any of us to have a relationship with God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Satan will do anything he can to keep you from the light of God and to pull you into the darkness of his world. He's going to lie to you using half-truths that sound incredibly plausible. He's going to accuse you to such a degree that you're going to start believing what he says. He's going to hit you where it hurts most. Simply put, Satan wants to kill you physically and spiritually, driving you away from loving God and loving others.

Whether you believe it or not, spiritual warfare is real. If you don't believe, *Satan has already won in your life*. If you do believe, don't give Satan more power than he actually has. God has given us all the tools we need to beat Satan every time! Let me close this chapter with a quote I like from C.S. Lewis that I think puts things into perspective: “There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe, and to feel an excessive and unhealthy interest in them.” Keep your eyes on Jesus and He will see you through!

Chapter 6

Enemy on the Prowl

Key Points

1. Satan is alive and well and wants to kill you.
2. Satan will do anything he can to keep you from being healed.
3. The closer you get to God the harder Satan will fight you.
4. Satan will attack your weak spots.
5. Satan will attack you in your Faith Life, Prayer Life, Forgiveness of Other and Self, and in your Transformation
6. God has given us ways to defeat Satan
 - a. Rely on God's word
 - b. Go to God in prayer like David
 - c. Actively resist – tell Satan to buzz off
 - d. Put on the Armor of God daily.
7. God may choose you as His champion – be ready to rumble!

Chapter 7

Do You Know Who You Are?

There's an author by the name of Neil Anderson who wrote a book called "Victory Over the Darkness – Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ." The book is a game changer and I give it out often to people struggling with brokenness in their lives. Anderson's main thrust is if we truly understand who we are in Christ, nothing can keep us from a transformed life. Obviously, I agree and think it is vital that you also understand this on your road to healing. At the risk of repeating what Anderson has already written brilliantly, I am going to walk you through who you are in Jesus Christ so you can embrace the healing that is yours for the asking.

Child of God

In our Bible study, we studied Matthew for about a year. I'm a really slow leader! When we were studying chapter 25 at verse 31 we read: "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on His left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ***'Come, you who are blessed by my father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'***" (Emphasis added). This is an incredible statement! First, you are blessed by the Father. Do you get that? God almighty blesses ***YOU!*** Why? Well, if you have an inheritance, you must be a son or daughter, right? Scripture tells us that we all are adopted sons and daughters of God through Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5). In fact, we are all brothers and sisters and as such also brothers and sisters of Jesus! But there's more. Your inheritance is the kingdom – God's kingdom – and this wasn't just some snap decision that took place once you accepted Christ. This kingdom was yours since the creation of the world! God loves you SO much that He knew you would choose Him and He was ready at the creation of the world to give you EVERYTHING He has – His entire kingdom. If that doesn't blow your mind, I'm going to have to come over and check your pulse! The first thing you have to realize about who you are is this: You are not who you think you are. You are a child of God with all the honor, blessings and rights that come with that title.

But what does that really mean? Jesus addresses it with a number of his parables. Let's take a look at what Jesus says.

In Luke chapter 15, Jesus tells three parables that explain who you are as a child of God. First, Jesus tells the story of a lost sheep. In this story, Jesus asks a group of people that included Pharisees, tax collectors and sinners what they would do if they had 100 sheep and one went missing. "Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." What a great story! Were you ever the lost sheep? I was and Jesus the good shepherd did leave the flock to come look for me. And according to Jesus, there was great rejoicing in Heaven when I repented and

came home to my heavenly Father! Can you believe that? Heaven rejoiced over us?!? Unbelievable, but true! He left the flock to come for you, too!

The next story Jesus tells is the parable of the lost coin. Jesus continues to talk to the group, saying, “Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me, I have found my lost coin.’ In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

The last story Jesus tells drives the point home. It is the parable of the prodigal son. In this longer story, Jesus tells of a man who has two sons. The younger son tells his father he wants his inheritance immediately instead of having to wait until the father dies. This is impetuous on two counts. First, you always wait until the passing of the patriarch before you get your inheritance. Second, the elder son has the birthright and authority of the household after the father passes not the younger son. However, in this story the father agrees, divides the inheritance between his sons, and the younger son sets off for a distant land, leaving his father and older brother. You pretty much know what happens next. The younger son blows all his money and during a famine is destitute. In fact, he was so broke that he had to take a job feeding pigs – for a Jew that was really low given that swine are considered an unclean animal. This wayward son decides that he will return home, humble himself and beg his father to allow him to be a hired hand. Let’s pick up the story here.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate! For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found. So, they began to celebrate.”

Jesus is showing you the Father’s love for you as his child in this parable. But, there’s more to it. As you can imagine, the older son is a bit peeved at all this celebrating for his delinquent brother.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So, he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ‘Your brother has come’ he replied ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So, his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’ ‘My son’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Do you see what Jesus is telling you about your place with God? Perhaps you've never been the lost son. Perhaps your path in life has been that of the older son. Then it's just like Jesus explains it: You already have everything the Father has to give! Through your faith and commitment to God, He's already given you everything He has and we all are to rejoice when a brother or sister comes home! Never forget that you are a child of God and that means that everything He has is yours.

I have a confession to make. I've always had trouble with the idea of God as my Father. I think the reason is self-evident: My earthly father was a crook, a swindler, a cheat, a liar, a convict and worst of all an atheist. In my 18 years of childhood, I think I lived with my father for a total of about eight years. I don't really understand or gravitate to family very well. Luckily, God knows this and provided me some more scriptures to help me see myself the way He sees me as His son even if I don't quite get the whole father-son thing.

Genesis 1:26 says, "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness....'" This tells me that not so much my body, but my mind, my intellect, my emotions, my will and maybe even my soul are in the image of God. He made me on purpose the way I am so that I would reflect Him in the world the same way a son reflects his father in the world.

Psalms 139:13-14 says, "For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful." God tells me that regardless of how I see myself or how others see me, I am wonderful! And I am wonderful, because I was created by God Himself.

Jeremiah 1:5 tells us, "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. Before you were born I set you apart." So, God loves me so much that He knew me before I was even made. In fact, He knew me before the creation of the world and He set me apart as one of His children. God chose me eons before I chose Him. I must really matter to Him for some reason.

That reason is in Psalm 8:4-5 – "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor." Did you read that? You are made just a little lower than heavenly beings and God crowned you with glory and honor!

Do you find yourself questioning all this? Here's what Paul tells us in Ephesians 1:4-5 – "For He ***chose us in Him*** before the creation of the world to ***be holy and blameless in his sight***. In love He predestined us to be *adopted as his sons (and daughters)* through Jesus Christ in accordance with His pleasure and will." (Emphasis added).

Both the Old Testament and New Testament are clear on this point: God created us as His own and sees us as his children for whom He yearns. Further, the New Testament clarifies that we are adopted into the family through our faith in Jesus Christ and as such are heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. But as Jesus explained to us, we have a choice to make; will we be the lost son who leaves home only to find ruin or will we be the older son who stays home and is given everything?

Since creation, you've been chosen as a child of God. But what if you were like the prodigal son and left home to blaze your own trail? What if your life is full of wine, women and song, or as I like to say, sex, drugs and rock-n-roll? Jesus' story is nice, but can you really come home again? Will God really accept you? This next verse will be the most important one I can share with you if you're in that boat:

Romans 8:1 says, "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...."

If there is anything you get out of this book, please, please, please get this!

Christ died on a cross for the sins of the world. That includes your sins past, present and future! There is nothing you did, are doing now, or will do that the Father didn't know you would do before the creation of the world. Because of our sinfulness, someone had to pay the price of redemption. The problem was there is nothing a mere man can do to pay that price. But Jesus, the Son of God and a sinless man, could. He sacrificed Himself as a guilt offering to pay the price for the sins of the world from Adam through the time when He returns. If you accept Christ as your Lord and Savior, you then accept the gift of being seen righteous and holy in God's eyes because Christ took the nails meant for you. You truly are not under condemnation for your sins – Christ has already set you free as one of his brothers and sisters.

Being a child of God and a brother or sister to Christ is just the beginning. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior you go through what is known as the "Baptism of the Holy Spirit." This is the moment when God's Holy Spirit comes to rest upon you and then dwells in you for the rest of your days. I'd try to explain it in detail if I could but I really can't. For each person it looks different. I can tell you that when I experienced this baptism, there were instantaneous changes and there were progressive changes. There was immediate revelation of God's will in my life and to this day I am seeking progressive revelation of what the Holy Spirit has to teach me. But one of the things that happens immediately, something you will not feel or necessarily recognize, is you will become a new creation in Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:17-18 actually says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation."

Let me put it into English for you. When you accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, God no longer sees you as a sinner, but as holy in His sight. To help you, God gives you the Holy Spirit to help change you into the person God created you to be – Christ like.

You Are the Branch; Jesus is the Vine

John 15:1-8 is a powerful statement by Jesus as to who we are in Him. Here's what it says:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit

unless you remain in me. “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

The illustration that Jesus is using is quite simple, yet quite profound. Using imagery that would be well-known in His time and culture, Jesus imagines the grape vineyards.

The branches are the part of the plant from which the grapes grow. However, these branches are connected to vines that supply everything the branches need to stay alive so they can bear fruit. While it may be the branches bearing the grapes, it is the vine giving life to the whole operation. This is what Jesus is trying to tell you. You are a branch and if you understand that your entire life comes from Jesus, you will bear good fruit. In other words, by relying on Jesus for your needs you will do great things for the Kingdom of God! But Jesus also gives us a warning that if we do not abide in Him – if the branch tries to go it alone without the vine – the branch will die as will we. The branch will produce no fruit and will be cut off and thrown into the fire. Same with us: if we do not produce because we take no nourishment or sustenance from the vine Jesus, then we, too, will be cut off and thrown into the fire. There’s one more point Jesus makes here: to produce even more fruit, sometimes the Father “prunes” the branches. I’m not a gardener, but I’ve seen people do this to plants where they cut a little here and a little there with the intent of strengthening the branch or flower or bush so it produces even more. This pruning, however, can be a bit uncomfortable if it’s being done to us! During these times when the Father decides to prune, we have to always remember two things: Stay connected to the vine and pruning will let us produce more fruit!

Scripture tells us nothing can snatch us from Jesus’ hand. “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and *no one will snatch them out of my hand*. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and *no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand*. I and the Father are one.” (John 10:27-30) As a branch attached to the vine, we have to ensure that we stay connected to Jesus in all we do. There is nothing we can do apart from Jesus and Jesus tells us that we are His sheep who hear His voice and we are His branches that bear fruit, because of Him. Do you see in this illustration who you are? You are the one needed to produce the fruit Jesus has intended for the kingdom. You have a significant role to play and Jesus has promised to be right by your side giving you everything you need to produce successfully for the Father.

We Are Not Guilty

Earlier I said that if there was one thing I wanted you to get from this book it would be Romans 8:1, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Who are you in Christ? You are not guilty!

This can be a tough one to get your head around. How can you be “not guilty” when every day you live with the knowledge of the things you’ve done? When I think of the things I did I seem

pretty guilty to me! Yet, I know that the Father in heaven sees me as holy, righteous and clean. He calls me a saint and loves me as His own. Let me tell you why He can do that for me and why He wants to do that for you, too!

Theologically speaking, the big question is why did Jesus have to die? If He was God incarnate, couldn't He have just waved his hands around a bit, said a few words and redeemed the fallen world? For that matter, if God the Father is all powerful, couldn't He just decide to fix it all and then SHAZAM it's all better? Honestly? Yes, they could have done it that way, but that's not how God set up this relationship. To understand why Jesus went to the cross, you have to understand what kind of relationship God wants with you personally.

From the beginning, God said there had to be a price paid for sin. Think about it this way: You have a two-year-old who does two-year-old things. Do you tell her "no" and does she get in trouble for doing things you've told her not to do? What happens if you never discipline that two-year-old? What kind of teenager do you get? (One you have to send to military school!). Same with God. The relationship rules have always been really simple: God says, "Be Holy for I am Holy." (Leviticus 11:44). His point was don't sin, and sin is doing anything I ask you not to do, like eat the fruit of the forbidden tree, or make a golden calf to worship, or break any of the 10 commandments. You get the idea. In return for not sinning, God would be our God and He would provide for us. Pretty simple deal. There was one catch; in our fallen state we cannot be holy like God, so we *constantly* sin against Him, choosing to not do the things He asks of us. Like a good parent, God tried a few different corrective actions. When Adam and Eve fell, He kicked them out of the garden and made them fend for themselves. That should teach them right from wrong and in turn encourage them to teach their kids right from wrong. Well, then there was Cain who killed his brother Abel, because Cain was jealous. Bloodshed begot bloodshed and God's people continued to sin. It becomes clear to God that this isn't working so He throws His hands up and floods the earth, saving Noah, his family and a pair of each of the animals. (Man, that ark must have smelled!). Surely this new start with Noah will work out and Noah and his offspring will be holy toward God. Nope – still same old fallen people choosing to do the same old unholy and sinful stuff. God decides that what He'll do is institute a sacrifice system. The reason will be two-fold. First, sin must have a price and by telling the people they have to give up their best animal for their sin they'll think twice before sinning, right? If I told you that every time you sinned you had to give me your flat-screen TV, your car and your recliner, chances are you might think twice about sinning! The second reason God implemented the sacrificial system was His people were getting distracted and not being in relationship with Him. At the slightest sign of anything shiny, they'd turn away! So, God put a system in place that kept the people's minds on God! You'd think this one would work but it didn't. The sacrifice system became an idol unto itself – the people would bring their offerings, but not really because they wanted to atone for their sins and have a good relationship with God. They brought their sacrifice, because the law said to bring their sacrifice. This is why scripture says in a couple of places that God hates their sacrifices! They didn't get it right!

To this point God has asked them not to sin. Punished them for sinning. Wiped out the world and started over because of their sin. And create a system that would teach them the cost of sin in the hopes they would understand that a price has to be paid for sin. Nothing changed. In our fallen state, the people just kept on sinning and it got worse and worse. What was God the Father to do?

How do you get through to these knuckleheads and more importantly, how can our relationship with a Holy God be restored after all this disobedience and sin?

Enter Jesus. God knows that not one man can redeem himself but the sacrifice of His own son – sinless and blameless – would atone for the sins of the world. Jesus would become a guilt offering, taking upon Himself all sin for all time and defeating it through death and resurrection. Through His death on a cross, the price needed to pay for your sin was paid. The debt to God was cancelled and marked “Paid in Full.” Jesus did for us what nobody could do for themselves. Yes, because there had to be a price, Jesus’ punishment is almost unthinkable. That is how much God loves us.

Today, you stand before God not guilty of any sin because of what Jesus did on that cross 2,000 years ago. You are not under condemnation. You are a child of God with an inheritance of the Kingdom. You are a new creation, having been born again of the spirit and gifted to perform ministries to glorify God. You are a branch fed by the vine that can never be snatched from His hand as you produce this fruit. And you are a saint in the eyes of God. Here’s the really cool part, all this was decided before the creation of the world! God is all-knowing – He knew this would all play out this way, but He still created you on purpose! Isn’t that incredible? Would you have made you on purpose? I wouldn’t have with me, I know that! But God sees us in a way we rarely see ourselves. And that is a major thing we must change if we are to be healed of our brokenness.

God wants us to see ourselves and others the way He sees them. He wants us to like and love ourselves and He wants us to like and love others. He wants you to stop beating yourself up and understand who you are in Christ. He wants you to stop feeling guilty and understand that no matter what you’ve done that Jesus has already made it right. He wants you to let go of your pain because you are a new creation born again in Him and empowered by the Holy Spirit. You’re not what other people say you are; you are what God says you are!

We’ve talked about faith, prayer and forgiveness as components of your spiritual healing. We’ve walked through how you can replace your reactions and bad habits with actions and Godly habits. We’ve talked about the importance of transformation and how you can do that through Jesus. We’ve talked about how Satan wants to keep you from all of this and how he wants to continue to lie to you and misguide you into ruin. And now we’ve talked about who you are as a believer in Jesus Christ and how you cannot be snatched from God’s hand, because you are one of His children, an heir to the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture says a lot more about all this. Joyce Meyer was nice enough to put a list of this scripture online! I want you to read each line out loud and stop before you go on to the next verse. I want you to take your time and think what each individual verse means to you in your life. What is God telling you in His word? Write it down, because I think He wants to talk to you.

Who You Are in Christ

I am complete in Him Who is the Head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

I am alive with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).

I am free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

I am far from oppression, and fear does not come near me (Isaiah 54:14).

I am born of God, and the evil one does not touch me (1 John 5:18).

I am holy and without blame before Him in love (Ephesians 1:4; 1 Peter 1:16).

I have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16; Philippians 2:5).

I have the peace of God that passes all understanding (Philippians 4:7).

I have the Greater One living in me; greater is He Who is in me than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4).

I have received the gift of righteousness and reign as a king in life by Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).

I have received the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Jesus, the eyes of my understanding being enlightened (Ephesians 1:17-18).

I have received the power of the Holy Spirit to lay hands on the sick and see them recover, to cast out demons, to speak with new tongues. I have power over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means harm me (Mark 16:17-18; Luke 10:17-19).

I have put off the old man and have put on the new man, which is renewed in the knowledge after the image of Him Who created me (Colossians 3:9-10).

I have given, and it is given to me; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, men give into my bosom (Luke 6:38).

I have no lack for my God supplies all of my need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19).

I can quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one with my shield of faith (Ephesians 6:16).

I can do all things through Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:13).

I show forth the praises of God Who has called me out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).

I am God's child for I am born again of the incorruptible seed of the Word of God, which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).

I am God's workmanship, created in Christ unto good works (Ephesians 2:10).

I am a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

I am a spirit being alive to God (Romans 6:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23).

I am a believer, and the light of the Gospel shines in my mind (2 Corinthians 4:4).

I am a doer of the Word and blessed in my actions (James 1:22,25).

I am a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17).

I am more than a conqueror through Him Who loves me (Romans 8:37).

I am an overcomer by the blood of the Lamb and the word of my testimony (Revelation 12:11).

I am a partaker of His divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4).

I am an ambassador for Christ (2 Corinthians 5:20).

I am part of a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people (1 Peter 2:9).

I am the righteousness of God in Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21).

I am the temple of the Holy Spirit; I am not my own (1 Corinthians 6:19).

I am the head and not the tail; I am above only and not beneath (Deuteronomy 28:13).

I am the light of the world (Matthew 5:14).

I am His elect, full of mercy, kindness, humility, and longsuffering (Romans 8:33; Colossians 3:12).

I am forgiven of all my sins and washed in the Blood (Ephesians 1:7).

I am delivered from the power of darkness and translated into God's kingdom (Colossians 1:13).

I am redeemed from the curse of sin, sickness, and poverty (Deuteronomy 28:15-68; Galatians 3:13).

I am firmly rooted, built up, established in my faith and overflowing with gratitude (Colossians 2:7).

I am called of God to be the voice of His praise (Psalm 66:8; 2 Timothy 1:9).

I am healed by the stripes of Jesus (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24).

I am raised up with Christ and seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 2:12).

I am greatly loved by God (Romans 1:7; Ephesians 2:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4).

I am strengthened with all might according to His glorious power (Colossians 1:11).

I am submitted to God, and the devil flees from me because I resist him in the Name of Jesus (James 4:7).

I press on toward the goal to win the prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward (Philippians 3:14).

For God has not given us a spirit of fear; but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7).

It is not I who live, but Christ lives in me (Galatians 2:20)

http://www.joycemeyer.org/articles/ea.aspx?article=knowing_who_i_am_in_christ

Chapter 7

Do You Know Who You Are?

Key Points

1. You are a child of God, loved and cared for by your creator.
2. You can do all things through Christ if you abide in Him.
3. You are not guilty if you accept the fact that Jesus died in your place to make you whole and holy before God.
4. You were made on purpose by God and for God. Rejoice!
5. Write one of the “Who You Are in Christ” statements on a 3x5 card along with the accompanying verse. Carry it around with you all day, reread it, refer to it, think of what it means for how you live your daily life, pray that your heart embraces its truth. Each day pick a new one; then repeat.

Chapter 8

What's Holding You Back?

I love getting to the last chapter of a book. If it's one I like, I am always hopeful the last chapter will leave me wanting more! If it's a book I'm so-so about, I know I'm about done, which is a relief! So, no matter which way you're feeling about this book we've finally made it to the last words!!

I want to spend some time in this final chapter talking about what's keeping you from getting this healing in your life. And I want to start with the hardest part first.

When God Says "No"

In John 14:12-14, Jesus says this, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it."

I think this verse has caused a lot of disappointment and hurt for people not because of what it says, but because of the way we interpret it. Many think Jesus is writing a blank check here. If you believe in Him and do what He wants you to do, then He'll do anything you ask Him to do, right? Has that been your experience? It's not been mine. Let's take a closer look at this verse and what it really means in our lives.

Jesus says, "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son." That second part about the Father being glorified is the key. Jesus will do anything you ask so long as it glorifies the Father. And what glorifies the Father? Simple, doing His will. Thus, so long as what you ask is in the Father's will, Jesus will do it. That leaves just one question: How do we know if what we're asking is in the Father's will? If you're like me, sometimes you just don't know. Of course, that doesn't mean we don't pray and ask – scripture is clear that we should bring everything to God. But there are going to be those times that what you are asking is not in the Father's will. Let me give you some examples.

As a child, I prayed for years that God would heal my mother of the MS that had paralyzed her and left her wasting away in a nursing home hospital bed. Apparently, that request was not in the Father's will because it never happened and she died in that nursing home at 55 years old – 20 years after becoming bed ridden.

Our church prayed constantly for two people we knew who were fighting cancer. These folks battled the disease like I've never seen, but in the end, they both died. One woman in our congregation was shaken, saying to our Sunday school class, "But we prayed that God would heal her and she still died." Apparently, our prayers for healing were not in line with the Father's will.

There is a woman in our Wednesday night Bible study class who is afflicted with Bi-Polar. She is a devout woman, but she is so discouraged that her prayers for relief from that condition have

not been answered – at least not answered the way she would like. Gently, I've shared that God may have a different plan for her life than simply to heal her of the condition.

See, this is the hard part where things get heavy, deep and real in our lives. What if you are seeking healing in some way and you find your prayers are met with Jesus telling you that it's not in the Father's will that you be healed as you are asking? What happens then? Is all the stuff I've been sharing with you about relationship and faith and prayer and forgiveness and transformation and who you are in Christ worthless because God didn't respond to you the way you thought He would? If you answered "yes," I can understand that. It is so discouraging when God tells you "No." Once He says that word, it's easy to tune Him out. But hang in there with me for a little bit as we talk a little more about this.

There was a guy who asked God to help him during his time of need. In fact, he was so tormented by his circumstances that he could barely function. He asked God to get him out of his situation and God said "No." And then Jesus said, "Not my will, but yours" and went to the cross to die for our sins. Did you get that? God told his son, Jesus, "No" when Jesus prayed for relief from his circumstances. But, look at how Jesus prayed, "Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." Jesus asked if it was in the Father's will, please take the cup. Jesus understood that things have to be in the Father's will for them to happen and in this case – as much as it pained God to send His only begotten son to the cross – it was not in God's will. Why? God had something better in mind. Had Jesus not gone to the cross, none of us would be saved and none of us would have relationship with the Father and all of us would be spending eternity in a very hot place. God knows what's best for His plan even when it doesn't line up with what we think is best for us.

For years, I never understood how a loving God could allow my mom to suffer like she did. Not only did it affect her but it had serious ramifications on my sisters and me. Imagine if she had been well. When my father went to jail, she would have been there to take care of us instead of all the foster homes. When dad didn't work, she would have and we wouldn't have had our electricity turned off, our phones disconnected, and our belongings confiscated. We would have had food to eat and a roof over our heads instead of having no food and being evicted all the time. I'd go to God in prayer and ask Him what He was thinking! Do you ever feel that way about your life? God, what are you thinking?!?

It wasn't until I was a middle-aged man that I stopped long enough to listen to what God had to say beyond the word, "No." When we hear that word, we all become petulant little brats and stop listening to God. But what I learned was God wasn't done talking. Had I heard Him out, I would have heard Him say, "No. I have something different in mind for you and you have to trust me on this one." As I was thinking about my mother one night, being open to the guiding of the Holy Spirit to help me find healing in this area, God revealed it to me. It's still painful for me to talk about, so it's a good thing I'm typing! God showed me that my mom suffered so that I would make it through the difficulties of my youth. God knew that my dad would be a louse and would put me in all sorts of difficulties, including abusive foster homes. I remember during the darkest times thinking, "If mom can do it, so can I." My mom was my rock. Here was a good woman suffering every day and she did it with dignity and grace. My goal as a child and young man was to save her from that living hell and bring her home. Every time I went without food;

every time I was made fun of at school; every time I was kicked out of an apartment and was homeless; every time I was dropped off at a strange house and told this was my new foster family; every time I was around violence; every time I was so lonely I wanted to kill myself, I thought about my mother.

God provided for me the thing I needed to make it out of my situation not only alive, but strong and focused and determined and smart and prepared to take on the gates of hell if that is what it took to save my mom. I'm sure she didn't know any of this. In fact, I visited her at Thanksgiving my freshman year of college; I had just turned 19 the month before. She didn't know me, but she talked to me about her son of whom she was so proud. But I do know this: My mother was a woman of faith and she is in heaven now completely healed with perfect knowledge and understanding. And if God asked her if she would do it all again so that her son could make it through all those hardships, she would not hesitate to say, "Yes!" My mother was a fallen person who was laid waste by a terrible disease. And God used that situation for good, placing in my heart a deep love and affection for my mother who I barely knew so that I could be a survivor. When I prayed to God to do a miracle and heal her, His answer was "no," I have something else in mind. God knew that if I did not have my mother to focus on, I probably would have killed myself years before. It was just too painful. But if mom could do it, so could I.

I think about the pain you may be experiencing and how you may be just like I was, wondering why God is not acting in your life; why He's not answering your prayers. Let me tell you that He is acting, but it may not be the way you think or want. God may be telling you, "No, I have something different in mind for you." It took me 40 years to figure out what He meant by that. My prayer for you is that it doesn't take you that long to hear His voice and that you are more open to it than I was. But know that if God does tell you "No," that's not the end of the conversation. For my friend at Bible study, God has told her, "No, I'm not going to take away your bi-polar." But He's also saying, "I have something different in store for you." For our congregation, God said, "No, it's time for my children to come home and I'm not going to cure their cancer." The bottom line is at the end of the day we have to trust that God knows better than we do. We have to trust when scripture says that God will use everything for his good purpose that it means the hard things in our lives, too! Jesus tells us that we will have trouble in this life, but we also know that God will provide what we need – which may be different than what we want – at all times. When you pray, do so like Jesus and ask the Father that *if it is in His will* to answer your prayer. And if it's not in His will, keep listening, because He may reveal to you what His will actually is.

Scripture tells us that in all things rejoice. I might rephrase that a little and say no matter what God tells you, attitude matters. If He doesn't give you the answer you want, don't get all pissy about it. Stay positive because it just means God is going to bless you in a different way. God didn't heal my arthritis and I'm in pain every day. God didn't grow back the half a stomach I had removed in emergency surgery and now on my best days I feel like I have the flu and on the worst days I can't really function. But God is blessing me in so many other ways that it doesn't matter if I have trouble walking or am about to throw up on your shoes! God's will for me is that I have these disabilities and like Paul, I will rejoice in my weakness, because it just shows me how much more I need God! If God tells you "no," ask Him what He wants and then gladly do it!

Self-Inflicted Wounds

That was some hard learning, but I'm not done yet. There's another set of circumstances where your pain may not find the healing you are seeking, or at least in the way you are seeking it, and we have to talk about it. I'm going to start by using Moses to illustrate this one.

You all probably know the story of Moses and how he was chosen by God to lead the Israelites out of captivity in Egypt. Let's fast forward to when the Israelites are wandering in the desert for 40 years because they disobeyed God and He punished them by saying the first generation of Israelites would not see the Promised Land due to their idolatry. During this time, God was providing food and water to the nation. Earlier in the story, God tells Moses to take his staff and hit a rock with it and water gushed out for the Israelites. They've moved on now and need water again. This time, God tells Moses to talk to a rock and water will come forth. But just before doing so, the Israelites start acting up and Moses is getting ticked off. In fact, he's so mad at the people that he goes to the rock and smacks it with his staff. Water comes out, but Moses is in trouble! God told him to talk to the rock not smack it. This may seem like a little thing, but Moses disobeyed God and in his unrighteous anger acted in his own power instead of the power of God. At this point, God calls Moses over and tells him that because of his anger and disobedience Moses will not get to go into the Promised Land either. Can you imagine what Moses must have felt like? Here he was taking on Pharaoh, leading the people, bringing them the 10 commandments, teaching them how to be a nation and doing everything God's asked him to do. One little slip-up and he loses his inheritance of the Promised Land. God's lesson here is clear to those who want to lead His people – to whom much is given, much is expected and the standards and expectations for leadership are much, much higher. Let's fast forward again. They finally are ready to go into the Promised Land and God brings Moses up on a mountain so he can look over the valley and see the Promised Land. Moses sees the place God has promised for 40 years and then God calls Moses home and Moses dies. Bummer, huh?

The moral of the story for us is this: Sometimes our own actions result in pain and loss and God will let us suffer that loss. We do, indeed, reap what we sow.

Moses is not the only one in scripture that this sort of thing happened to. If he was we might just be able to write this off as an exception rather than the rule. But, we're not that lucky. The Bible is full of stories of people doing dumb stuff and then suffering the consequences. And each of us knows that it's true in our own lives; God will allow us to make free-will decisions but we also are responsible for the consequences of those decisions.

We have a friend in church that made some bad decisions in her youth. One of the results of those decisions was a divorce in which the father took custody of the children. Since that day, this woman has not been able to see or speak with her children and it kills her inside. How does one get healing from something like this? Will God heal the brokenness that you yourself cause? Yes, of course, but it requires an additional step to what we've been talking about so far.

Certainly, you need faith, prayer, forgiveness and transformation in this healing process, too. But when trying to heal the brokenness caused by your own poor decision making, God requires

more. See, you are responsible for this pain and the pain you have is a two-fold reminder. First it reminds you that you were a knucklehead and not to screw up like that again. You're supposed to learn from these kinds of mistakes because you don't want to feel this pain again. Second, this pain is a reminder that God's ways are right and your ways are wrong. He wants you to understand that if you follow His ways you won't have this kind of pain in your life. Unless you are first ready to embrace these truths, God cannot help you with this pain. If you're looking to heal this pain just because it hurts, too bad. You're going to have to live with it. But if you are repentant and understand that the pain is there to teach you and you actually learn the lessons, then God will do amazing things with this pain. Let me walk you through it.

First, think about what's going on in your life and see if you are at a place where you can accept the fact you are to blame for the consequences of your actions. This may seem like a no-brainer, but it's not. A lot of people are in denial about their culpability in their own actions. Instead of taking responsibility for what they themselves own, they point the finger at everyone else and blame them. God's not impressed by that. He knows what you did and He knows that you know what you did. You're not fooling anyone so just suck it up and admit that you screwed up. We all own what we own and until we're ready to admit that none of us will see God's healing in our lives.

The next step may be even harder for you. Once you admit your guilt to yourself, you need to go to God and admit your guilt to Him. You need to tell Him what you did, what you're experiencing because of what you did, and that you are sorry for not doing it His way. Let me give you an example from scripture.

Even though he was considered a man after God's own heart, King David had a problem with sin. As devout as he was, David kept sinning! The most notorious of his sins was his actions with Bathsheba. Here's the condensed version. King David is on his porch overlooking his kingdom when he spies a woman taking a bath. Instead of being a good guy and looking away, David lustfully stares and decides he has to have this woman. Being King, he pretty much can have anything he wants so he calls her to his house and sleeps with her. Now the woman, Bathsheba, is the wife of a guy named Uriah. While it's not told directly in the story, Uriah has been one of David's right hand guys forever, serving as one of David's "Mighty Men." So not only is David committing adultery, he's doing it with the wife of one of his best friends. Bathsheba ends up pregnant by David, so David tries to cover it up by inviting Uriah home from a war so he will sleep with Bathsheba, causing everyone to think the child belongs to Uriah. However, Uriah's a good guy and will not sleep with his wife while his comrades are enduring hardship on the battlefield (that's called honor!). Uriah comes home, but sleeps on the porch. David's plan doesn't work, so he tells his commander to send Uriah back to the front and place him at the head of the line, knowing full well that Uriah will be killed. Uriah dutifully reports as ordered and is indeed killed. Bathsheba moves in with David and becomes one of his wives.

Sounds like a story from Jerry Springer! But it's not over. God's ticked at David and sends the prophet Nathan to David to confront him. Nathan tells a parable basically asking the King what he would do if someone stole a person's only lamb. David is outraged by this theft of the person's only lamb and says the thief should be executed. Nathan then says the thief is David for what he did to Uriah with Bathsheba! David finally recognizes his sin. Let's pick up the story

from there: “Then David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the Lord.’ Nathan replied, ‘The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die. But because by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt, the son born to you will die.’” See, David made a bunch of bad choices and the consequence was the death of the child conceived in lust. David had to live with that the same way maybe you are living with the consequences of whatever you did.

But did you see what Nathan said? First, he told David that God forgave his sin once David admitted to that sin. This is VERY important for you to understand. There is nothing you have done that God cannot forgive if you take responsibility for it. David had a man killed and was an adulterer. God forgave him. But, David had to live with the consequences of that mistake the same way we all do with our mistakes. The first step toward redemption and healing is owning your actions and going to God and admitting to Him that you are guilty.

The next step I think is even harder but just as important. You must humble yourself and seek forgiveness from those you’ve hurt. Scripture tells us in Matthew 5:23-24, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” God believes that seeking forgiveness is more important than you coming to Him with an offering! More importantly, God thinks that you are unable to come before Him before you’ve settled this forgiveness issue.

I shared with you earlier that I had to go through this step in my life and it was hard. I sought out forgiveness from about eight people and there’s still at least one person out there I can’t find of whom I need to beg forgiveness. As you pray to God and admit your guilt, you also need to pray to God that He gives you a spirit of humility and contrition so that you are in a place where you can honestly seek to reconcile yourself to those you have hurt. This may be a process for you – you may have to re-read chapter four about the power of forgiveness before you can actually take a step toward that place. But do not expect God to heal your self-inflicted pain until you show obedience by admitting your guilt and seeking forgiveness from those you hurt.

Once you’ve done those two things, God will then act in your life. Like David when he recognized his guilt, God will erase your sin. But when you humble yourself before Him and do what He tells you to do, He will provide healing as well. Here’s what it looks like.

I have done some really dumb things in my life, some of which I have shared with you in this book (believe me, I haven’t even scratched the surface!). When I went to God and admitted my guilt and sought His forgiveness, He told me that I needed to seek forgiveness from those I hurt, which I did. When I returned to God after doing so, I think I felt even worse. I shared that only one person responded to my requests for forgiveness, and that person pretty much hit me with both barrels (rightfully so). I was pretty low at that point and here’s what God did. He said, “Yes, Tom, you knucklehead, you screwed up big time! But I love you and forgive you. Don’t do it again. You’re okay. Don’t forget the lessons you’ve learned, but remember you’ll always be my child. Don’t feel guilty, there’s no profit in that. Do feel remorse that you were so stupid so that you won’t be that stupid again. Lastly, you are a new creation in Christ – act like it.” For me, those were the words I needed to hear. I am remorseful over the sins of my past, but I am not

crushed with guilt. I did what I did and I own those things, but God does not hold them over my head like an ax waiting to fall. Instead, He loves me and told me that I can do better through Him. He is right; I have to act like a new creation in Christ, which means I rely on the Lord for my strength, for my advice, for my transformation. Do I still remember all the things I did and feel badly about them? YES! More than ever I wish I could travel back in time and undo it all. But just like the adulteress woman, Jesus does not condemn me, He just wants me to go and sin no more.

God is not going to take away the consequences for your actions. What He is going to do is change how you deal with those consequences. Right now your guilt may be crushing you. The consequences may be unbearable. You may range from being angry to being despondent! Go to God and let Him start healing you. Admit your guilt and own what you own. Ask God to give you a heart of forgiveness so that you can forgive others and you will allow others (including God and yourself) to forgive you. Seek out forgiveness everywhere! Allow God to turn that guilt into remorse – there’s a difference. Guilt imprisons you; remorse teaches you. Learn the lessons and move forward by embracing Jesus and allowing Him to help you recover and sin no more.

David did these things, but his son still died. I did these things, but my losses are still my losses and they hurt. My friend who hasn’t seen her children is doing these things and finding healing, even though she doesn’t know if her now adult children will ever reach out to her. We will suffer the consequences of our actions, but that doesn’t mean that God will not be merciful to us. He must allow us to make free will decisions that He knows will end up badly, but He can help you deal with the consequences in a way that moves you forward in His light instead of keeping you trapped in your darkness.

I Like Where I Am

There’s yet another thing that may be holding you back from healing and it’s you. We’ve talked throughout the book about getting to a place where you are ready to be healed or ready to forgive or ready to transform. But there are people out there who actually prefer living in their dysfunction even though they won’t admit it. I have been one of those people and we’re going to talk about what these folks can do to find healing.

You know that growing up my dad was in and out of jail, and each time he was about to be released I was asked if I wanted to stay where I was or return home to him. Every time I chose to go home. Sometimes, the reason was pretty obvious; being home was safer than where I was! But other times, going back to live with my father meant going back to significant dysfunction that would only result in me being in foster care again and I knew it. Yet, I still chose that dysfunction over the stability of the foster home. Why would I do that? Simply put, I was more comfortable in that environment than I was in a “normal” environment. My experience was growing up in dysfunction means that your version of “normal” *is* dysfunctional and other people’s normal actually is abnormal for you and extremely uncomfortable. So, I stayed where I was comfortable. Later in life, my “normal” affected my decision making because I considered lying normal. I considered swearing normal. I considered having credit card debt I couldn’t pay normal. I considered being poor normal. I considered sex, drug and rock-n-roll normal. Stealing was okay as long as it didn’t hurt anyone. Lying wasn’t just okay, it was encouraged, so you

didn't hurt people's feelings. Yelling and anger was okay; that's how I was corrected and I turned out all right! See, I believe we all are products of our environment and our childhood development. Unfortunately, in my case, I didn't even know that I was messed up even though everyone around me kept telling me I was. Since getting right with God, I've been blessed to be in other people's lives who are going through what I went through and they are struggling just as badly as I had. And just like me, they all had trouble recognizing they live in dysfunction and are themselves the problem. In fact, some have not been willing to admit they even have dysfunction in their lives – everyone else is wrong. Sound familiar? Either way, it's holding them back from God's healing.

Have you ever tried to do an intervention with one of these folks and let them know they need to change? Their reaction can range from manipulation to indignation, but in the end they all stay exactly where they are. Why? As bad as it is, it's all they know and they're comfortable. They're also scared to change because they have no control over that change, where at least they have a little control in their dysfunction. So how do you get there with someone like this?

First and foremost, they have to be a part of the solution. What I mean by that is if they are not willing to work on their issues you will have zero chance of helping. I mean that! You can give someone all your time, all your advice, all your money and all your energy, but if they are not part of the solution at the end of it all they will be exactly where they started. Do you resemble that remark? Have you tried every program and had dozens of people in your lives ranging from social workers to church laity trying to help you but nothing works? Here's the truth: It's you not them. You're the problem and you will continue to be the problem until you own what you own and become part of the solution.

Do those words sound harsh? You're right, they are. And that's the second part of finding healing for this type of dysfunction: No coddling people – you have to tell them the truth and you need to run it straight through their heart. Oh, how I wish someone would have done that with me when I was 19 years old! You have no idea how much carnage could have been avoided if some adult had taken enough interest in me to sit my butt down and smack me across the forehead with the two-by-four of truth. Looking back, there were a couple people in my life who were close to doing it but they all begged off when it got too hard, i.e. when I would get angry and fight back. Too bad; it was just what I needed and would have saved me. That's why I am telling you now that if you are someone who lives in dysfunction – and you know if you are – I'm not going to pat you on the butt and tell you it's okay. It's not okay. You are the problem and you need to get your act together and become part of the solution. Stop using other people; stop blaming other people; stop making excuses. Get up off your butt and decide today that you are going to find healing in your life and that you are going to own both that decision and the actions it will take to do it.

This is going to be very hard if you have lived in your dysfunction for any length of time, so you need to start with prayer. Pray to the Father that He enables you through the Holy Spirit to have the strength and the skills you need to move forward. Pray that the Holy Spirit reveals to you the decisions you should make instead of relying on yourself. Pray that Jesus will help release you from the prison you're in so you can move forward as His disciple and be the person God created you to be.

Now that you've prayed, you need to plan. Remember, you have a role to play in all this. This is a relationship and you have to do your part. You need to take an honest look at your life, identify the things that are holding you back, and make a plan as to how you are going to move forward. Start with your sin life. Make a list of all your sins – all of them! As a reminder, there are sins of commission and sins of omission, which means there are sins that you actively do and there are sins that happen when you don't do what you're supposed to do. Don't hold back here; remember that God sees everything so you can't hide anything from Him. Be honest and up front with Him. Once the list is made, first go to God and seek forgiveness for each one and ask Him through the Holy Spirit to help you fight these temptations and sins. Next, write down how you plan to stop committing these sins. Let me give you examples from my life.

Swearing – I had a HUGE problem with swearing and bad language. I loved dirty jokes - it was just how I was raised. When I had my big revelation at 40 years old, I knew that my language had to change. Scripture tells us not to use coarse language and if you looked up that term in the dictionary you'd see my picture! So, I prayed that God would forgive me all the evil I had spoken with my tongue. I prayed He would help me control my tongue. Then I decided that I needed to have a plan to stop using those words. I started at home with Lisa. No more swearing and I found it just took a little forethought about what I was going to say and a little discipline. Then I realized that in my professional world, I really didn't swear, so I needed to take that same approach in my personal world. Again, discipline and accepting the fact that it was not okay to do. Eventually my habit of bad language became a habit of appropriate language. Yes, I still slip! When I served in the Army, every other word started with an F. So, when I get around a group of men and especially when I'm around soldiers (I work with veterans), that old habit resurfaces and I have to double down my discipline. I also swear when I'm ticked off. That one I'm still working on; I have to find a better way to express my irritation. But I am working on it!! Then there are the jokes. I've pretty much stopped telling dirty or coarse jokes. The problem is I have a very broad sense of humor; what I find funny a lot of people don't, especially in churchy circles. I have to be very careful not to offend anyone. And that's how I do it; so long as I can think ahead about what I'm about to say and figure out if anyone is going to be offended – including God – I do okay. It's when I'm in the heat of the moment and tell a sheep joke I get in trouble! But again, I'm working it and asking for God's help.

Lust – Ooh, I used that four-letter word that all men pretend doesn't exist! Here's what I tell people: In general, women are emotional and men are visual when it comes to the opposite sex. I've not met the man who didn't have an issue with lust, including me. I saw my first Playboy magazine when I was five years old. I learned about sex from the older boys and by the time my dad gave me the "sex talk" when I was about 11, I already had known all about it for years. My father considered himself a player, and I would often get up in the morning to get ready for school and there would be a naked woman in my dad's bed. Then when I was 13, dad moved us into the Playboy Club in downtown Chicago for about six weeks before we got kicked out. That was like getting a libido steroid shot! Needless to say, I've always liked the female form, but I never felt it was unreasonable because every man I knew – and I mean *every* man I knew – felt the same way. We all liked pornography, we all chased skirts, and we all thought it was pretty normal. That's not what God says. When I came to know God better, I realized that my lust had to be tamed. But how do you turn it off? It seems so biological! I prayed and prayed and prayed about it, but didn't have much success. I read a book called *Every Man's Challenge* that gives

strategies to deal with lust. Some worked, but not as strongly as I needed. Then I realized that I wasn't listening to the Holy Spirit. Each time I felt that way, I would hear the Holy Spirit direct me to do something else but I tuned Him out. Once I realized I was doing that – probably more out of habit than disobedience – I started listening harder for Him. Then I had to have the discipline to do what He told me to do. Sometimes it was to grab the Bible and read a chapter. Sometimes it was to get off the computer so I didn't get tempted by the Internet. Sometimes I just had to be still and allow God to ease the temptation. And, I also learned that I had to rebuke the devil when he would tempt me. I simply say, "Stop it," to him and he flees. Am I completely healed in this? No, I'm still a man and have to struggle with it. But God is there with me, helping me when I call to Him. I also have a plan that I implement at the first sign of lust in my life. It's made a big difference.

Agape Love – Before I gave myself fully to God, I didn't love people. In fact, I didn't like people and certainly didn't trust them – even those closest to me. Yet, God calls us to love each other. So, how do you go from disliking people to loving them? The only way is through the supernatural touch of God. Once I realized I had to figure this out, I went to God in prayer and asked Him to help me with it because it just didn't come naturally to me. First, He taught me that it wasn't everyone else who was wrong, it was me who was wrong. Then He put people around me who were overflowing with love for their fellow man – so much so that it made me a little queasy! God put these people in my life to mentor me. Then God gave me situations where I could help someone, not because of me showing what a big man I was (which was my previous motive), but because I genuinely wanted to help. This started to change my heart. As I saw God doing this, He told me that I also had to become vulnerable and transparent to people. I protested at this one! I was sure I would be emotionally hurt by doing so, but God told me that He'd take care of me and to do it. So, I did and He was right. By submitting to God in this area, I now can honestly say that I do have *agape* love for my fellow man. Like the Grinch, my heart has grown three sizes and I do actually care and have compassion and empathy. But I will tell you that these things are not of my own doing; God placed those things in me and only through Him can I do as He commands.

So, there are three of my sins (there are many more!). Do you see a pattern of how I deal with them? First, I pray and ask God to intervene. Next, I recognize that my role is two-fold: Allow the Holy Spirit to work in me and apply self-discipline to the issue. Then I follow my own advice and replace my reaction with a new action, creating a new habit that is more in line with God. This is what I am asking you to do in your dysfunction. Write down your sins. Go to the Father and seek His intervention in your life through the power of the Holy Spirit. Have some self-discipline and make the change by creating new Godly habits in your life. Then you will see significant change in both your everyday life and in your relationship with God.

Once you've done this, you are ready to seek healing. I hope you see that your sin life is holding you back from all God has to offer you. Change your habits and God will bless you fully! Change your habits and you can have that relationship with God through faith, prayer, forgiveness and transformation that will bring you to healing. God wants to heal you and it's just around the corner. Do the preliminary work first; you have to get right with God by being straight with yourself and straight with Him. Once you're at that point, then He can work with you on your pain. Make sense?

You've Tried Everything Else

I have a lot of favorite verses, but as I write this, two come to mind.

1 John 4:6 reads, “Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

Acts 17:11 reads, “Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.”

Having come this far with me, I think you see why I like these verses. The first tells us that there is a lot of crap out there that is not of God even if people make it look as if it is. The second verse tells us that we should check everything against scripture to be sure it's true. If I were to leave you any advice, it would be to follow these two verses.

The funny thing about our lives is all of us are looking for that thing that makes us whole. We instinctively know in our DNA that something is missing and we all go searching for it in different ways. Those of us who are Christians are confident we have found the answer not because we're smarter than everyone else, but because experientially we've been made whole. If it weren't so, none of us would remain Christians, we'd just move on to the next thing to see if it worked. Christianity proves itself true through the documented transformed lives of its adherents. But while there are two billion of us, there are another five billion people on earth who do not follow Jesus and do not know the freedom we've found in Christ.

My experience is there are a lot of people who seek and find the wrong spirit that blinds them to the love of God. And instead of testing what they believe against the scriptures, they simply buy the lies hook, line and sinker! The result is not a transformed life but a life tethered to illusion and falsehood. Maybe you know someone in this boat or maybe you yourself are searching but never finding.

In my way of thinking, there really are only two things in the world – things of God and things not of God. It's pretty simple when you get right down to it. That is why those two verses are so powerful. You are either being led by God or you are being led by things against God. And God has given you an instruction book (**Basic Instructions Before Leaving Earth**, i.e. Bible) to help you figure out which is which. Let me ask you a series of questions:

- **Is the self-medicating with drugs and alcohol working?** Is it killing your pain not just in the short-term but the long term? Are you finding healing in it? Or is it just causing you more trouble financially, legally, personally and physically? Is self-medicating from God or is another spirit leading you to believe you “need” it, because it's the only way you can “deal” with your problems?
- **Are the one-night-stands and other sexual relationships you're in filling your need for love?** Do you feel fulfilled by the person you met in the bar last night who you will never see again? Did that prostitute emotionally fill you? Did surfing porn satisfy your

need for relationship? Or are you finding that like drugs and alcohol, you just need more and more of it? Have you had premarital sex and if so, how do you feel now that you're not with that person anymore? When you read scripture, do you find that God approves of sex addictions or does He have something else in mind for you?

- **Does money make you happy and fill that gaping hole in your life?** Have you decided that the ends justify the means when it comes to making a living? How far have you gone to close the deal? Is your money used to glorify God or is it used to soothe your insecurities?
- **Do you fill that missing piece through glorifying yourself as a narcissist?** Are you the center of the universe to whom you expect everyone else to defer? Are you a boss for whom people work or are you a colleague on a team? Do you enjoy it when you're the center of attention? Do you think you're the smartest person in the room? Do you get jealous and angry when others steal your spotlight? Do you consider others better than you as scripture teaches or do you secretly think you are better than everyone else and that eases your pain?
- **Have you found another religion that fits your personal beliefs better?** One that caters to what you want to believe? Do you find the God of Christianity unreasonable, because He doesn't do things the way you would do them? Is that other religion filling that hole in your soul or do you still lie in bed at night awake because your mind won't shut off, because you have no peace?

Do any of these questions bother you, tick you off or make you stop reading? Is the Holy Spirit convicting you right now and pleading with you to follow the right spirit and to examine the scriptures to ensure what you are doing is of God? You're going to have to give this some thought if you want healing in your life. If your car breaks down, you don't bring it to the grocery store to get fixed. You bring it to a mechanic. When your soul is broken, you don't bring it to anyone or anything else other than the person who can fix it and in this case, that's the person who created it – Jesus. I can't make it simpler than that.

Chapter 8
What's Holding You Back?
Key Concepts

1. Jesus will do anything you ask so long as it is in the will of the Father.
2. When God tells you “No,” keep listening, because He has more to say.
3. Many wounds are self-inflicted. God's waiting to hear from you.
4. You must be part of the solution if you want healing in your life.
5. If you keep doing what you're doing, you're going to keep getting what you're getting.
6. If you've tried everything else, you may as well try this – can't hurt.
7. Jesus wants you to have life abundantly!

Conclusion

I have a niece who did a Master's degree in Counseling and works for a school district. When she was in her program, she got shirts for everyone in the family that reads, "We're all just crazy, mixed up people." It was right on target for my nutty family, but it also hits the mark for all of us. We're all fallen people. We're all broken in some way, either physically, emotionally, mentally or spiritually. And we all need Jesus in our lives to heal us.

I want this healing for you in your life. Not because I'm some holier-than-thou person preaching at you the virtues of the Christian life. I want it for you because I've been where you are and I've seen the other side and trust me, the grass is so much more lush and green on this side of the fence! I know that you may have your reasons for holding back. Perhaps you had a bad experience with God, Christianity, a church or church people in the past. Okay, me, too. I get it, but don't let your pride, anger, ego or anything else stand in the way of what God has in store for you.

You have a choice to make. You can spend the rest of your life feeling like you do right now, living with a giant hole in your soul and going day-to-day trying to manage your pain so that you keep everything compartmentalized in your mental boxes, hoping they don't open. Or, you can go to God and submit yourself to His love, grace, mercy and forgiveness and allow Him to one-by-one clean out each box and heal you in such a way that there is nothing to compartmentalize. Which will it be?

John 10:10 reads, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Your life is being stolen from you by Satan. Come to Jesus and He will restore you so that you may have life and have it abundantly. So, I will end by asking you one simple question: Do you want to be healed?

EPILOGUE

It's hard to believe, but it's been more than four years since I wrote this book. A lot has happened during that time.

I left the secular work world at God's behest to go into full-time ministry. I was ordained a Minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by the Evangelic Church Alliance International in February 2017 after a 10-year discernment process (yeah, I'm a slow learner). And today I spend all my time pouring myself into others as I wish others had done for me in my youth and young adult years. I am still a significant work in progress, but oh how I love the work!

Many of the stories I've told in this book about people I know have incredible – no – miraculous endings! God has been so faithful to those who have run to Him, reconciling relationships, healing emotional and spiritual trauma, and even doing physical healings!! I even found that last person from whom I needed to seek forgiveness – what a great reconciliation that was! **PRAISE GOD!!!**

I have been stunned, although I shouldn't be, by what God has done through this work. Complete strangers have found Jesus in jail cells, at the bottom of a bottle, and at the end of their rope after reading what God has put on my heart to share. The Holy Spirit has changed lives – some of which have been tormented for 50 years of suffering – through the words in this book. It is more than humbling to know that God can use a sinner like me for His kingdom! **PRAISE GOD!!!**

If I were to share one last thought it would be this. There is nothing better in this life than finding that thing God created you to do and spending all of your life's energy and resources doing it! You see, God created each of us for His good purpose, for good works determined before the beginning of the world (Ephesians 2:10). Most people I know are really unfilled if not miserable because they don't know what they don't know. In other words, they don't even know that they were created to do these works so they're not doing them and are obviously unhappy and empty in ways they can't even express.

I am a blessed man; God revealed to me my purpose in all this. I am to pour myself into others, sharing everything He has taught me through all the lessons of my life – the good, the bad, and the ugly. When God heals, we then have a sacred obligation to go back into the dark and show others the way out because we now know the way!

I will spend the rest of my life doing just that, using every bit of my time, talent and treasure to glorify God by going back into those dark places and finding others in despair, pain, fear, and dysfunction so that I can offer them Jesus and the healing He has for them.

Last thought: While I owe Jesus everything, I owe my wife, Lisa, a debt of gratitude I cannot repay. She has stuck by me through much of my dysfunction and healing. She continues to put up with me as I work through my process of deeper healing. It is not easy and at times it is no fun. Yet, she is perhaps the most faithful person I have ever met. I don't tell her enough that I love her and am eager to continue our adventure together in this covenant we call marriage.

May God bless you all richly through the words in this book! May you find healing in Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. May you embrace your place as God's sons and daughters! And most of all, may you know the love of Christ as you never have before!

Rev. Tom Mann
December 21, 2017

Photo Album

Our Baby

Name Thomas W. Mann


Born at Columbus Hosp.

On OCT. 21 Time 9:25 A.M.

Weight 5 Lbs. 14 1/2 Ozs.

1964

Parents
Marilyn + Dave



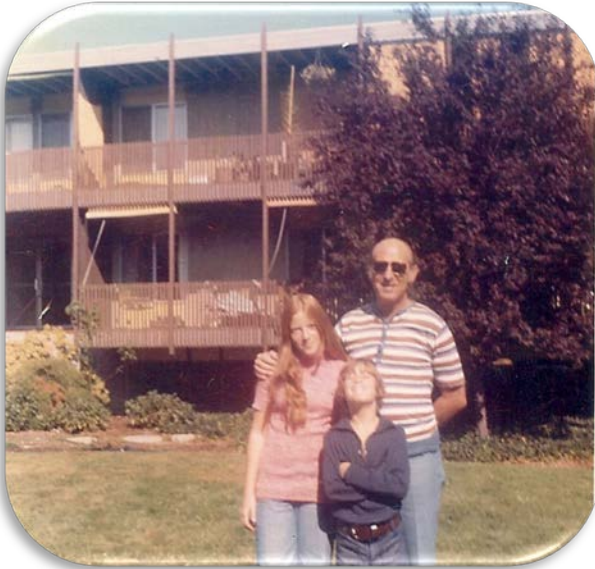
Newborn pic! Mom looking tired and annoyed with the newborn! Donna, Doreen, Diane and me! Donna hates this photo by the way!





L-R: Christmas 1968 at grandparents in Florida; Sisters Donna, Doreen and Diane before me; Mom with her parents; Mom and me in Florida 1968.



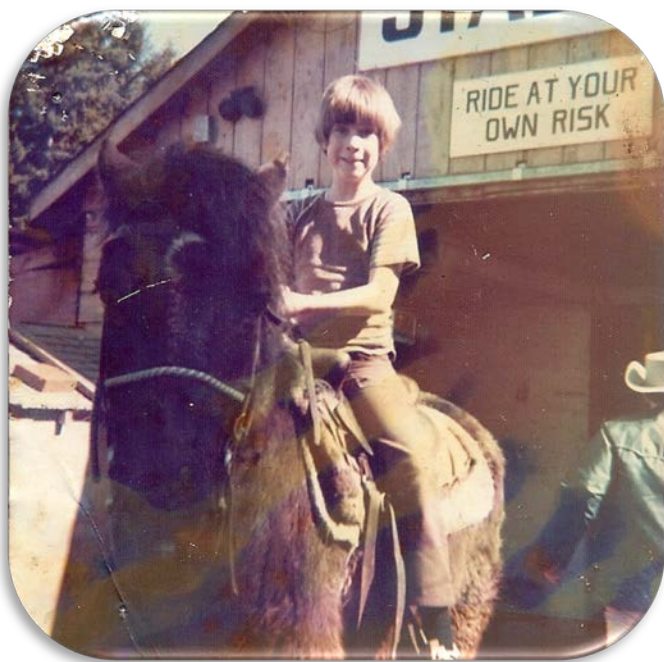


L-R: Diane, Dad and me in the 70s
sometime. Dad and Mom early
70s. Me early 70s. Me and Doreen
early 70s.





L-R: Mom, niece Angela and me 1974ish. Me with homemade Gayle Sayers jersey. Me on a horse and with foster brother Ken Terho playing Little League around the same timeframe.





Ah, high school in the early 80s. Senior year I was the marching band Drum Major; also played trumpet at jazz bars; and my foster family – Pat, Dick, Karen and Ken Terho



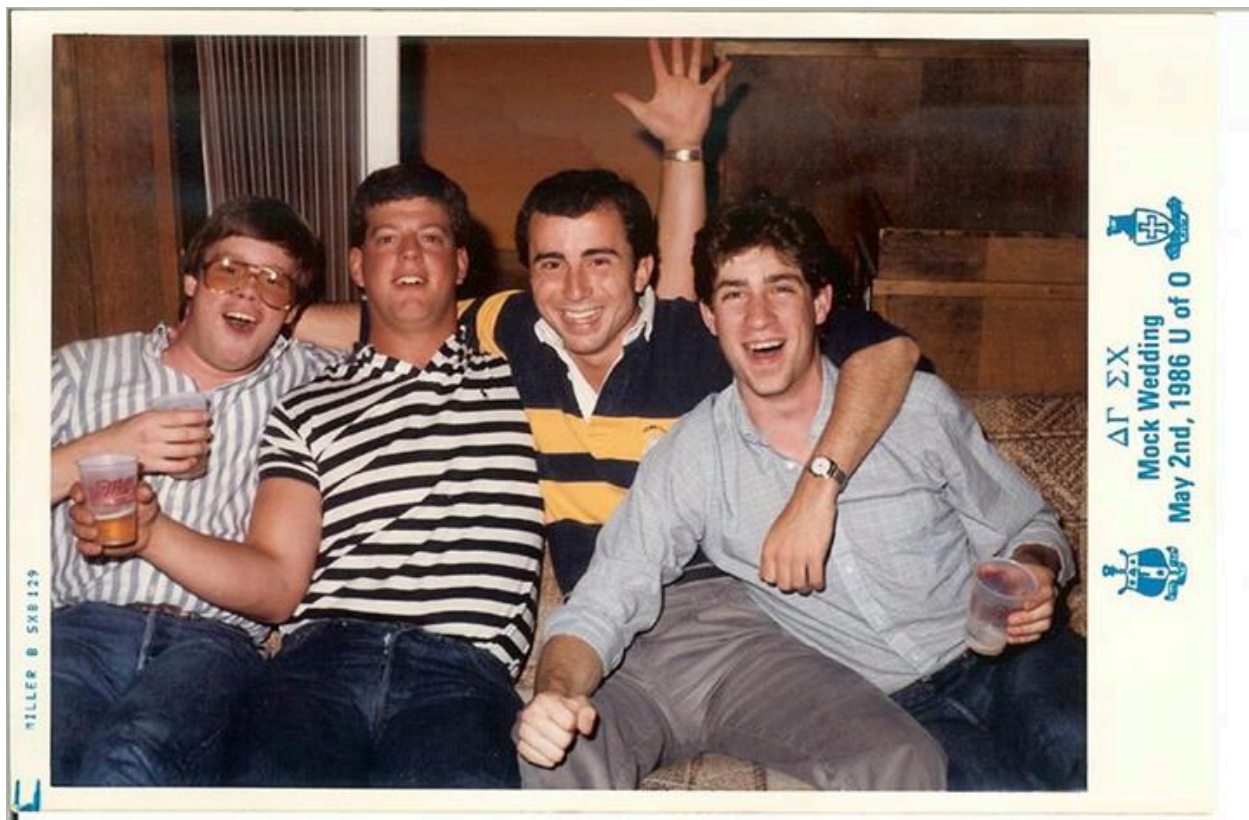


Photo above is Mike Mills, Bob Miller and Rich Bassett – college friends. I've known Mike since little league and Bob since high school. I was an AEPi at the University of Missouri but when I transferred to Oregon there was no chapter; the Sigma Chi brothers allowed me to play with them sometimes! Below, Dad, Doreen, Diane and me in the 90s, and a pic from Lisa's and my wedding with Diane and Doreen.



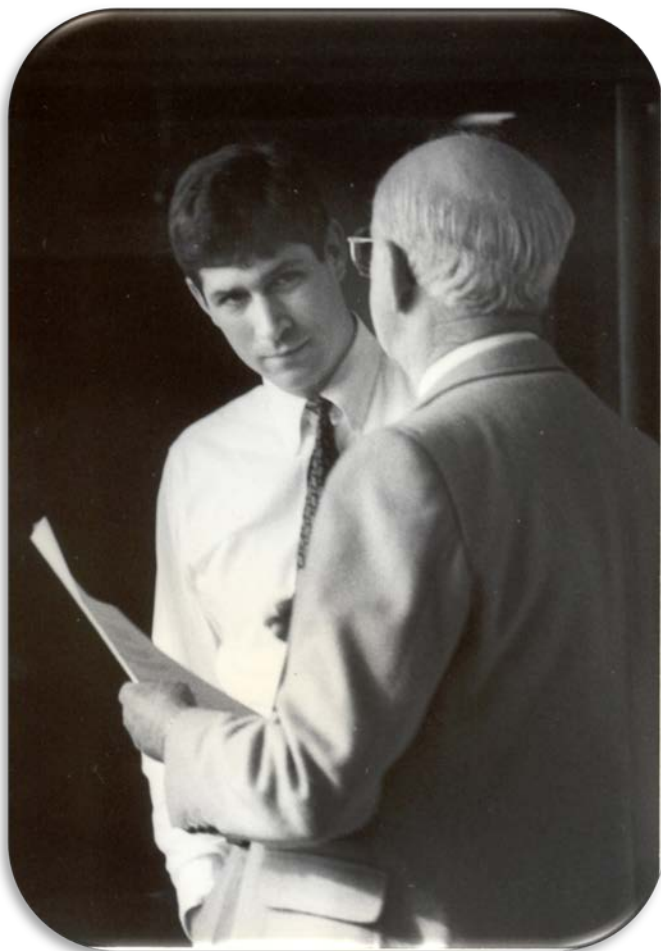


Pat, Dick and Karen Terho at a family reunion; me and my sisters all grown up! Ken and Karen Terho with me at Pat and Dick's 50th Wedding Anniversary party.





The Army: Fred Paulson, me, Scott Thompson, Paul Varga and Jeff Couch with the base commander getting an award. Right is me singing and playing trumpet during “mandatory fun” at the Defense Language Institute circa 1988. Below, me at the Oregon Legislature circa 1995.





My bride and I through the years.



Appendix

The aim of the following workbook is to walk you through things you probably already know but have never committed to paper or been able to visualize in one place. I always have found it helpful to use lists in order to outline where I am, where I want to be, and what I need to do to get there. The following 12 exercises do just that.

Here's how you use this workbook. First, do the exercise. The key is to be completely honest – don't hold back. You don't have to share your answers with anyone else. This is for you to use in your own healing process, so let it rip! Second, analyze your answers once you are done. Don't just blast through this thing. Really think about what you wrote down. Third, write some notes to yourself about what you're learning, what you're feeling, and most importantly what God is telling you! This is where you can start formulating your action plan – how you are going to get from where you are to where you want to be! (See exercise on replacing reaction with an action.)

I started a new paragraph for "Fourth" because this is REALLY important. Once you do the three steps above, pick one or two things to start working on. DO NOT try too many things at once. The key to success in our healing process is incremental change. I liken it to eating an apple. The way you eat an apple is one bite at a time. If you try to swallow the whole apple at once you will choke. It is the same with these exercises. You may identify a couple dozen areas in your life that you want to transform. Now that you can see how to do it via these exercises, it may seem very exciting to get started on all of them! Then you will choke on the apple and be even more discouraged. Take a bite at a time – one or two areas that you identify and take intentional actions to make the changes. Once you have made progress in those couple areas, pick a couple more. Allow success to build on success. You will see incremental changes in your life and you will learn the process for this transformation to apply to other areas.

Lastly, choose the "low-hanging fruit" first. What I mean by that is choose areas in your life that are easier to heal than the deepest hurts first. Again, the idea is to build on success. You don't want to start by taking on the biggest demon in your life and getting bogged down in that fight as your first challenge. Build your way up to that fight by picking off the easier ones first, building on those successes and learning the process so you are ready when you step into the ring with the real beasts in your life.

Remember, these exercises are not intended to tell you things you don't already know. They are intended to show them to you in a new way so that you can see them and then allow the Holy Spirit to start working on you! You can do nothing in your own power so pray that the Holy Spirit is alive and active in your life and that He reveals to you the wisdom you need to work with him in this healing process.

I will be praying for you as well that God's love covers you and sustains you, that He provides for you and enables you, and that in His strength you defeat the demons in your life and are transformed in healed in a way you never thought possible.

Exercise 1: SELF ASSESSMENT

In column one, list all the things on which you place value in your life. In column two, prioritize the things in column one. In column three, reprioritize them based on how God would want you to see your life. Do you place too much value on some things and not enough on others? Do you need to reprioritize your life?

[illegible]

Exercise 2: WHAT DO YOU VALUE?

In column one, write down all the things on which you place value in your life. In column two, rank the things you've written in column one. In column three, determine if you place too much, too little, or just enough value on these things. In column four, rank the things in column one based on how you should value them. Adjust your life accordingly.

<u>Column 1</u> What do you place value on?	<u>Column 2</u> Rank	<u>Column 3</u> Too much, too little, or just enough value	<u>Column 4</u> How should you value them?

Exercise 3: TRIGGERS

Identify the things that trigger you (sights, sounds, smells, words, incidents, etc.) and put them in column one. In column two, write down your reaction to each of these triggers. In column three, right down how you would rather respond to your triggers. Exercise to replace re-action with an action.

[illegible]

Exercise 4: NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

In column one, write down all the negative things you say about yourself. In column two, write down whether it is the truth, is it a lie, or is it partially true if you spin it the right way. In column three, list how God sees you instead of how you see yourself on each of these negative things.

[illegible]

Exercise 5: FORGIVENESS #1

Identify people or incidents that still irritate or hurt you when you think about them. Write them down in column one. Identify the reason you are having trouble with the person or situation in column two. Determine what action you will take to forgive the situation in column three.

[illegible]

Exercise 6: FORGIVENESS #2

Identify the people you have hurt along the way in column one. Write down how you are going to ask that person for forgiveness in column two.

[illegible]

Exercise 7: HAS GOD BEEN IN YOUR LIFE?

Write down a list of all the memorable incidents in your life (good, bad, ugly) in column one. Then think about where God may have shown Himself in those incidents. Write that down in column two. Do you see a pattern of where God shows up in your life? Do you see that God really is involved with you even though you didn't see it at the time?

[illegible]

Exercise 8: PRAYER

Write down in column one the prayers you sent God's way over your life. Include the smallest to the largest. In column two, write down if He answered them and how He answered them. In column three, see if you can determine if your prayer was within God's will for your life and consistent with who God is in your life. For example, if I pray for riches, I probably won't get that because it's not God's will for me.

[illegible]

Exercise 9: WHO ARE YOU?

Write down your character traits, values, and morals in column one. In column two write down who you think God wants you to be. For example, in column one it may say “angry”; column two may say “patient.” Think about how you are going to make changes in your life to live more like God wants you to instead of how you are living currently.

[illegible]

Exercise 10: BATTLE PLANNING

Sometimes you have to manage a situation that you know will trigger you but you can't avoid it. In those situations, you must have a plan. In column one, write down things that can trigger you (such as going to the store when it's crowded, or doing a family event). Then in column two, write down how you will mitigate the situation – what is your Battle Plan to minimize the trigger? For example, going to the store – mitigate and minimize by going earlier in the morning or later at night when less people are there. Never walk into a situation you know will trigger you without a Battle Plan.

<u>Column 1</u> Triggers	<u>Column 2</u> How to mitigate the situation

Exercise 11: WHOSE ROCKS ARE YOU CARRYING?

In life there are things for which we are absolutely responsible. Things we must own. But there are also things we don't own – they belong to someone else. Unfortunately, many people end up carrying other people's rocks – taking responsibility for things that are not theirs to own. Conversely, sometimes people don't actually take ownership of the stuff that is theirs. This exercise is about an honest assessment of whose rocks you're carrying. In column one, write down the issues in your life for which you are responsible – be honest. In column two, write down issues you are carrying that actually do not belong to you but are someone else's issue. In column three, write down how you are going to deal with either your issues in column one or letting go of issues that are not yours in column two.

<u>Column 1</u> Issues in life for which you are responsible	<u>Column 2</u> Issues you are carrying that belong to someone else	<u>Column 3</u> How will you deal with your issue? How will you let go of other's issue?

Exercise 12: WORKING TOWARD YOUR STRENGTHS OR WEAKNESSES

Our everyday lives are filled with tons of responsibilities, decisions, and actions we have to take. Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by it all. But part of the reason we feel overwhelmed is we may not be working to our strengths and instead are working toward our weaknesses. When we do things that work to our strengths – things we are good at – we barely take notice of them because it all seems so easy. We are confident of our abilities and we attack the problem with our full focus. However, when we are working toward our weaknesses, we are hesitant and unsure. We don't attack the problem, rather we ease into it worried that we are going to fail, which then becomes a self-fulfilled prophecy. This exercise is aimed at learning your strengths, weaknesses and which you are using for what purposes in your life.

In column one, list your strengths – things you are good at either naturally or through learned aptitude. In column two, list your weakness – things you stink at. In column three, list the responsibilities, decisions, and actions you have to take daily. In column four, list whether the issue in column three works toward your strength or weakness. Once you determine the things that work toward your weakness, determine in column five how you are going to change it to make it work toward a strength instead. Sometimes, we're stuck and we have to do things that simply are not our strength. But sometimes we have the opportunity to adjust how we do things so that we are more successful. See if this exercise helps you figure out how best to make your life work toward your strengths.

<u>Column 1</u> Your strengths	<u>Column 2</u> Your weaknesses	<u>Column 3</u> Daily responsibilities, decisions, actions	<u>Column 4</u> Does this work toward your strength or weakness?	<u>Column 5</u> How are you going make it work toward your strength?

DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED?

So you've prayed to God that He will take your pain away, but it just seems as if He wants you to carry that cross forever. Have you ever thought that perhaps God really does want to heal you, but you're actually standing in the way? *Do You Want to Be Healed? Allowing God to Heal Brokenness in Your Life* shares a little-known truth about Jesus' healing ministry—you have to be ready for healing before Jesus will heal you. That means you can't keep one foot in your dysfunction while crying out to God for help. You have to go all in before Jesus can perform that healing miracle in your life. If you're ready for that kind of commitment—ready for Jesus to wipe away your tears and heal the brokenness in your soul—take a chance and say, yes, I want to be healed.



Newspaper editor, soldier, political consultant, private investigator, intelligence officer, adjunct professor, business owner, senior executive, Bachelors and Masters Degrees—on paper Tom Mann looks like one of the more successful people you will meet. You would never see the dysfunction that consumed him, caused by too many years of neglect and abuse as a child. For years, he thought everyone else was nuts until the day he realized it was actually him. Crying out to Jesus, Tom found healing, but not in some “shabalee-doo, you’re

healed” kind of way. No, more like the “Submit yourself fully to Jesus and do things you don’t want to do” kind of way. God has used Tom’s pain for good, giving Tom the ability to powerfully speak into other’s lives about healing. Now he desperately wants you to have the same kind of healing God has given him.

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