

# *Starting Over*

*The Believer's Guide To The More Abundant Life*

by  
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Starting Over – A Believer’s Guide to the More Abundant Life  
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## *Dedication*

This book is dedicated to those who love truth more than religion, and freedom more than sin.

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## CHAPTER ONE

# *Salvation*

## *The Foundation of the More Abundant Life*

*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*

*Luke 19:10*

If we would stop thinking of salvation as a transaction that occurs at a moment in time, and start thinking of it as the life long, three phase process that the Bible says it is, we could stop wasting time trying to assure sinners that they have been saved, and we could stop wasting energy trying to get them to act like it. Imagine the impact we could have if we spent our time and energy doing the things Jesus really wants us doing: leading sinners to salvation, and showing believers how to cultivate life transforming relationship with the Father. Instead of all the senseless bickering, perhaps we should start turning the world upside down again.

- The First Phase of salvation is the first act of obedience in a life of obedience. When a sinner, responding to the drawing power of God, chooses 1) to believe on Jesus Christ alone for salvation, 2) to repent of their sin, 3) to ask for, and receive, forgiveness of all their sins (*past, present, and future*), 4) to submit completely, one-hundred percent, no holds barred, to the absolute authority, or Lordship, of Jesus Christ, and 5) to openly confess Christ for the rest of their life, it is then that they A) are raised from the dead (*we were dead in trespasses and sins*) to walk in newness of life, B) are given the gift of eternal life, C) pass through the gate that leads to the narrow path, that in turn leads to life, and D) are born again, sanctified, redeemed, become a Christian, etc.
- The Second Phase of salvation is the process of learning to live in relationship with God here in this present world. It is the process of walking that narrow path that leads to life in the face of all the opposition that the world, the flesh, and the devil can throw at us. It is during this process that 1) your mind is renewed by the washing of the water of the Word, 2) the wounds in your heart are gradually healed by the anointing balm of the Holy Spirit, and 3) we learn how to have, to cultivate, and to enjoy life transforming relationship with the Father.
- The Third Phase of salvation is the moment when God takes us out of this world and into the next; bringing us into the fullness of our reward – absolute, direct, unhindered fellowship with God forever. It marks the completion of that good work that Jesus started in us when He determined to save us before the foundations of the world. It is at this moment that mortality takes on immortality, and death, at least on an individual basis, is swallowed up in victory!

The offer of salvation is a package deal. You do not get to pick and choose the aspects that you like, and throw the rest away. Jesus Christ is Lord of all, or not at all; and if He is not your Lord, He is not your Savior. Included in the first phase of salvation – an essential, non-negotiable condition of salvation – is the choice to submit to the command authority of Jesus Christ without

reservation. Refusal to submit obediently to His revealed will on any point thereafter is a rejection of His authority over you. By logical extension, such disobedience amounts to a rejection of His free gift of eternal life.

Supporters of the doctrine of eternal security just went on high alert, and those who support the doctrine that believers can lose their salvation just felt vindicated. Let me be clear; I am on both sides, and I am against both sides. I am on both sides because the Bible clearly supports both sides. The scriptures that are used on both sides are absolutely convincing, and logically conclusive. I am against both sides when they say that the two views are mutually exclusive; that proving one true proves the other false; that it has to be one or the other.

### *Examine Yourself!*

*Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

*But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates.*

*II Corinthians 13:5-6*

Eternal security is supposed to encourage us through our failures; to keep us from being overwhelmed by condemnation over sins that we have repented of and been forgiven for. Unfortunately, this scriptural doctrine can be fraudulently used to hide the deception of false security, and to justify people in a life of sin.

The warnings that you can lose your salvation were given to encourage us to engage in times of self-examination; valuable to all because of its capacity to strengthen the faith of truly saved people through a series of periodic validations, and because of its capacity to expose the false sense of security built up by a variety of deceptions designed to blind sinners to their real need for Christ. Unfortunately, the idea that one can accidentally lose their salvation – an idea produced and supported by the fraudulent use of such warnings – results in believers that are unwilling to take the risks that are necessary to boldly do great things for God.

Ironically, the greatest weakness of each position is the undeniable truth of the other. If God gave us these two tools (*which He clearly did*) to be used for His purposes, how dare we be so proud or insolent as to refuse the benefits of one or the other? Honestly, who do we think we are? If we justify refusing either tool because it can be abused, we must immediately refuse Christianity as a whole, because it has certainly been abused by many over the years.

*For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.*

*Matthew 13:12*

*For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.*

*Matthew 25:29*

*For he that hath, to him shall be given: and he that hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he hath.*

*Mark 4:25*

*For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.*

*Luke 19:26*

Will those, “who have,” be given more of what they have? Will those with eternal life be given more eternal life? I think we have to conclude that those who have eternal life will be given other wonderful things in addition to eternal life; the blessings of this world, and all the promised blessings that are laid up for us in heaven. Of course, this clarifies the meaning of the second half of these passages as well. Those who do not truly have eternal life will, in the end, certainly lose those things that they did have.

*Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have.*

*Luke 8:18*

Because they never received the gift of eternal life, the cars, houses, families, and vain religious hopes of sinners will all be taken away from them when they die, showing plainly that they only seemed to have the things that they foolishly called their own.

So, how do we examine ourselves? How can we be certain that we have, in fact, truly been saved? How can we know that we are not just deceiving ourselves by a life of religious morality? How can we have any confidence that we are truly the children of God?

First, you evaluate the validity of your salvation experience. If it does not line up with what the Bible says it should have been, and you want it to, make it line up now. If the person who led you to Christ totally blew it, but you know it was your intention to submit obediently to Jesus, correct any defects right now, and move forward in peace.

Then, you evaluate your current situation. Are you growing in your knowledge of God? Are you being changed by the working of the Holy Spirit in your heart? Is the power of God evident in your life in any way? If not, why not? I know it's not God's fault. A change is needed, and you are going to have to make it. Determine right now that you will make it, or that you will die trying. Anything less proves that you are not serious, and that you should not expect anything from God. Once the decision to make any necessary changes has been made, you can go to God in faith to find out what those changes are, and to be empowered by the Holy Spirit to make them.

And if the enemy tells you that your sins, subsequent to a salvation experience, have barred you from any further forgiveness (*that you have sinned away your salvation completely*), there is a way to evaluate even this. If you have sinned away your salvation, do you want it back? If you do, it is proof that you have not, in fact, sinned it away. Those who want to come back to Christ

only want to do so as a direct result of the drawing influence of the Holy Spirit in their life, and God would not draw someone to Himself if He was unwilling to forgive and receive them.

### *The Purpose of Creation*

*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

*Revelation 4:11*

It is impossible, by definition, for a perfect, self-existent, eternal, unchanging being to need anything. Therefore, God's reason for creation had to be desire based (*a fact that is clearly indicated by the passage above*), not need based. But what could God possibly have desired that could only be satisfied by creating us? What pleasure can we possibly give to Him who created the universe with a word, and who brought all living creatures into being by His power? The only way to answer such questions is to consider the situation God was in before He ever created anything; when God was all there was.

From all eternity past, the Father loved the Son, and the Son loved the Father. Their love for one another was always perfect, and always will be. If their love ever grew, it would prove that their love was not perfect before it grew. That would prove that God was not complete at some point in the past, which, by logical extension, would disprove His divine claim on two major grounds. First, if He was not complete at some point in the past, He was not God at that time, for God, by definition, is the eternally perfect one. Second, if God ever changed – going from incomplete to complete; from not being God to being God – would constitute a significant, substantial change, which is inconsistent with the essential immutability of the self-existent, unchanging, eternal God.

If God was an arithmetic unity (*not a trinity*), the same problems would exist. He would have had nobody to love prior to creation, which would have made Him incomplete. When He did create, His ability to begin expressing love would have been a substantial change; from unfulfilled and incomplete to fulfilled and complete. Also, such a being would have created out of need; not desire. Any god who is subject to any substantial change is therefore subject to all possible changes, including death. If such a god cannot guarantee its own eternal life, how can it guarantee yours? Simple, it cannot! And this is the fatal flaw in all religious systems whose god is such an arithmetic unity (*i.e. Jehovah's Witnesses; Islam; Jesus Only cults; etc.*).

While it is undeniable that the one true God did not need to create us, it makes sense that the omniscient God would have known how to increase His enjoyment of the love that He already enjoyed perfectly. It makes further sense that the omnipotent God would have put that knowledge into action, which is where you and I come into the picture.

As an infinite being, the Father is able to know the Son and the Holy Spirit completely, and so He is able to love them perfectly. The same is true of the Son and the Holy Spirit. As finite beings, we are not (*and never can be*) capable of knowing the infinite God completely. So, on the one hand, we will never be able to love God perfectly, but, on the other hand, the gift of eternal life means that we will be able to grow in our love for God (*by growing in our knowledge*

of God) forever. As our love for God grows, the pleasure He receives from our love grows. As a result, God gets to enjoy the pleasure of perfect love within the Godhead, He gets to enjoy the pleasure of ever increasing love from us, and he gets to enjoy them both forever!

### *Salvation is Not Just an Invitation to Heaven*

Salvation is the uniting of God with an individual human being, and the cultivating of a loving relationship between them. If you are not after that, you are not a disciple of Jesus Christ, no matter how religious you are, how many good works you do, how many prayers you pray, or how regularly you attend religious meetings. If you have become a Christian, “just in case it ends up being the truth,” you have not really become a Christian at all. If all you want from being a Christian is to avoid eternal damnation, you should know most assuredly that you are still on your way to hell.

While there are so many ways that we are different from God, there is one way that we are very much the same – God wants us to love Him for Him; not for what we can get from Him. He wants us to love Him more than we love His rewards. Like us, God wants to be loved for who He is. That is what the salvation He purchased for us was designed to produce, and He does not allow it to produce anything else.

The promise of eternal life is not a *pie in the sky, by and by, when I die* kind of thing. Eternal life speaks not only of duration, but also of quality. Receiving eternal life changes us. It puts us in a position to begin enjoying the pleasures of God’s perfect love for us, and to begin enjoying the pleasures of our ever increasing love for God. How do you know if you have truly been saved? Simple. Are you enjoying the pleasure of God’s perfect love for you? Are you enjoying the pleasure of your ever increasing love for God? It is what we were created for in the beginning; it is what we lost when we sinned in the garden; and it is what Jesus died on the cross to buy back for us.

And it is available to us today. We do not have to wait for it any longer. Jesus wants us to have life, and that more abundantly, and He wants us to start enjoying it right now! So, if you are not enjoying eternal life now, what in the world are you waiting for? One famous definition of insanity is continuing to do the same things, and expecting different results. If it’s time for a change, make the change now.

### *Free Will is Forever*

Since free will is an essential component of love, and we were created to love God forever, it is undeniably, unavoidably certain that we will possess free will forever. We will always, throughout all eternity future, possess the constitutional ability to reject God. But there is something else that will continue throughout eternity future; the prophetic revelation that those of us who have given our lives to God never will, in fact, reject Him. As the two essential attributes of the eternal life God freely offers to us all through Jesus Christ, free will and eternal security will both endure forever.

## *In Conclusion*

In order to enjoy life, and that more abundantly, one must first have life. You cannot enjoy all that Jesus has for you if you are still in sinful rebellion against Him. Neither can you enjoy all that Jesus has for you if you are still in the clutches of deception. So, before we move on, I recommend that you carefully evaluate your position. If you have already been saved, the process will strengthen your faith. If you have not, it will save you the failure that will ensue if you try to enjoy more abundantly something you do not even have in the first place. In either case, such self-examinations are commanded by God, so swallow your pride, work the process, and let the chips fall where they may.

## CHAPTER TWO

# *Foundational Prayer*

## *The Key to the More Abundant Life*

*The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

*John 10:10*

While most professing Christians have no difficulty believing that they have received eternal life (*been saved, been born again, etc.*), few can honestly say that they enjoy the more abundant life that Jesus came to give us. I couldn't say I enjoyed life more abundantly during my first nineteen years as a believer! I was beaten, battered, bruised, starved, and ready to die. The blazing fire that Jesus had ignited in my soul when I got saved had all but gone out. But God was faithful. He didn't leave me for dead, and He isn't going to leave you for dead, either. If you want the more abundant life that Jesus came to give us, keep reading.

### *An Analogy*

Think of salvation as a platform that God sets us on when we get saved. We are no longer in sin, but we are not far from it. Think of the more abundant life as a second platform high above the first one. Every good work takes a certain amount of energy, and brings us half our current distance to the second platform (*so, there will always be a gap*). Also, we start every new day on the first platform (*losing all the previous day's progress*).

Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, and because the experience of having received new life is so fresh, we, as brand new believers, are highly motivated (*and for a time, supernaturally energized*) to do good works. Doing good works enables us to perceive the reality of the second platform (*the more abundant life*), and the reality of the unbounded pleasures that await us there. Eventually, God stops supernaturally energizing us, fatigue overwhelms us, and we fall to the ground in total exhaustion.

After a rest, our desire for the more abundant life drives us to resume our good works. We get close to the second platform again, and our desire grows proportionally. Fatigue overwhelms us again, and we find ourselves totally exhausted again. Eventually, all hope of ever enjoying the more abundant life dissolves away. We lie there helpless until God comes, in the fullness of time, and shows us the way. More often than not, we lie there until everything in our lives has either fallen apart, or is on the verge of doing so.

### *The Process*

*See now that I, even I, am he, and there is no god with me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand.*

*Deuteronomy 32:39*

God is a wonderful Father who gives us exactly what we need, even if it hurts us a little bit (*Romans 8:18*) for a very short time (*80 years is what percent of eternity?*) (*James 4:14*). God brings us through this painful process so that He can bring us close enough to Himself to protect us from being destroyed by the pride that the more abundant life would otherwise produce in us.

*The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.*

*Psalms 34:18*

These passages of scripture make a lot more sense to me now that I understand this process:

*The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.*

*Psalms 51:17*

*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.*

*Matthew 5:3-4*

*But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.*

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

*Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.*

*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.*

*James 4:6-10*

Of course, God would prefer if we got close to Him through prayer instead, but we have a natural aversion to prayer (*we hate it!*), and we are incredibly stubborn (*I resisted for 19 years!*). So, if you would like to enter into the more abundant life Jesus came to give us, with as little suffering as possible, establish a solid habit of Foundational Prayer right away, and guard it with your life.

### *The More Abundant Life*

Life on the second platform is characterized by victory and success in areas where believers have always experienced failure and defeat. Things like stress, depression, addictions, nervous habits, and sinful strongholds have no place in the more abundant life. Because they are no longer needed to reveal the abundant life to us, God can use our good works to bring others to Christ, and to show them how to have life transforming relationship with the Father.

*After these things the word of the LORD came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.*

*Genesis 15:1*

As unbelievable as it may seem from where you are right now, the greatest benefit of the more abundant life is the quality of relationship with God that is available to us there. I will not take any time trying to describe it. Suffice it to say that, to me, God himself has truly become my exceeding great reward. But don't take my word for it. Taste and see for yourself!

*O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusted in him.  
Psalms 34:8*

### *A Few Essential Definitions*

Prayer – Study the original languages all you want. Prayer simply means talking to God. It is verbal worship. It is intercession (*asking God for things for other people*), supplication (*asking God for things for yourself*), and the Hebrew word even includes the idea of a hymn. So, if you feel like singing your prayers to God, you go right ahead, and don't let anybody stop you.

Christian Prayer – Prayer that God listens to. Prayer offered by a person who has believed on Jesus, repented of their sin, and given their entire life over to the absolute Lordship of Jesus Christ. Prayer offered by a person who will obey whatever God tells him, or her, to do, no matter what it may be.

Foundational Prayer – Diligent, disciplined, daily, prioritized, Christian prayer.

Sporadic Prayer – All Christian prayer that does not constitute Foundational Prayer.

### *How to Get Started with Foundational Prayer*

1. Make the decision right now that you are going to start your day tomorrow with Foundational Prayer.

If you do not decide to start right away, you may never start. All the devil has to do to steal a lifetime of powerful prayer from you is to rob you of just one day. Do not give him this victory in your life.

2. Determine what your Foundational Prayer time is going to start out looking like.

It may be structured (*using a list, or a model like the Lord's Prayer*), or unstructured (*simply saying whatever comes into your head*), or some combination of them both. It can be reclining, kneeling, walking, or sitting in a bathtub. As long as you are open to making any changes that the Lord wants to make, you can start out with anything, and trust that God will work with you to develop the Foundational Prayer time that is perfect for you.

3. Establish a point of termination that constitutes the conclusion of your foundational prayer time.

I ask people all the time if they think they pray enough. They always say no. When I ask them how they know they do not pray enough, those who don't go blank usually tell me that they could pray more. Then I tell them that they did not answer my question. I do not do this to torment them. I do it to show them the total irrationality of saying that they do not pray enough when they cannot honestly say what constitutes praying enough. Establishing a point of termination strips the devil of this weapon. You do not have to stop when you reach your point of termination (*feel free to pray more than enough whenever it suits you!*), but you must determine that you will never stop before you reach it.

### *Attributes of Foundational Prayer Explained*

Diligent – Determining what your Foundational Prayer time will start out looking like is the first part of the process of spiritual due diligence. Studying the subject of prayer throughout the remainder of your life continues this process. When the introduction of further light, or the leading of the Holy Spirit, indicates the need for a change, make the needed change immediately.

Disciplined – Making yourself do what you determined to do whether you feel like it or not at the time. It means always entering into Foundational Prayer when you are supposed to, and never stopping before you reach your point of termination.

Daily – This means every day. Weekends and holidays are not exceptions. Vacations are not exceptions. There are no exceptions.

Prioritized – This means that Foundational Prayer is done before work and play. You do not need to get legalistic about things like brushing your teeth or eating breakfast. But it is vital that you always pray before going to work, or entering into the recreational activities of a day off.

### *Mercy Over Sacrifice*

It is important to be fully committed to obeying God in Foundational Prayer, but it is never more important than loving your neighbor. If you forget to set your alarm clock, you may have to decide what is more important to you; Foundational Prayer, or getting to work on time. But if you have to decide between Foundational Prayer and taking your injured friend to the hospital, you are a Pharisee in need of some serious repentance.

### *Freedom Over Form*

When I say you should establish what your Foundational Prayer time will look like, I do not assume that it will look the same every day. We are not to take weekends off, but we may have liberty from the Lord to sleep in. If I get up at six in the morning during the week, but I sleep in until ten on Saturday, as long as I pray before I play, I am A OK.

Be aware that God reserves the right to do whatever He wants. I typically pray from a list, but God may tell me to put it away and engage in unstructured prayer. It may be just for that day, and it might be a radical, permanent change. Do yourself a favor now. Do not allow yourself to get too comfortable with any style of prayer. That is the stuff that idols are made of.

### *Why We Were Created*

God is the eternal, unchanging, self-existent being. By definition, a perfect being cannot need anything, so His choice to create must have been desire based, not need based. The members of the Godhead have always loved one another perfectly, and have always enjoyed the pleasure of that perfect love. As such, God would not need to create in order to be fulfilled in this area. But it also makes sense that He would desire to increase His enjoyment of the pleasure of love. That is where we come in.

As sentient beings we can know God truly, but as finite beings we cannot know Him exhaustively. As free will beings we are capable of loving God, which we do in direct proportion to our knowledge of God. Therefore, giving us the gift of eternal life means that God gets to eternally enjoy the pleasure of perfect love within the Godhead, and He gets to eternally enjoy the pleasure of ever increasing love with us. We get to eternally enjoy perfect love from God, and we get to eternally enjoy ever increasing love for God. This is why we were created.

*Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.*

*Revelation 4:11*

What we believe affects what we do. If we believe that we were created to effect the infinite increase of God's pleasure in love forever, then prayer (*how we express love to God directly*) is our primary task. Evangelism and discipleship (*how we express love to God indirectly by introducing others to Him, and helping them grow in their love for Him*) are definitely next in line. Everything we do in life has value only to the degree that they help us to fulfill one or more of these three tasks. And these three tasks have value only to the degree that they are calculated to increase God's pleasure in love forever.

### *Common Attacks that Kill or Hinder Foundational Prayer*

1. Knowing that God is right there listening to us when we pray does not change the fact that we appear to be talking out loud to no one, and the enemy makes us feel stupid and foolish for doing so. The only way to combat this is to truly stop caring what people think about us. The sooner we start acting like God's opinion is the only one that matters, the better off we will be.

2. The enemy plants the following question in our minds: If God knows what I need before I ask Him, why do I need to pray? There are two problems with this question:
  - a. Prayer is not just about getting things from God (*for ourselves, or for others*). People need to stop acting like God is nothing more than a great big vending machine in the sky. God wants us to share our hearts with Him, and He has things that He would like to share with us.
  - b. We need to stop thinking about prayer as something that we *need* to do. People spend time with those they love because they *want* to, and God is no exception.
3. Fear. We have a mental picture of God (*placed into our heads by the enemy*) sitting on His throne with a great big hammer in His hand just waiting for us to mess up so He can blast us. If we would start spending regular, quality time with God, we would begin to learn that He is not like that. Of course, if God really was like that, you would not be reading this right now, because we would all have been blasted years ago!
4. Unbelief. We feel too guilty to approach God because we do not really believe that God has truly forgiven us. We say that we do, but it is mere lip service. We know that it has to be true. We know that the Bible says it is true. But, deep down where it matters, we do not really believe it is true. (*Of course, if we harbor secret sin in our hearts, we really are not forgiven, and our aversion to getting close to God in prayer is well justified. If this is the case, repent, ask forgiveness, and move on!*)
5. The enemy introduces the idea that offering the same prayers to God day after day is a violation of Jesus' teaching against the use of vain repetitions in prayer. There is a difference, however, between vain repetitions and holy repetitions. If all repetitions in prayer were vain, Jesus would not have specified what kind of repetitions to avoid. Vain repetitions speak of the heathen practice of saying a lot of words over and over to get their god's attention. We have our omnipresent God's attention before we even start speaking. I don't know the fullness of why God wants us to offer petitions more than once, but the Bible makes it clear that he does. "Give us this day our daily bread," is obviously a petition to be repeated on a daily basis, and so, by extension, the whole model prayer Jesus gave for us to follow should probably be followed on a daily basis. Also, a better rendering of the exhortation to, "ask and ye shall receive," would be to "ask and keep on asking, and ye shall receive."
6. The enemy tells us that our prayers are ineffective because we are not seeing any results. But the purpose of prayer is not to get results. The purpose of prayer is to make God happy. The sooner you grasp this fact, the sooner your life will get dramatically better.
7. The enemy tells people that a disciplined approach to prayer cheapens prayer. To see the stupidity of this argument, simply ask yourself if the same, disciplined approach to other activities cheapens them. (*i.e. going to work, eating meals, church attendance, tithing, etc.*)

## *How Foundational Prayer Blesses God*

1. God, like any good father, is blessed when He sees that His children are blessed.

Foundational Prayer strengthens our righteous desires, weakens our sinful desires, cultivates the fruit of the Spirit in us, and continually fills and refills us with the Holy Spirit. A soul filled with the Holy Spirit conducts the voice of God clearly, and muffles the voice of the enemy. It strengthens the lobbying efforts of righteous desires, and weakens the lobbying efforts of sinful desires, resulting in less sinful choices and more righteous choices. Righteous choices produce acts of worship. Since worship is a tool that naturally makes people progressively more like the object or individual worshipped, Foundational Prayer ultimately makes us more and more like God (*i.e. happy, healthy, holy, complete, loving, wise, well adjusted, etc.*), and it blesses God to see us being so blessed.

2. God enjoys our company, and is blessed when we choose to spend time with Him in prayer. Especially when we spend time with Him in Foundational Prayer!

True friends are not those who like being around you when all is well. True friends are those who do not run and hide when there is work to be done, or needs to be met. The old cliché is so true: A friend in need is a friend indeed. Praying when you feel like (*sporadic prayer*) it is like hanging out with a friend when all is well. Choosing to regularly spend time with God in prayer, even when you do not particularly feel like it (*foundational prayer*), is like driving across town in the middle of the night to watch your friend's kids because he has to take his wife to the hospital. Being a friend in need sweetens every aspect of a friendship.

### *Foundational Prayer is Just the First Step*

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;*

*Ephesians 6:18*

Just as “getting saved” is only the first step in the three phase process of salvation, we have discovered that foundational prayer is just the first step in a powerful life of prayer. Whatever you do, resist the temptation to think you have arrived (*you will feel like you have!*), and that there are no greater glories ahead. And by all means, resist the temptation to religionate\* foundational prayer.

\* Religionate – to take something that God ordained to give life, and turn it into a legalistic, life sucking instrument of death.

Let me give you a loving warning before moving on to the next chapter. If you are unwilling to establish foundational prayer, either 1) you are not saved, or 2) you are on your way to being totally crushed by God.

### CHAPTER THREE

# *Victory and Freedom*

## *The Fruits of the More Abundant Life*

The three greatest fruits of the more abundant life are 1) the direct experience of relationship with God, who alone is our exceeding great reward (*Genesis 15:1*), 2) the availability of total and permanent freedom from all of the afflictions of the soul here in this world, and 3) the promise that we will enjoy final and permanent deliverance from the experience of physical infirmities forever in heaven. Did you notice how perfectly the three fruits correspond to the three phases of salvation (*i.e. from the guilt and penalty of sin, from the power of sin, and from the very presence of sin*)?

I have already dealt with the glorious pleasures available to us through the direct experience of a dynamic relationship with God cultivated by a life built on foundational prayer. The twofold purpose of this chapter is to show you 1) that you can be made totally and permanently free, right here and now, from all of the afflictions of the soul (*i.e. bondage to things like depression, addictions, destructive behaviors, and annoying nervous habits*), and 2) how to overcome the hurdles that the enemy places in the way of enjoying such freedom.

### *Full Commitment Yields Full Joy*

*If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.*

*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.*

*John 15:10-11*

Jesus made a clear connection between keeping His commandments, abiding in His love, His joy remaining in us, and our joy being full. There is a vast difference between His joy being in us – a joy that is stronger than any pain or suffering; a joy that acts as a safety net that keeps us from falling into total despair, no matter what the world may throw at us – and the joy we can experience through the more pleasant situations and circumstances of life in this world.

*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.*

*And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.*

*I John 1:3-4*

According to John, true fellowship with the Father is a present experience that makes our joy full. As a fruit of the Holy Spirit (*Gal 5:22*), our experience of joy is directly proportional to how filled with the Holy Spirit we are. If we grieve the Holy Spirit, our joy diminishes. So, not only do we have access to the quality of joy that Jesus experiences, we have the ability to

increase our enjoyment of this joy through greater submission, and obedience, to the will of God in our lives.

### *Grieving the Holy Spirit Kills Our Joy*

*And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.  
Ephesians 4:30*

This verse makes two things very plain: 1) we can grieve the Spirit of God, but 2) such grieving does not nullify the fact that we are sealed unto the day of redemption. Grieving the Holy Spirit does not unseal us, so to say (*i.e. cause us to lose our salvation*), but rather, it diminishes our joy. And if you read the whole chapter, you will see that grieving the Holy Spirit happens as a result of our sinful choices. So, if you want your joy to be as full as it can be, you cannot harbor sin in your heart.

This does not apply only to sins that you know about, either. There is a wealth of sin buried deep in the hearts of each and every one of us. While we have already been set free from the guilt and penalty of our sins, we have not been set free from the presence of sin – yet. It still dwells in us (*Romans 7:17, 20*) as a defeated, but not completely inoperative, foe. We are no longer guilty of harboring Sin in our lives, but it is still able to make destructive messes in our hearts. So, when God points out the presence of some sin, we should not think of Him as a police officer arresting us for a crime, but rather as a friend who is willing to help us clean up the mess left behind by someone who has vandalized our house!

### *The Purifying Process of Relationship Building That Sets Us Free*

God is not satisfied to just make us clean and pure. He wants us to know that we are being made clean and pure, and He wants to bless us by including us in the cleaning process. It gives us something that we can spend time doing together with God, because (*as in any friendship*) the process of spending time doing things together is how we get to know God better. God could make us pure and perfect in an instant if our purity and perfection was His ultimate goal. But He is after relationship, and the process of purifying and perfecting us is how He cultivates that relationship.

While there are many sins in our lives that we know about, there are many others that we are completely ignorant of. Sometimes they are buried too deep. Sometimes we have simply forgotten about them. But there are also sins we engage in regularly because we honestly don't know that they are sins! (*This is where we see the value of knowing our Bible!*) But the situation is not hopeless. God has lovingly established mechanisms by which such sins can be clearly illuminated.

Some sins are identified by their outward expressions. The sin of hatred, for example, is seen very clearly by the hateful acts it produces. There are other sins, however, that are not so clearly identified by their outward expressions. Unforgiveness and bitterness against someone who sinned against you – someone you are no longer in contact with; someone who died years ago;

someone you simply never think about anymore – may still be festering in your heart; silently eating away at your soul, completely unnoticed.

### *How the Process Starts*

God's first step in the process of elimination of a sin is the illumination of the sin. You will never take action against something you do not even know exists. One way or another God will draw your attention to the sin, and He will impress upon you the necessity of forsaking it. Perhaps you will be reading a Bible verse that deals with the subject, and God brings the sin to your remembrance. Perhaps you will see someone else commit the sin, and it will spark your memory of your own experience committing that sin. There is virtually no limit to the methods God might use to reveal the presence of a sin to you.

### *How the Process Intensifies*

Forsaking any sin is a terrible, painful blow to our pride. Our natural response is to harbor a sin until keeping it becomes more painful than forsaking it. So, when we refuse to listen to the voice of God, He takes things up a notch. He combines the illumination of your sin with threats of hellfire and damnation. If that does not turn the heat up high enough to get us to let go, situations and circumstances will be orchestrated to bring any number of possible experiences of pain and suffering (*physical, emotional, financial, etc.*) into our lives.

### *How Far God Will Go*

Eventually we will yield, or God will have to take even more drastic measures. He will remove His presence from us for a period of time. When this happens, we lose all power to resist sin, and end up falling back into a lot of the old sinful behaviors God has previously delivered us from. Only now, we dive deeper than we have ever been before, and enter into new areas of sin that we never thought we would find ourselves in. We will do all of this knowing the truth (*wishing we didn't!*), and having no ability to repent until God sees fit to draw us back to Himself.

When He does, He brings us right back to the place we were at before, and invites us to deal with the sin we refused to forsake before. Hopefully, we see that harboring the sin results in more pain than is required to forsake it. But why does God do this? Why would God allow so much suffering over the cleansing of one little sin? Simple. Because there is no such thing as one little sin, and because nothing we could possibly suffer here is worthy to be compared with the eternal sufferings of the damned, or with the glories that await those who will forsake their sins.

### *God's Ultimate Desire with Respect to the Process*

*He must increase, but I must decrease.*

*John 3:30*

Eventually, when we get to know God better, and grow in our love for Him (*when our love is no longer mere lip service, or parrot talk*), we start forsaking sins, not because keeping them is painful to us personally, but because we see that the barrier they erect between us and God keeps us from enjoying the pleasures of closeness with God. Eventually, we start forsaking sins because we see that the barrier hurts God by keeping Him from enjoying the pleasures of closeness with us. Finally, we get to the point where forsaking sins is just one of the many things we enjoy doing together with God.

It is at this point that we are finally able to do the works that Jesus did, and greater (*John 14:12*), because it is not until this point that we are able to see that all of His works were done from a foundation of seeking to do the Father's will (*John 5:30*), and of doing only what He saw the Father do (*John 5:19*). It is here that we finally see that, in addition to teaching, healing, and casting out devils, the works of Jesus included praying, suffering, and dying on the cross. And it is at this point that we are willing to take the good with the bad in order to do the works that Jesus did, and greater. It is at this point that we have finally become so heavenly minded that we can begin to be some earthly good.

### *The Most Destructive Sin*

The most destructive sin is not the one that wreaks the most havoc in our lives economically, socially, or physically; it is the one that goes unnoticed, doing direct damage to our immortal soul, for the longest period of time. Due to our unique experiences, circumstances, and weaknesses, different sins will be able to hide longer in different people. A sin that has little effect on one person can rip another person to shreds.

Some sins hide behind prevailing social trends. In America, for example, gluttony is not even viewed as a sin anymore. You will almost never hear a word preached against it in our churches. Greed calls itself good stewardship; gossip a prayer request. And far too many harbor spiritual pride and hatred behind the banner of earnestly contending for the faith.

Other sins hide behind the new names given to them by the wizards of, "science falsely so called" (*I Tim 6:20*), from the Greek τῆς ψευδωνύμου γνώσεως, which literally means, "the erroneously, deceitfully, or wickedly called knowledge." I am referring to the way the medical community labels things like depression, addiction, and behavior problems as diseases and syndromes. As long as people think they are dealing with a medical problem – which is exactly what the highly paid, highly respected professionals (*doctors, nurses, psychiatrists, counselors, and teachers*) are telling them – they will look no further for answers.

### *The Root of All Sins*

*Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?  
Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom  
he hath sent.*

*John 6:28-29*

This verse makes it clear that believing on Jesus is the only work (*singular*) that we can do to work the works (*plural*) of God, which in turn shows us that every good work in particular is really an act of faith in Jesus Christ in general. Evangelism, for example, is a work of God because it is an outward expression of our faith in the promise that our evangelistic efforts will result in the salvation of sinful souls. Prayer is a work of God because it is an outward expression of our faith that God hears us, and that He will do something favorable for us in response.

If every good work is truly only an expression of our faith, every sinful work must necessarily be an expression of our unbelief. As lost sinners, we avoid coming into any meaningful contact with God because we do not believe He wants us to enjoy life. As those who have come to Christ for salvation, we do not forsake this present world completely because we do not believe that Jesus will satisfy us. In one way or another, every sin we commit is rooted in our unbelief of the existence, the goodness, or the perfect love of God.

One of the fruits of unbelief is a general sense that all is not well. Left unchecked, that sense will be followed by feelings of isolation, a sense of despair, and a sense of a total lack of purpose; collectively referred to as depression. Taken individually, or collectively, the choice to entertain such feelings constitutes a sinful expression of unbelief. Contrary to popular opinion, depression is not a disease that can be treated with drugs or therapy, but rather a sinful expression of unbelief that can only be successfully cured with repentance and forgiveness.

I have personally spent more years than I care to remember suffering the tormenting ravages of some of the most severe depression imaginable. I am not a self-righteous, Jonny come lately pointing a condemning finger at people who are suffering what I suffered. I am not trying to make people feel worse by saying that their suffering is their own fault. I am simply doing what the religious social clubs have failed to do. I am giving you the truth that can make you free, immediately and permanently, from all the tormenting effects of all the afflictions of the soul.

### *The Commandment to Stay Free*

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*James 4:7*

We have seen that freedom is available to believers, but verses like this one shed a different light on the subject. Freedom is not just a blessing to be enjoyed; it is a commandment to be obeyed. Jesus does not ask us to submit ourselves to God, and He does not ask us to resist the devil. They are both commandments, obedience to which results in the devil fleeing from us. This driving away of the devil is intimately connected to us being made free from the afflictions of our soul.

*If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.*

*John 8:36*

Being able to know the exact moment that Jesus has made us free of something is absolutely necessary, because it is at that exact moment that we become morally obliged to begin obeying

the commandment to be free indeed. We obey it by fighting tooth and nail, in the power of God, against every attempt of the enemy to bring us back into bondage to anything that Jesus has made us free of. So, how do we know the exact moment?

*Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.*

*John 16:24*

The moment you ask to be made free is the moment Jesus makes you free.

*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.*

*I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.*

*John 15:4-5*

And this is the key to our ability to do anything; abiding in Jesus Christ. We abide in Him by spending time with Him in prayer. We abide in Him by reading the book He wrote: The Bible. We abide in Him by doing whatever He wants us to do. But this requires a complete surrender of our will to God. Total surrender is not a high plateau reserved for the greatest of saints. Actually, it is the decision required to enter into the kingdom of God in the first place. If you have never made that decision, it is not the more abundant life you should be seeking, but life itself.

*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children.*

*Hosea 4:6*

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

*John 8:32*

*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*

*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*

*And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*

*Matthew 7:21-23*

*I never knew you.* Strong words from the lips of Him who said, *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.* (John 10:14) This is why foundational prayer is so important. It builds a solid foundation upon which a life of prayer can be built, and it is through such a life of prayer that we get to know Jesus – and if we do not know Jesus, we do not get into heaven.

*Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

*John 15:16*

In order for our joy to be full, we must be made free, and we must remain free. It is not enough for us to bring forth fruit only to let it die on the vine; our fruit must remain. We are commanded to do the things that will make us free. When we have been made free, we are commanded to be free indeed. As strange as it may sound to our ears, it is a sin to continue suffering the afflictions of the soul.

### *How Do We Obey the Commandment to Stay Free?*

As I said before, we obey it by fighting tooth and nail, in the power of God, against every attempt of the enemy to bring us back into bondage to anything that Jesus has made us free of. But what does that look like? What constitutes fighting tooth and nail against the enemies attempts to bring us back into bondage? (*I know that some of you are wondering!*)

#### Make it a Subject of Prayer

During your foundational prayer time, and anytime during the day that you feel like it, thank God for making you free from (*whatever it was*), and ask Him to do whatever it takes to cause you to obey His commandment to stay free.

My foundational prayer time is structured. I utilize a printed list that follows the Lord's model prayer. When I get to the heading, Lead Us Not Into Temptation, I offer up the following petitions:

- ~ Cause us to stop leading ourselves, and each other, into temptation. (Rom 14:13; I Cor 8:9)
- ~ Give us perception to see temptation (Rom 13:14)
- ~ Give us the power and will to resist temptation (I Cor 10:13)
- ~ Give us the humility to repent quickly when we give in to temptation.
- ~ Cause us to walk in the Spirit, so we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (Gal 5:16)
- ~ Cause us to submit ourselves to You, and resist the devil. (Jas 4:7)

I share this with you to give you an idea of how your prayer time can help you stay free from things that Jesus has made you free from. You are free to use it or alter it to your heart's content.

#### Let Someone Know

*Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.*

*James 5:16*

There is unimaginable power in letting someone know that you are struggling with a sin. They can pray for you. They can hold you accountable. And knowing that they may ask you about it at any time can be the straw that keeps the camel's back from breaking in the midst of powerful

temptation. But make sure that the person you tell is a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the wrong hands, the power you want them to use for good can just as easily be used to rip you to shreds.

### Make No Provision to Fall Back into Bondage

*But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*

*Romans 13:14*

If, for example, you have been made free from cigarette smoking, do not carry a pack of cigarettes around with you. Do not go to the break area at work where people are smoking. Tell your friends that you quit smoking, and ask them not to let you bum cigarettes from them when you are tempted to smoke, no matter how desperate you get. Different bondages involve different provisions, so you are going to have to identify what they are with respect to your particular situation.

People only make such provisions because they are shocked and overwhelmed by the power of temptation. The more you resist temptation, the stronger it grows, until one of you breaks. Unfortunately, we habitually break first, and every time we do, the lie that the power of temptation never breaks is strengthened. That lie strengthens another lie; that we can give in to temptation, or be crushed to death by it. If we are ever going to stay free from the afflictions of the soul, it is imperative that we start trusting the Word of God more than we trust our fears.

*There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

*1 Corinthians 10:13*

### Rebuke the Devil at Every Temptation

*Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*

*James 4:7*

Every time you are tempted to do something that will bring you back into a bondage that Jesus has made you free from, you have a choice to make; resist the devil, or bow down to him. Of course, if you have not submitted yourself to God first – if you are not a completely sold out disciple of Jesus Christ – you will fail in your attempt to resist the devil, and instead of fleeing from you, he will stick around, bring you into worse bondage than you were in before, and torment you mercilessly until you decide to submit yourself to God the way you should.

When you are faced with a temptation, thank God for setting you free, ask Him to give you power against the enemy, rebuke the devil that is tempting you, and move on as if nothing happened. But you have to do it as soon as the temptation hits, and you have to do it every time, no matter where you are, or what you are doing. If you do not do it because it feels strange, or is inconvenient, you do not place a high enough value on your freedom. If you do not do it because

you are ashamed or embarrassed, you have far more important things to worry about than your freedom.

*Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.*

*Mark 8:38*

Many believers point to Jude 1:9 and Zechariah 3:2 when they say that we should not rebuke demons directly, and there is integrity in their exhortation. If those were the only verses on the subject, their case would be rock solid. But Jesus, during his earthly ministry, rebuked many devils directly to drive them out of people (*Mark 1:25; Mark 9:25-27; Luke 4:35*), to effect physical healings (*Matthew 17:18*), and in direct connection with a physical healings (*Luke 9:42*). It is also worth noting that He stopped a storm at sea by rebuking it (*Matthew 8:26; Mark 4:39; Luke 8:24*), and that He healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever by rebuking it (*Luke 4:38-39*).

The revelation that Jesus is to be our example in all things, mixed with His practice of directly rebuking demons, constitutes clear instruction that we are to do likewise. That Jesus said we would do the works He did, and greater, constitutes a clear revelation that we are authorized to do likewise. If we are instructed, and authorized, to directly rebuke demons, who do you think would be likely to come against the practice of doing so? Exactly. The demons themselves. I cannot say for sure what rebuking them accomplishes, but if Jesus did it, and if the demons do not want us doing it, it must accomplish something.

*And he asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.*

*Mark 5:9*

It is more likely that Jesus was directing His question to the man; not the demons inside the man. That Jesus did not need to know the demon's name is seen clearly by the fact that He never asked any other demon's for their names, and that He did not use the name Legion to cast these demons out. When you rebuke a demon, feel free to identify it by its actions (i.e. spirit of affliction, smoking demon, lust, etc.), if you feel any need to identify it at all. You can simply say, "I rebuke you in Jesus' name," if you want to. Jesus knows who you are rebuking, and any effect your rebuke has comes from Him anyway.

When God revealed all this to me, I asked Him to deliver me from fingernail biting, and chose to believe that He had done it right then. I must have rebuked the spirit of fingernail biting at least an average of once a minute for the first two days. The third day was less frequent, and after that the temptation only came on rare occasions. All this after a 40 year habit of uncontrollable fingernail biting that left my fingers in pain a lot of the time. Whenever the enemy tries to tempt me to doubt God in any way, I look at my fingernails, thank God, and laugh at the devil for being so stupid.

## *Why are so Many Believers Still in Bondage?*

*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed;*

*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*

*John 8:31-32*

Freedom is only available to those who are willing to continue in Jesus' word. Freedom is only available to those who are willing to go all the way with Jesus, no matter what it costs. Freedom is only available to those who are His disciples, not in word only, but in deed. Why are so many professing Christians still in bondage? Simple. They love their sin more than they love Jesus. They would rather keep their sins than be made free from the various bondages that enslave them. They are unwilling to let go of this world in order to grab hold of Jesus with both hands.

*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.*

*1 John 2:15*

When new believers come into the churches, they are excited. They have been saved, and they know it. They are overwhelmed with the love of God shed abroad in their hearts. They are on fire for God. They want to take the world by storm, turning it upside down for Jesus. They want to win souls for Christ, addicting themselves to the ministry of the saints. And they want to walk in absolute victory over sin, and in unmitigated freedom from all of its debilitating effects.

As they read their Bibles, their excitement grows. And it keeps on growing until the compromisers in the church around them cannot take it any longer. Instead of guiding the young converts in the way they should go, they do their best to trip them up. Instead of fanning the flames that are burning in their newly converted hearts, they throw the wet blanket of discouragement on them to put the fire out. They play the part of the lawyers in the following verse:

*Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.*

*Luke 11:52*

When new believers begin to run after Jesus, in hot pursuit after a life of holiness, they are a glaring rebuke to the carnal, compromising, sin harboring "Christians" that make up the majority of most of the religious social clubs falsely calling themselves churches in America today. If you choose to capitalize on the mistakes new believers make in order to trip them up (*to offend them*), instead of repenting at the well deserved rebuke of God, you are in grave danger.

*But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.*

*Matthew 18:6*

Those of you who are willing to do whatever it takes to be free from the afflictions of the soul, there are two lies of the devil (*widely believed by those in the churches*) that were designed to keep you from being made free. They must be identified, understood, and fully rejected. The first lie has been touched upon already; that things like depression and addiction are diseases for which there is no cure, but that we can safely rely on drugs, counselors, and 12 step programs for relief. The second lie is the faith killing lie that physical healing has been made available to us through the atonement.

### *Broken Cisterns*

*For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.*

*Jeremiah 2:13*

God has broken Sin's power, so it cannot keep us bound in the afflictions of the soul if we do not allow it. We can be made totally free – be completely healed – from all the afflictions of the soul. All we have to do is 1) identify any root sins, 2) repent of them, 3) ask God to forgive us, 4) ask God to make us totally free of the afflictions that they produced and supported, 5) choose to believe that God did forgive us and make us free, 6) determine to obey, with the power God has given us to do so, the commandment of Jesus to be free indeed.

Many in the churches today say that such healing is not available. They tell us that we are suffering from an incurable medical condition and direct us to counselors and 12 step programs for relief. When they do successfully get a person sober, drug free, or emotionally functional, without removing the underlying root of sin that gave rise to the affliction in the first place, the person is actually worse off than they were before. The root will continue to grow in obscurity until it is powerful enough to rip the person out of *recovery*, or until it finds a more socially acceptable way to express itself. In either case, the person is never made free, and the doors to even greater destruction remain wide open as the sin, (*unrepented of and out of sight*) is allowed to eat away at the person's soul.

It is bad enough that so many believers, who are supposed to love the Truth, have swallowed such lies. What is worse is that most, if not all, of the churches have bowed down to them. We have outdone our Old Testament brethren by committing three evils. Not only do we reject the fountain of living waters, and chase after the broken cisterns of psychological counseling and 12 step programs – we have actually had the audacity to Christianize the broken cisterns themselves! We offer Christian counseling, and Biblically based 12 step programs! What's next? Christian strip clubs? Sanctified swinging? Bible based brothels? Enough is enough! It is time for those who name the name of Christ to start acting like it.

### *The Faith Killing Lie*

The other lie that keeps so many people bound to the afflictions of the soul is the false teaching that physical healing is in the atonement; a benefit that can be appropriated by faith the same way that salvation and forgiveness are. Faith to be saved would necessarily work the same way as faith to be physically healed. Since all who come to Christ for salvation are saved

immediately, and all who ask for forgiveness are forgiven immediately, if this doctrine were true, everyone who has ever asked God for a physical healing would have been healed immediately. This is not the testimony of the Bible (*Acts 9:36-37; Php 2:25-30; 1 Tim 5:23; 2 Tim 4:20*), and it is not the testimony of anyone who has eyes to see. This doctrine is a lie from the pit of hell.

*But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*  
*Isaiah 53:5*

This is the foundational proof text that is used to support the lie that healing is in the atonement.

*Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.*  
*1 Peter 2:24*

And this is the verse that exposes the lie. Isaiah speaks of the stripes of Jesus as the instrument by which our healing would be effected, and Peter speaks of the stripes of Jesus as the instrument by which our healing was effected. The prophecy has been fulfilled. Those of us who have come to Christ for salvation have been healed (*past tense*) by the stripes of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The inspired statement of what has happened in the past is not a promise of what can happen now, and no amount of twisting can change that fact.

I believe that the context of the passages in question, along with the entire teaching of the Bible, both New and Old Testaments, make it clear that the healing procured for us by the stripes of Jesus was a spiritual healing from sin, and the healing of the separation from God that our sin produced.

The healing here referred to, is spiritual healing, or healing from sin.  
– Albert Barnes Notes on the Bible

Healed - By his sufferings we are saved from our sins.  
– John Wesley's Explanatory Notes

[2.] Hereby we have healing; for by his stripes we are healed. Sin is not only a crime, for which we were condemned to die and which Christ purchased for us the pardon of, but it is a disease, which tends directly to the death of our souls and which Christ provided for the cure of. By his stripes (that is, the sufferings he underwent) he purchased for us the Spirit and grace of God to mortify our corruptions, which are the distempers of our souls, and to put our souls in a good state of health, that they may be fit to serve God and prepared to enjoy him. And by the doctrine of Christ's cross, and the powerful arguments it furnishes us with against sin, the dominion of sin is broken in us and we are fortified against that which feeds the disease.

– Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

Citing the many times that the gospels say that Jesus healed everyone present does not prove that healing is in the atonement. It doesn't even prove that Jesus always healed everyone He came in

contact with. There was a great multitude of people at the pool of Bethesda seeking physical healing of one kind or another. Jesus only healed one (*John 5:2-9*). Actually, none of the healings of Jesus can be used to prove that healing is in the atonement, because He did them prior to having made the atonement.

Anyone who says that the all powerful God cannot heal today is an idiot, and anyone who says that He does not heal us today is blind. All I am saying is that physical healing is not a guaranteed benefit provided for in the atonement, while the healing of the afflictions of the soul is. We will be perfectly healthy in heaven, but we can be made free from things like depression, addictions, sinful strongholds, destructive behaviors, and annoying nervous habits here and now. Do not allow the lies of man to keep you from enjoying the promises of God.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# *Accurate Diagnosis*

## *How to Help People in the More Abundant Life*

I have already described how you, if you are a true disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, can be made free from all of the afflictions that torment your soul:

1. Identify any and all sins that are at the root of the affliction.
2. Repent of those sins, which means to make a choice to forsake them, and to trust that God will give you the power you need to act on that decision.
3. Ask God to forgive you for having committed those sins.
4. Ask God to make you totally free from the afflictions that those sins produced.
5. Choose to believe that God forgave you, and made you free, the very moment that you asked Him to.
6. Determine that you will, with the power God has given you, fully obey Jesus' commandment to be free indeed.

Applying the solution is simple. The hard part is accurately identifying all of the sinful roots that feed any particular affliction of the soul. The difficulty is intensified by the fact that the same affliction may be fed by different root sins in different people. What worked for one person may not work for another. Also, the various connections between the root sins and the afflictions they feed range from relatively clear to absolutely obscure, the majority leaning in the direction of the latter. The confusing complexities of the human heart are perfectly expressed in the following words:

*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?  
Jeremiah 17:9*

The question at the end of the verse appears to present a hopeless situation. "Who can know it? - It even hides itself from itself; so that its owner does not know it. (*Adam Clark's Commentary on the Bible*) Without the direct assistance of God Himself, the situation of the heart of fallen man is hopeless. Thank God Jeremiah didn't stop there.

*I the LORD search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.  
Jeremiah 17:10*

Our utter inability to know our own deceitful, wicked hearts means that we could never, left to our own devices, accurately complete the first of the six steps listed above. Thank God we have not been left to our own devices! God is more than willing to take us through all the steps that are necessary for Him to make us free, and He is eager for us to ask Him to do just that. I made it clear that we had to identify the sins that produce the afflictions of our soul. I never said we had to do it on our own.

*Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.*

*Jeremiah 33:3*

Mighty things speaks of things that are hidden; things that are inaccessible to us by any means short of the direct revelation of God. And all we have to do to get such revelation from God is to simply ask for it. If you ask God to show you the sinful roots of an affliction of your soul, He will certainly reveal them to you so you can forsake them, and be made free.

*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*

*For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*

*Matthew 7:7-8*

The verb forms used are better understood this way: Ask, and keep on asking, and it shall be given you; seek, and keep on seeking, and ye shall find; knock, and keep on knocking, and it shall be opened unto you: God may not show you every root of every affliction of your soul instantly, but if you keep on pursuing Him, He will certainly come through for you. It is not only important to God that you be made free; it is important to Him that it happen in the fullness of time (*the best time possible*).

*If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.*

*But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.*

*For let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.*

*James 1:5-7*

We are commanded to ask for wisdom, and are warned against doubting the promise that God will grant it. Again, the wisdom may not come instantly. In fact, if God intended to give it to us instantly, there would have been no need for the warning against wavering in our faith.

*...for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

*1 Chronicles 28:9*

If you seek God, He will be found of you. But, again, the seeking can take some time. Rest assured, it will only take the perfect amount of time; not a second longer. God does not delight in the unpleasant feelings waiting produces in us, but He does delight to do everything He does in the best way possible, and that includes timing. But remember, you are either seeking Him, or you have forsaken Him. Never stop seeking Him.

Seeking God for illumination of sinful roots is one of the ways God gets you to start seeking Him just to know Him better. Eventually, you will stop seeking Him for such illumination because

you will stop caring so much about the afflictions of your soul. You will start caring only about getting to know God better. Of course, when that happens, sinful roots start simply shriveling up like the fig tree Jesus cursed. Sometimes God points them out so we can go through the process. Other times He will just kill the sinful root all by Himself – just to say I love you!

### *What About Physical Healing?*

Most of the physical ailments that we suffer (*diseases, deformities, injuries, etc.*) have natural causes. Some have emotional causes. Still others are caused directly by the harboring of sins and the agency of demons.

Demonic – Any physical ailment that is being directly caused by a demon will go away immediately when the demon that is causing it is cast out. This is the only category where dealing with the cause automatically, and instantly, effects the desired result in every case.

Sinful – I heard a testimony once of a woman who had terrible arthritis. She also harbored bitterness and unforgiveness against someone. Nobody ever made the connection until God revealed her sin to her, she repented of it, and was completely healed of the arthritis. Nobody even prayed for her to be physically healed. I have heard many such testimonies.

Emotional – Since we are triune beings (*body, soul, and spirit*), it makes sense that something experienced in one part can have an effect on the other parts. Worry in the soul can produce ulcers. Stress in the soul can produce headaches. I have heard many testimonies of people being healed of the emotional affliction of their soul only to notice a subsequent, and dramatic, improvement of their physical health.

Natural – Many of the physical ailments brought about by natural causes – the result of living in a cursed world – can be cured, healed, or mended by natural means (*drugs, surgeries, etc.*).

Some physical ailments are caused by one thing and exacerbated by another. But, as confusing as it can be, remember, we have access to God, and He has already said that He is more than happy to give us the revelation necessary to do what He wants us to do. And there are times when effecting healings is just what the Great Physician ordered. If grey areas remain, we can still rest in the goodness and mercy of God.

*Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.*

*Philippians 4:6*

God does not do parlor tricks to amuse or amaze us. He only gives us revelation when we need it to accomplish His will. Sometimes it is His will to heal people in answer to our prayers alone. So, if He seems to be frustratingly silent, resist the temptation to be frustrated, and ask God to

help you trust Him. Then, simply ask Him to do what you want Him to do. Making the request does not guarantee that we will get the results that we want, but not making the request does guarantee that we will not get the results that we want (*James 4:2*). Also, the fact that the verse above is treated as a precious promise should never detract from the fact that it is a commandment of God. That means that not asking for the things you want is a sin.

*Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

*Hebrews 4:16*

Not only are we commanded to come to God with our petitions, we are commanded to do so boldly. We are commanded to approach God with the absolute confidence that He will welcome us into His throne room, and that He will gladly hear our request. While He does not promise to grant every petition, He does promise to give us the mercy and grace we need in every situation.

*22 And Jesus answering saith unto them, Have faith in God.*

*23 For verily I say unto you, That whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.*

*24 Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

*Mark 11:22-24*

As you offer your petitions, Jesus exhorts you to have faith in God. He did not say to have faith that God would grant your petition. He simply said to have faith in God. We hear a lot about having faith in the promises of God, but how much better to have faith in the character of God; in the limitless knowledge and power of God; in the grace, mercy, and love of God?

In verse 23, He gave us a way to know which petitions He was going to grant. He said that those who did not doubt, but truly believed that something would come to pass, that was the evidence that it would, in fact, come to pass. Many people believe this means that we can make things come to pass by working up faith, but they do not understand that faith is not something that can be worked up. Hope can be worked up, but hope is not faith.

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:  
*Ephesians 2:8**

The structure of the Greek words used shows us that the word *it* in this verse is speaking of the entire package; the grace, the faith, and the salvation.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.  
*Hebrews 11:1**

Faith is clearly defined as the substance of things hoped for; not the hope itself. Strong hope does not equal faith.

*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.  
Romans 10:17*

The gift of faith – the gift of the substance that transforms hope into faith – is delivered to us by hearing the word (*the rhema, not the logos*) of God. Rhema is the word of God that is spoken directly to you. The word that makes it possible to change hope into faith can be none other than a word from God telling you clearly what God intends to do. Faith is not the act of believing that you will get what you hope for. Faith is the act of believing that God will do what He said He would do. Once God does tell us that He is going to do something, we are accountable to believe that He will, in fact, do it.

Finally, in Mark 11:24, Jesus makes a connection between the things we desire when we pray, and our accountability to believe that God will grant us such things; a connection that David made centuries earlier.

*Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.  
Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.  
Psalms 37:4-5*

As we delight ourselves in the Lord by spending time together with Him in prayer, He gives us the desires of our heart. This does not mean that He looks into our hearts – desperately wicked, and full of iniquity – and gives us what it desires. It means that He places desires into our hearts; desires for the things that He desires. Then, when we know that the desire was given to us by God, we can commit our way (*what we must do in order to bring it to fruition*) to the Lord in faith, and we can truly trust that God will bring it to pass.

### *In Conclusion*

The best way to help people is to find out what God wants you to do in any given situation. The only way to do that is to ask Him. And the only way to be sure you are hearing from Him accurately is to spend a lot of time with Him in prayer. Do you want to be able to accurately diagnose people? Approach the subject the same way, and with the same level of integrity, that Joseph (*Genesis 41:15-16*) and Daniel (*Daniel 2:26-28*) approached the interpretation of dreams.

## CHAPTER FIVE

# *The Static Paradigm*

## *A Major Hindrance to the More Abundant Life*

Whether they have ever tried religion (*thinking they have tried Jesus*) or not, there are some people who will simply never respond to the call of Christ to be saved. They will never be willing to lay down their lives (*give up self rule*) the way a person needs to in order to enter into the intimate, loving, beneficial relationship with God that we were created to enjoy. They offer a lot of criticisms and complaints against Christianity and the Church, but all of their criticisms and complains are nothing but cheap smokescreen designed to justify their sinful rebellion against the Truth, and are therefore not worthy of any serious consideration.

But there are also people who avoid Jesus like the plague because of what they see in the churches, and in the lives of those who claim to be Christians – who would get saved in a heartbeat if it didn't require them to have anything to do with the religious social clubs that litter the landscape. And there are those who have given their lives to Jesus, but who are dying on the vine – not enjoying the more abundant life Jesus came to give us – because of all the abuses they have suffered in the churches at the hands of both the clergy and the laziness. These people also offer a lot of criticisms and complaints, but theirs are rooted in Truth, and must be addressed honestly.

### *There Are Serious Problems*

*And when they found them not, they drew Jason and certain brethren unto the rulers of the city, crying, These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also;*  
*Acts 17:6*

This was the reaction that was elicited by Paul and Silas (*two men!*) preaching to the Jews in Thessalonica. The fact that there is nobody out there *turning the world upside down* today is irrefutable evidence that there are serious problems in the church today. But what if the problems are not just cosmetic? What if the problems are foundational and systemic? What if the problems have affected so much of the church that removing them would destroy it? What if the problems have transformed true churches (*expressions of the body of Christ*) into inert, religious, social clubs (*expressions of the great whore of Babylon*) such that the only viable solution is to abandon them entirely?

I know that believers love their churches, but the question is: Do you love Jesus more? Do you love Him enough to evaluate the evidence, and follow where it leads? Are you willing to prove all things and let the chips fall where they may? You can tell that something may be an idol in your life by the level of rage that rises up in you when anyone even hints at the possibility that Jesus might hate it. Love for the true Church is no excuse to continue clinging to a cheap imitation, no matter how beautiful it is.

## *Conduits of God's Blessings*

There are some blessings that God rains down on humanity in general. He created us; He loves us; and He uses His blessings to woo us. He will not buy our affection, but He will certainly use His blessings to attract our attention. He knows that those who truly taste will see that He is good (*Psalms 34:8*), which is why He lets so many crumbs fall from His table (*Matt 15:21-28*). There are other blessings that God only bestows upon those who have chosen to enter into covenant relationship with Him; those who have chosen to become His children by the Spirit of adoption (*Romans 8:15*).

But there is a third category of blessings; those that are only available through the appropriate use of the constituted means ordained by God for their delivery. Prayer, Bible reading, believers' meetings, evangelism, and discipleship are five of the most significant conduits of such blessings, and the enemy wants to clog them all.

### Prayer

His chief attack has always been against prayer, and it always will be, because prayer is the conduit through which God communicates His power to us; power over all the power of the enemy; so much power that the gates of hell cannot prevail against us as we labor to set the captives free.

### Bible Reading

He attacks Bible reading with a rage and fury almost unparalleled in the history of the world because it is the conduit through which God exposes all of the enemy's weaknesses, and informs us of all our strengths. It tells us how to walk in victory, and how to destroy the works of the devil, just like Jesus did when He was here in the flesh. He has tried to destroy the Bible, pervert the Bible, and anything else he could think of to keep us from reading the Bible. But, like the true Church of the living God, the Bible is an anvil that has worn out many hammers.

The good news about the blessings reserved for those who will read the Bible is God's willingness to circumnavigate Bible reading when circumstances and situations make it impossible for you to get your hands on a Bible. During times of economic ruin, or religious persecution, God can easily substitute direct revelation for Bible reading. But woe unto those who have access to the Bible, yet refuse to read regularly from it.

### Believers' Meetings

The enemy has attacked the believers' meeting by crushing it under the weight of an almost insurmountable pile of religious debris. What started out as disciples gathering together for enjoyable fellowship and mutual edification has turned into a web of ecclesiastical tomfoolery. When we look at the scriptures that give us revelation about the form and function of the believers' meetings, and the structure of the body of Christ itself, we will see that most of the organizations that call themselves Christian Churches are guilty of fraudulent identification.

## Evangelism

The enemy attacks evangelism by playing on our fears. Fear of looking foolish. Fear of falling on our faces. But worst of all is the irrational fear that our presentation of the gospel would do more harm than good. (*What, will our poor presentation send them from hell to hell two?*) We honestly believe that our stumbling attempts can drive people farther from God than they are already, because we do not understand that it is the power of God behind our efforts that effects persuasion unto salvation. We are absolutely incapable of a presentation so bad that it could keep the elect from going to heaven. God does not use our presentation of the gospel to save souls; He uses our obedience. The only thing you can do to keep people from going to heaven is to continue doing nothing.

## Discipleship

The enemy's most successful attack against discipleship is to get Christians to believe they are being disciplined when one of two other things is really happening: either they are being indoctrinated into their groups particular flavor of legalism, or they are being turned into a clone of the human leader of their group.

### *Where Do You Start?*

Opening any conduit of God's blessings is a wedge that God can use to get the ball rolling, but the most powerful wedge by far is the conduit of prayer; especially if you start by establishing a habit of foundational prayer along with a failure-is-not-an-option attitude toward maintaining it.

### *Counterfeits Are Known by Contrast With the Real*

The best way to train someone to detect counterfeit money is to sit them down in a room day in and day out doing nothing but counting real money. When someone tries to pass them a counterfeit bill, alarm bells will go off. They don't have to know how it is fake; all they need to know is that it is not the real thing. The same rule applies to truth.

Jesus Christ is the Truth. The Bible is the true record of the Truth. Saturate yourself with Jesus Christ by spending time alone with Him in prayer; saturate yourself with the Bible by spending time reading from it; and when the enemy offers you a counterfeit of one of the conduits of God's blessings, you may not know how or why, but you will know for sure that it is not the real thing.

Read the New Testament, look around at the churches, and do the math yourself. Life transforming relationship with the Father that allows two men to turn the world upside down verses the same old flesh pleasing song and dance every Sunday morning week in and week out until you become so numb that you don't really care anymore. And the only thing getting turned upside down is the congregation as the money is shaken out of their pockets.

## *Form and Function of Believers' Meetings*

Let me take some time to show you a few passages of scripture that describe some of the characteristics of a believers meeting according to the New Testament. As you read them, think very seriously about three things: 1) do such things happen in your church, 2) would such things be allowed to happen in your church, and 3) would making the changes necessary to bring your church into compliance in these areas require such drastic changes that it would be easier to shut the whole thing down and start over?

*And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:  
Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but  
exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.  
Hebrews 10:24-25*

Let us consider (*to observe fully*) one another. Us means all believers, and so does one another. It does not exhort pastors to consider their flock; it exhorts all of us to consider one another. Then we are all told to exhort one another. And all of this is wrapped around the exhortation not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. We are all to be observing one another, exhorting one another, and provoking one another unto love and good works – and we are all to be doing these things during believers' meetings.

*How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.  
Let all things be done decently and in order.  
1 Corinthians 14:26, 40*

The confusion prevalent in Corinth came about because everyone had something to share at the meetings. The solution was to let all things be done unto edifying; to let all things be done decently and in order. Did you notice that the solution to the chaos was not to limit the ministry to a single paid professional? The solution involved letting all things be done.

*For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.  
1 Corinthians 14:31*

Whether you see prophesying as the exercise of a spiritual gift, or as the inspired preaching of the gospel, this scripture makes it plain that, according to the Holy Spirit, every member present is authorized to prophesy during the meeting, and there is not a word from God saying that they have to clear their contribution to the meeting with anyone in leadership. Also, whatever prophesying is, it is not merely giving a testimony or a praise report. The purpose of prophesying is so that all may learn, and that all may be comforted.

*Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge.  
If any thing be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace.  
For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted.  
And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.  
1 Corinthians 14:29-32*

We have already seen that verse 31 keeps verse 29 from being understood as imposing a limitation on the number of prophets who can speak during a meeting. But after two or three have spoken, we should take a break to allow the others to judge what they have said. This allows errors to be caught quickly, and keeps good words from being buried too deeply.

### *Form and Function of the Church*

The form of the Church is very simple. Jesus is the head, and we are the body. Jesus certainly raises men and women up to lead His people by their mature example, but He is the one and only head in His Church. Anything that has more than one head is a monster.

Another important thing to understand is the distinction between the Church and believers' meetings; a distinction that has been blurred for centuries. The Church is the assembled believers, and the believers' meeting is what they do when they assemble together.

When you take something that started out as a church – a local expression of the body of Christ – and infect it with a human clergy, a list of rules, a doctrinal statement, and a bunch of programs, what you end up with is a lifeless machine that looks like a Church; a kind of religious Frankenstein.

Neither the church, nor its meetings, are supposed to be the foundation, or the center, of Christian living. Our individual relationship with God (*through prayer, and a life of individual obedience*) is the foundation and center of Christian living. Meetings are an important corporate expression of Christian living, but they must always be understood as secondary. They rest on the foundation of our individual relationships with God, not the other way around.

### *Paradigms*

The New Testament is the only divinely inspired pattern, or paradigm, of Christian living. It shows us the only way to be saved from our sins, the only way to receive eternal life, and the only way to enjoy that life more abundantly. While there is a lot of room for great variety within the Biblical pattern, we must resist every temptation to deviate from it in any way, either by doing things it forbids, or refusing to do things it commands.

The degree to which we allow ourselves to compromise is the degree to which we forfeit our enjoyment of the more abundant life of intimate relationship with God. It is also the degree to which we become ineffective and irrelevant. If we want to introduce sinners to Christ and show believers how to have life transforming relationship with the Father, we have got to do things the way God wants them done. If we are not going to do that, why are we playing church at all?

There are two ways that the static paradigm hinders believers in their enjoyment of the more abundant life. It keeps us from enjoying the blessings God designed to be communicated only through dynamic, New Testament paradigm Christianity, and it gives us the false sense that we have found an expression of true, New Testament Christianity, so we do not feel the need to continue looking for it.

### *Definitions*

- The Dynamic Paradigm – The general pattern of Christian life described in the New Testament.
- The Static Paradigm – Every pattern produced by any deviation from the dynamic paradigm produces a static paradigm.
- Performer/audience Paradigm – The pattern of allowing only a severely limited number of people to contribute substantively during believers meetings.
- Clergy/lazity Split – The division that separates believers into kings and cattle, encourages the formation of unbiblical hierarchies (*Matt 20:25-28*), and schools the multitudes in the fine art of silent, obedient submission to the will of man. (*And no, lazity was not a typo.*)
- Pastor/king – Anyone in the kingdom of God who exercises executive authority over other believers, no matter what title they are identified by.

*[The scope of this writing is limited to the proper conduct of believers with respect to the body of Christ. The Bible clearly recognizes the executive authority of duly appointed government officials over their citizens, employers over their employees, and parents over their children.]*

### *Reformation is Not an Option*

The situation has gotten so bad that fixing the problems is no longer possible. The whole thing needs to be torn down, the foundation ripped out, and a new foundation laid. If an entire body is unwilling to go through such a process, individual believers who desire the fullness of the more abundant life Jesus came to give them need to leave. I believe that this is why Jesus has me following a policy of rescue, not reformation, with respect to static paradigm churches. If one ever approaches me with a unanimous desire to be converted, I will gladly help them make the necessary changes. But I do not expect it will ever happen, and I am making no efforts to bring it about.

The pastor/king led performer/audience driven static paradigm produces meetings where the pastor/king invariably ends up feeding the flock worm ridden, left over manna that they gobble down in a starvation based feeding frenzy, produced by the bad habit (*instilled in them by the*

*pastor/kings themselves*) of sitting down, shutting up, and doing nothing for themselves. The clergy uses threats, passive/aggressive intimidation, and physical force (*when they can get away with it*), to keep believers from rising up, going forth, and conforming their lives to Jesus!

### *How Do I Find A Dynamic Paradigm Believers' Meeting?*

Discovering the truth about the static paradigm means you will have to separate yourself from participation in static paradigm meetings. Unlike the practice common among cults, however, there is no reason to leave your friends behind. In fact, it is better for them if you don't. Your stand for the Truth, mixed with your continued love for them, may be the very thing God will use to set them free, too!

While there are many blessings available to us through our regular participation in believers' meetings, it is important to lay down the static paradigm mindset that equates being at meetings with Sabbath observation. Along those lines, we need to abandon the static paradigm mindset that gatherings have to be held on Sundays, or that Sunday is in any way significant to the true disciple of Christ. Sunday is not the Sabbath, and it is not the Lord's Day. Jesus is our sabbath, and every day is the Lord's day.

*Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days:*

*Colossians 2:16*

*For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*

*Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.*

*Hebrews 4:10-11*

*This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.*

*Psalms 118:24*

The sooner you can begin gathering together regularly with other dynamic believers the better. If you are married, you and your spouse can gather together for mutual edification (*in addition to the regular experience of living together*). If you are not married, or your spouse is unsaved or not interested, look to your children, brothers, sisters, cousins, friends, co-workers, etc. If any of them are saved, give them this information and see what develops. If nobody you know is interested in living a dynamic paradigm lifestyle, go to the highways and hedges and compel sinners to come into the kingdom. As soon as one does, set a time and a place, and let the good times roll!

### *But How Can I Start A Church?*

Who said anything about starting a church? All you are doing is enjoying the blessings of believers' meetings. I know you are wondering how to run a meeting, but that is the great thing about the true, dynamic, New Testament paradigm. You do not have to run the meeting. In fact,

if you do, you will ruin it. Jesus will show up, and He is responsible to lead the meeting. All we have to do is be willing to follow, and refuse to get in His way.

*And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

*Matthew 16:18*

Remember, you are gathering together with other believers. You are not building a church. We have not been called to build churches. We have been called to preach the gospel, see people get saved, and then make disciples of all nations. Gathering together for meetings is just one of the many things we do together with Jesus.

*Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.*

*Psalms 127:1*

When we do the things we do, we are helping Jesus build His church, unless we are doing things our own way. If that is the case, we are laboring in vain. Remember all those scriptures that described what should be happening, or at least what should be allowed to happen, during our meetings? Well, think about it. Are the people in the so called churches in America building the Lord's house, or are they laboring in vain?

### *Time, Place, and Frequency*

The Old Testament made the Sabbath day holier than the other six, and stipulated requirements with respect to its observation. The New Testament has no such holy day. The earliest church gathered together daily. It quickly shifted to a weekly meeting. That Christians have commonly met together on Sunday mornings is not, of itself, a good reason to follow that pattern. There is nothing wrong with it, as long as it is clearly understood that it is not a Christian requirement.

Pray with the person you are going to start gathering together with, and follow whatever direction you get from the Lord. If you feel like meeting every Saturday afternoon at a picnic table in a local park, start with that. Like establishing foundational prayer, start with something and let the Lord adjust it as He sees fit. Perhaps you will add a Tuesday night meeting specifically to pray together in someone's home. Maybe you will set aside the first Sunday of the month to get together for a time of musical praise and worship. The only rule to remember is that Jesus is in direct control at every meeting. He sets the agenda (whether we know what it is beforehand or not), and He can change the agenda without a moment's notice.

### *In Conclusion*

We cannot infuse life into believers by crafting better meetings, or even by making them more biblical in their structure. We can only infuse life into believers by getting them to spend serious, quality time with the Lord in prayer; especially foundational prayer. If we get our meetings to line up with the prescribed Biblical order, God will immediately go to work trying to lead believers into such lives of prayer. If they refuse, all the organizing will have been for

nothing. But if we get believers to take prayer seriously, they will form ties with God that will enable them to stand alone against the whole world if they have to.

I did not write this chapter to tear down the church, or because I have been hurt. I wrote it because I know that when people start opening up the conduits of God's blessings (*starting a habit of foundational prayer, for example*), God will start drawing their attention to the conduits that are still clogged. One of the most common methods He uses to get our attention is a general sense of frustration. He does not delight in our frustration, but He know it will lead us to further investigation, which will lead us into the enjoyment of all of His blessings. Teachers cannot keep you from experiencing the frustration that is necessary to get your attention, but God uses teachers to keep you from being frustrated any longer than is necessary.

Every day I offer up the following prayer of thanksgiving to God:

Father, Thank You for delivering me from the life sucking bondage of ministry in the flesh according to the static paradigm, and for leading me into the refreshing, life giving pleasure of ministry in the Spirit according to the dynamic paradigm.

This chapter was written so that you could offer just such a prayer as soon, and as painlessly, as possible.

# Epilogue

This book was not designed to be an exhaustive treatment of any of the subjects presented. It was not even written to give you doctrinal instruction, or to persuade you of my opinions. It was written because I want others to enjoy the more abundant life that God has brought me into. I have set a table, and invite you to partake to your heart's content.

I have written enough to give you a good start. If you take my advice – establish foundational prayer, read your Bible every day, gather together regularly and often with other dynamic believers – God Himself can, and will, take you the rest of the way. There is a place in the kingdom of God for human teachers (*1 Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11-13*), but the Holy Spirit speaking through the prophets of old revealed that the New Testament would be characterized by each individual being directly taught of God (*Jeremiah 31:34; John 6:45*).

*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.*

*Acts 20:32*

# *Contact Information*

This book is offered to the world free as the Lord provides, and so is my time. I will go anywhere and speak to anyone (*group or individual*) as the Lord directs, and as the Lord provides.

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