

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GARDEN

The Lord God planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there He put the man He formed. All kinds of trees He made to grow from the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (Gen 2:8-9).

However, like an unfaithful spouse (James 4:4a TLB) who tastes what is forbidden, the knowledge of evil became carnal. Such behavior not only separated mankind physically from God's presence, but the very nature of our soul lost its resemblance to our heavenly Father.

When the Truth of God was exchanged for a lie (Rom. 1:24a), the ravishing (assaulting, violating, molesting) of sin began: Our skin reddened, our soul darkened, and our spirit was stifled by evil.

Good was not uprooted, but the weeds (garments, habit, costumery) of this second nature ensured disobedience (contrariness, defiance, rebellion, disrespect, inconsideration, insolence, rudeness,

stubbornness, perversity...) would not only become customary, but would make us akin (alike, resemblance, related) to the Ravisher.



And, to ravish is to plunder, rob, to overcome with emotion. When we are overcome by our own thoughts and emotions we can easily become enraptured, carried away, bewitched, captivated, excited... To ravish is also to delight, to gratify, to please, to satisfy one of two choices the desires of a heart that has been ravished by evil or the only One Who is Good (Matt. 19:17); Who will give to you the desires of your heart, if you choose to delight yourself in the Lord (Ps. 37:4).

However, danger is ahead for those who refuse to come to the Lord to have life (John 5:40). God is about to ravish the earth, and send everyone scurrying: priests and laypeople alike, owners and workers, celebrities and nobodies, buyers and sellers, bankers and beggars, the haves and the have-nots alike. Why? The earth is polluted by its very own people. Evil, like a cancer, ravages the earth. Its people pay the price of their sacrilege (Isa. 24:1-6 Message).



They live in the midst of deception; in their deceit they refuse to acknowledge the Lord (Jer. 9:6), to listen to God's Word, they follow the stubbornness of their hearts, and go after other gods to serve and worship them (Jer. 13:10).

The Lord will come and deal with all these proud and wicked people who viciously persecute the poor. The evil they pour upon others should be poured upon them. For they brag of all their evil lusts; they revile God and congratulate those the Lord abhors, whose only goal in life is money.

These wicked people, so proud and haughty, seem to think that God is dead. They wouldn't think of looking for Him! Yet, there is success in the things they do, and their enemies fall before them. They do not see God's punishment awaiting them. They boast that neither God nor man can ever keep them down - somehow they'll find a way!

Their mouths are full of profanity and lies and fraud. They are always boasting of their evil plans. They lurk in dark alleys of the city and murder passersby. Like lions they crouch silently, waiting to pounce upon the poor. Like hunters they catch their victims in their traps. The unfortunate are overwhelmed by their superior strength and fall

beneath their blows. “God isn’t watching,” they say to themselves: “He’ll never know (Ps. 10:2-11 TLB)!” They cling to deceit; they refuse to turn (Jer. 8:5) from their prideful ways.

They know not the Lord (they do not recognize, appreciate, give heed to, or cherish the Lord), for the spirit of harlotry is within them. They have played the harlot, and have worshiped idols. They are defiled. Their pride and self-reliance testifies before their own face. They shall totter and fall in their iniquity and guilt (Hos. 5:3-5 AMP).

This is what the Sovereign Lord says:

“Whoever will listen let them listen, and whoever will refuse let them refuse.”

Ezek. 3:27



If only they would listen, for God speaks – now one way, now another – if only they could perceive it. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on them as they slumber in their beds, He may speak in their ears and terrify them with warnings, to turn them from wrongdoing and keep them from pride, to preserve their soul from the pit, their life from perishing by violent means.

For there is a Mediator on our side, Who tells a person what is right for them. Yes, God has been gracious to us and says:

“Spare them from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom for them.”

Pray to God and find favor with Him. See God’s face (Job 33:14-26a), for the Son is the radiance of God’s glory and the exact representation of His being (Heb. 1:3).

Shout for joy, for God restores a person to their righteous state. Then come and tell others, “I sinned and perverted what was right, but I did not get what I deserved. God redeemed my soul from going down to the pit, and I will live to enjoy the Light.”

God allows things to occur in a person’s life – twice, even three times – to turn back their soul from the pit, that the Light of Life may shine on them (Job. 33: 26b-30).

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The grace of our Lord was poured out abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Thankfully, Paul was one who chose to turn and receive God's Word so the world could know there is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But, for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display His unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on Him and receive eternal life (1 Tim. 1:14-17).

Yes, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), this Man is the true God and Life eternal. The Son of God was seen and known. He has actually come to this world and has given us understanding and insight (progressively) so we can perceive (recognize) and come to know better and more clearly Him Who Is True; and we can rest in Him Who is True – in His Son Jesus Christ (the Messiah) (1 John 5:20 AMP).

And become God's garden, His vineyard and field under cultivation; to become God's building (1 Cor. 3:9 AMP) His Church. Blessed are those who do as God commands (Rev. 22:14a). And this is His command: To believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and to love

one another. For those who obey His commands live in Him, and He in them. And this is how we know that He lives in us; we know it by the Spirit He gives us (1 John 3:23-24 NKJV).



Though the knowledge of Good and Evil dwells within our heart, those who have an ear will hear what the Spirit says, and will overcome the evil one, when the Word of God lives in you (1 John 2:14-17). With faith as small as a mustard seed (Mark 4:31a) fear and disbelief can be overcome (Mark 9:24).

Like that mustard seed even the tiniest amount of faith when planted in the soil of our soul can grow. The tiniest seed of all that mustard seed; yet, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches the birds of the air can perch in its shade (Mark 4:31b-32).

Paul wrote, because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it also, but whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have - Christ Jesus, Messiah, the Anointed One (1 Cor. 3:11 NLT) Who says:

“Don’t be overcome by evil; instead, overcome evil with Good. How can righteousness be a partner with wickedness? How can Light live with darkness? What harmony can there possibly be between My Father and the devil?

Rom. 12:21



Therefore, fear not, for the Lord is with you; don’t look around in terror and be dismayed, for He is your God. The Lord will strengthen and harden you to difficulties, yes, He will help you. God will hold you up and retain you with His victorious right hand of rightness and justice (Isa. 41:10 AMP).

When you heard the Word of Truth, the glad tidings of your salvation, you were included in Christ Jesus. Because you believe in Him and took words with you when you returned, saying to Him, “Forgive all my sins and receive me graciously, that I may offer the fruit of my lips,” Hos. 14:2.

Because you adhere (cling, unite, cleave) to the Lord greatly rejoicing in Him for He has clothed you with the garments of salvation, your

soul exults in your God Who has covered you with the robe of righteousness as a bride your Bridegroom has adorned you (Isa. 61:10).

You are a private garden to the Lord. His darling bride, His treasure a spring enclosed, a fountain sealed (SS 4:12). Haven't you yet learned your body is God's building, His temple, the very sanctuary, of Holy Spirit Who lives within you - a gift received from God.

You are not your own. You were bought with a price. You were purchased with a preciousness and paid for. God made you His own. So bring glory to God and honor Him with every ounce of your being so He can be seen in you and working through you (1 Cor. 6:19-20).



When a person relies on Jesus to continue helping they can walk in the strength of the Lord their God. Telling everyone how good He is, and of His constant daily care (Ps. 71:14-17). Hopefully that's you, for then you were stamped with the seal of Holy Spirit. Who is your guarantee of an inheritance, for God has already purchased you and promises to bring you to Himself. Giving one more reason for our glorious God to be praised by you (Eph. 1:11-14).

So don't grieve God's Holy Spirit by Whom you were sealed, marked and secured as God's own for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, rage and resentment, animosity, contention and slander be banished from you along with all malice, cruelty and contempt. Instead, become useful and helpful and kind to others, forgiving as God in Christ forgave you (Eph. 4:30-32).

God's Word invites you to know and understand the Kingdom of God is like a grain of mustard seed, which is planted in a garden. It grew and became a tree for the wild birds to roost and nest and find shelter in its branches (Luke 13:18).

God brought forth His Servant the Branch (Zech. 3:8a), Christ Jesus, Who invites the world to commit themselves in faith to Him (John 7:31 Message). God laid the Stone upon which are seven eyes (Zech. 3:8): The Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Wisdom and of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and of Power, the Spirit of Knowledge and of the Fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2) so we can live in Him, rooted and built up in Him, strengthened in faith in the Lord, and overflowing with thankfulness (Col. 2:6-7). For He makes it possible to join Him in delighting in the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:3).



The Lord will guide you always; He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land, and will strengthen your frame. You will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail (Isa. 58:11).

Zechariah wrote of what the Angel of Lord, Christ Jesus, said of God's vast garden:

“Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of people and livestock in it. And I Myself will be a wall of fire around it, and I will be its glory within.”

“Come, O Zion! After the Father has honored Me, and has sent Me against the nations that have plundered you – for whoever touches you touches the apple of His eye – I will surely raise My hand against them, and you will know that God Almighty has sent Me.”

“Shout and be glad, O Daughter of Zion, for I am coming and will live among you. Many nations will be joined with Me in that day, and will become My people. I will live

among you and you will know the Almighty has sent Me to you. Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because He has roused Himself from His holy dwelling.”

Zech. 2:3-13



The Lord spoke to me of His garden. I was in church one morning and I saw petals of flowers scattered on the floor. One would think of this as a vision of disarray and death. A garden with flowers that have lost their fragrance, for the beauty of their foliage is seen falling to the earth.

Well that may be true because those flowers represented the people sitting in those pews, who lived/are living as captives, treated as slaves to sin. The cruelty and hardships of the world caused them to lose their beautiful fragrance, and stand before the Lord with vigor (vitality, sturdiness, vibrance) missing or completely shed.

But God, He sends His Word so all can see and understand that wise men die; the foolish and the senseless alike perish and leave their

wealth to others. Their tombs will remain their houses forever, though they had named lands after themselves.

But man, despite their riches, does not endure; they are like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. Their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.

But God, He redeems lives from the grave; He will surely take us to Himself.

So do not be overawed when a person grows rich, when the splendor of their house increases; for they will take nothing with them when they die. Their splendor and the fragrance of their riches will not descend with them. Though while alive they counted themselves blessed – and people praise a person when they prosper – they will join those who will never see the Light of Life.



An individual who has riches without understanding is like the beasts that perish (Ps. 49:10-20). So this would not be my fate, God does as

I've requested by drawing me pictures. And though we come to God like flowers whose floral beauty has been pillaged by the "Whethers" of the world, God places us in His Son so we can drink and recover and be renewed by the living water He bestows (John 4:10).

Our heavenly Father sets us apart for special holy services for honor (Ex. 28:2) with the beauty and delightfulness and favor of the Lord our God shining upon us (Ps. 90:17).

We are to God the aroma of Christ, and He always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ, and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 14-15).

Give God thanks and praise for He restores our soul. He guides us in paths of Righteousness for His name's sake (Ps. 23:3).



Praise God, from Him we have our life in Christ Jesus, Whom God made our Wisdom from God, revealing to us a knowledge of the divine plan of salvation previously hidden, and manifesting itself as our Righteousness, Christ Jesus, Who makes us upright and puts us in right standing with our heavenly Father. Jesus is our Consecration

making us pure and holy. Jesus is our Redemption providing our ransom from the eternal penalty for sin (1 Cor. 1:30 AMP).

All who believe are justified and made upright and in right standing with the Father, freely and gratuitously by His grace, through the redemption which He provides us in Christ Jesus.

God put forward before the eyes of all, His Son, as a mercy seat and propitiation by His blood, which is the cleansing and life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation, to be received through faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over and ignored former sins without punishment (Rom. 3:24-25 AMP).

So when the Lord sees our faith, our confidence in God through Him, He says:

"My child, your sins are forgiven you and put away."

We can be confident the penalty has been remitted, the sense of guilt can now be removed, we are made upright and in right standing with God (Mark 2:5 AMP), for He has given us His Word.



We may enter a house of God with petals missing or completely gone, but there is Life not death to be enjoyed as Holy Spirit works within to heal and restore our beauty for God extends His grace and mercy. Blessed be Adonai (Ezra 7:27-28 CJB), for He promises those who love Him, those who persevere under trials and tests, to stand firm with faith in His Word – the Crown of Life (James 1:12).

There is a river flowing with the Water of Life, as clear as crystal, from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the Tree of Life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves and the fruit of the tree are for food and the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:1-2).

When we partake with God through His Word we sow for ourselves righteousness, and we reap the fruit of unfailing Love (Hos. 10:12).

When we choose to live as children of Light instead of a child of darkness we reap the fruit of Light all Goodness and Righteousness, Wisdom and Truth so we can discover what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph. 5:8).



So do what is pleasing to the Lord and don't forsake Wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will watch over you. Wisdom is supreme; therefore, get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding. Esteem her, and she will exalt you. Embrace her, and she will honor you. She will set a garland of grace on your head and present you with a Crown of Splendor (Prov. 4:6-9).

YOU will be a crown of splendor in the Lord's hand, a royal diadem in the hand of your God (Isa. 62:2).

When a person chooses to live by the Spirit, He will work with them to cultivate His fruit within their soul – love, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23,25a) so the effect of Righteousness can bud and bloom and blossom into quietness and confidence and contentment forever (Isa. 32:17).

And surely it will be absolutely understood Goodness and Love will follow you all the days of your life, and you will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps. 23:6).



So let us work to keep in step with Holy Spirit, for He will help us do what those who belong to Christ Jesus must do – crucify our sinful nature with its passions and desires so we no longer will become conceited, provoking and envying one another (Gal. 5:24,25b). For we have come to know and believe God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with Holy Spirit and power, and the Lord went around doing good and healing ALL who were under the power of the devil, because God was with Him (Acts 10:38), and we are among the ALL.



Here is the Man, Christ Jesus, whose name is the Branch, and He will branch out from His place and build the temple of the Lord. It is He Who will build the temple of the Lord, and He will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on His throne. And He will be a High Priest on His throne, and there will be harmony between His two roles: Priest and King (Zech. 6:12-13).

For Jesus Himself is our peace, Who makes the two one. He has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in His flesh the Law with its commandments and regulations (Eph. 2:14-15a). So speak as people should who are to be judged under the Law of Liberty, the Law of Love, the moral instructions given by Christ (James

2:12 AMP). For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy: Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13 NKJV).



Remember, there are those who formerly were Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision.” They were separated from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of Promise, without hope and without God in the world.

But now in Christ Jesus those who once were far away have been brought near through the blood He shed. This was His purpose to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body of believers to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.

Jesus came and preached peace to those who were far away and

peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Consequently, there are no longer any foreigners or aliens, but fellow citizens, God's people and members of His household, which is built on the foundation of the prophets and apostles, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone. In Jesus the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And, in Him we too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit (Eph. 2:11-22).



Zechariah prophesied of this when he spoke God's Word to Joshua the high priest and his colleagues:

“These men are a sign, a type of what is to come, for behold, I will bring forth My Servant the Branch. “

God showed Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan:

“The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, Who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?”

Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the Angel of the Lord, Who said

“Take off his filthy clothes. See I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you. Put a clean turban on his head.”

“If you will walk in my ways and keep My requirements, then you will govern My house and have charge of My courts, and I will give you a place among those standing there.”

Zech. 3:1-9



God brought forth His Branch to the world to give His people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. And because of the tender mercy of God, the Light of the rising Son will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide their feet into the path of peace (Luke 1:77-79).

Yes, God has set the Stone before the world, and as we come to Him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him. And we also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Christ Jesus. For in Scripture it says:

“See, I lay a Stone in Zion, a chosen and precious Cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”

1 Peter 2:4-6

The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals. The Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders; He has seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth (Rev. 5:5-7).



An inscription is on that one Stone, and He will remove the sin of this land in a single day (Zech. 3:9). Though there are many who work to destroy the faith of some with words that differ from what has already

taken place – the resurrection of Christ Jesus, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription:

“The Lord knows those who are His” and “Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness.”

2 Tim. 2:18-19

Yes, the sevenfold Spirit of Lord rests on Jesus – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord (Isa. 11:2). God’s Servant acts wisely; He has been raised and lifted up and highly exalted (Isa. 52:13). When you rely on the Lord, He will deliver you from your enemies. For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him (2 Chron. 16:8-9).



When the Lord God made the heavens and the earth, no shrubs or plants had yet sprung up. No rain had been sent, nor anyone to tend the ground. However, streams welled up from underground and flowed across the land. And from the dust a man was formed by God,

Who gave to him the breath of life to be a living breathing person (Gen. 2:5-7).

Lord, You have been our dwelling place throughout all generations. Before the mountains were born for You brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting You are God. You turn us back to dust, saying:

“Return to dust, O sons of men.”

A thousand years in Your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night (Ps. 90:1).

Yes, O Lord, You are our Father. We are the clay, You are the Potter; and we are all the work of Your hand (Isa. 64:8). How we praise You, O Lord, because we are fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, we know that full well for Your eyes saw our unformed bodies. All the days You ordained for us were written in Your book before one of them came to be (Ps. 139:14-16).

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As a father has compassion on his children, so too does the Lord have compassion on those who fear Him; He knows how we are formed, and remembers that we are dust (Ps. 103:13) a natural being, but also a spiritual being destined to dwell in eternity.

Someone may ask, “How will the dead be brought back to life again? What kind of body will they have? You will find the answer in your own garden! When you put a seed into the ground it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it “dies” first. When the green shoot comes up out of the seed, it is very different from the seed that was planted.

All you put into the ground is a dry little seed of wheat or whatever it is you planted, then God gives it a beautiful new body – just the kind He wants it to have; a different kind of plant grows from each kind of seed. And, just as there are different kinds of seeds and plants, so also there are different kinds of flesh. Humans, animals, fish and birds are all different.



The angels in heaven have bodies far different from ours, and the beauty and the glory of their bodies is different from the beauty and the glory of ours. The sun has one kind of glory while the moon and

stars have another kind. And the stars differ from each other in their beauty and brightness.

In the same way, our earthly bodies which die and decay are different from the bodies we shall have when we come back to life again, for they will never die.

The bodies we have now embarrass us, for they become sick and die; but they will be full of glory when we come back to life again. Yes, they are weak, dying bodies now, but when we live again they will be full of strength. They are human bodies at death, but when they come back to life they will be superhuman bodies. Just as there are natural, human bodies, there are also supernatural, spiritual bodies (1 Cor. 15:35-43 TLB).

So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being," the last Adam, a life-giving Spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven (1 Cor. 15:44).

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Therefore, stop trusting in people, for they have but a breath in their nostrils. Of what account are they (Isa. 2:22)? It is the lamp of the Lord that searches the spirit of a person; it searches out their inmost being (Prov. 20:27). For there is much that you should know; like, how precious God's thoughts are for you. How vast the sum of them! If you were to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand. That you may know when you wake, the Lord is still with you (Ps. 139:17).

That you may know the Lord is God. It is He Who made you, and you are His. You are one of His people, one of the sheep of His pasture. So enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise; give thanks to Him and praise His holy name. For the Lord is good and His love endures forever; His faithfulness continues through all generations (Ps. 100:3-5).

However, God is not served by human hands, as if He needed anything, because He Himself gives all people life and breath and everything else. From one man He made every nation of mankind, that they should inhabit the entirety of the earth.

He determined the times set for each one, and the exact places where they should live. God did this so that people would seek Him and

perhaps reach out for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us. 'For in Him we live and move and have our being,' (Acts 17:25).



Yes, God is great and does marvelous deeds; He alone is God. Ask and He will teach you His way so you can walk in His truth. Knock and He will answer and give you an undivided heart, that you may fear (be in awe and wondrous reverence of) His name. If you seek the Lord with all your heart, you will surely glorify His name forever. For great is His love toward us; He has delivered us from the depths of the grave (Ps. 86:10).

The Lord God Almighty - our King and Redeemer - says:

"I am the First and I am the Last; apart from Me there is no God. I am the Alpha and the Omega, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty. Whatever you do for the least of these, you do for Me."

Isa. 44:6, Rev. 1:8, Matt. 25:45

And you will have this assurance: Those who belong to God shall live again. Their bodies shall rise again! Those who dwell in the dust shall awake and sing for joy! For God's Light of Life will fall like dew upon them! Go My people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until God's wrath passes by. Look! The Lord is coming from the heavens to punish the sins of the people. The earth will no longer hide those who have been killed. The blood they shed upon her will be disclosed for all to see. And the guilty will be found (Isa. 26:19-21).



The Lord Himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so, we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore, encourage each other with these words.

Dearly beloved, about times and dates we cannot say, for the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety," destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor

pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape (1 Thess. 4:16-5:3). God's Word says:

"Men will tell you, 'There He is!' Do not go running off after them! The Son of Man in His day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first He must suffer many things, and be rejected by this generation."

"Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all."

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed."

Luke 17:22-30



But, the beloved of the Lord are not in darkness so that this day should surprise you like a thief. I pray you are among the ones taken with the

Lord, the sons of the Light and sons of the Day. The beloved of the Lord are not like others who are asleep; instead, alert and self-controlled.

Those who belong to the Day are self-controlled wearing faith and love as a breastplate. In this world of contradiction and temptation they remain faithful and loyal to the Lord, Who bestows Hope of salvation to be worn as a helmet (1 Thess. 4:16-5:8).

Yes, our hope is in God's Word, for the Lord is our help, our shield of protection. So rejoice in God's Message, His Promise of salvation, if the holy name of Jesus is trusted. For the Lord has shown His love to the world; but, He personally places the Hope of salvation in those with faith and trust in God (Ps. 33:20-22).



IN GOD, Who gives us His shield of victory, His right hand to sustain us; He stoops down to make us great (Ps.18:34). Who is God besides the Lord? And Who is the Rock except our God? It is God Who arms us with strength and makes our way perfect (Ps. 18:31). Yes, the Lord is a Warrior; Christ Jesus is His name. Majestic in power! In the

greatness of His Majesty He threw down those who opposed Him. His right hand has shattered the enemy (Ex. 15:3-7).

Again God's Word says:

“Peace be with you. The breath of the Almighty gives life. Receive Holy Spirit! If the earthly tent in which you live in is destroyed, you have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. These words of Truth are Spirit and they are life. The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. Yet, there are some who do not believe.”

John 20:21-22, Job 33:4, 2 Cor. 5:1, John 6:63



In the Garden of Eden God placed the man to tend and guard and keep it. From any tree fruit could be eaten, except the Tree of Conscience. In the middle God placed the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil of Blessing and Calamity saying:

“From it you shall not eat. For its fruit will cause your eyes to be opened to what is right and what is wrong, to what is

good and what is bad, to life and death and surely you shall die.”

Gen. 2:15 TLB

The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines conscience as:

(1a.) The sense of consciousness of the moral goodness or blameworthiness of one’s own conduct, intentions or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good.

In Cor. 4:4 Paul wrote: My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord Who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; WAIT till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of a heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

Conscience (1b): A faculty, power or principle enjoining good acts guided by conscience

Peter wrote: In your heart set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do so with gentleness and

respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak against your good behavior in Christ will be ashamed of their slander (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Conscience (1c): The part of the superego in psychoanalysis that transmits commands and admonitions to the ego



FYI: Ego is the Latin word for “Self.” In science, it has its origins with Freudian psychology. Freud thought we were basically made up of three distinct personality traits that are at constant war with one another.

1st the id which he used in reference to our instincts

2nd the super-ego the moral part of our psyche

3rd the ego the rational part that mediates between the other two

What is interesting as defined by Freud the trinity of man the ego, super-ego and the id are as close to a Biblical truth as an atheist can get without forgoing being an atheist. For the Bible also teaches we are made up of three components.

- The id is what Christians call the Flesh, which is instinct and desire driven.
- The ego is what we call the Soul, which is our mind, will and emotions
- The super-ego would be our Spirit, which is that part of our being that makes us self-aware and guides us morally.

The mind, flesh and spirit are the id, ego and super-ego. This information was taken from the message, “Let Go of My Ego” by Steve Childs.

In 2 Cor. 1:12 Paul wrote: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relationships, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom, but according to God’s grace. We don’t write anything you cannot read or understand.



Conscience (2): Conformity to what one considers to be correct, right or morally good.

Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:6: We are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. We live by faith, not by sight. So we make it our goal to please God. We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due them for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience.

Conscience (3): Sensitive having regard for fairness or justice.

In 2 Cor. 4:1 it is written: We do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the Truth plainly we commend ourselves to every person's conscience in the sight of God. And, if our Gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the Light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ Jesus, Who is the image of God. God made His Light shine in our heart to give us the Light of knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

Conscience (4): Consciousness – in all conscience or in conscience – in all fairness

Hebrews 10: 19 states: Since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, the Lord's body. And, since we have a great Priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for He who promised is faithful. And, let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds (Acts 2:38-39).



Peter's reply, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off – for all whom the Lord our God will call," Acts 2:38-39. God's Word leaves no room for doubt His call is for each of us, you and me alike. And, God's gifts and His call are irrevocable (irreversible) (Rom. 11:29).

Though individually we all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), we each experience life individually – with all the unfairness, injustice, cruelty and neglect – that unfolds before us in ways we cannot be prepared.

With its countless variables and complexities, this life we share on earth can roll us over with the deception, violence and trauma it generates. As Covid-19 has made apparent, life can impact not just our personal worlds, but the world in general seemingly without mercy and with exceedingly great loss.

These are the provisions God offers freely to the world – Redemption, Regeneration, Renewal, Reconciliation and Recovery – all of which come to us through Jesus. And, God's provisions though immeasurable are offered for our personal benefit – Faith, Humility, Repentance, Forgiveness, Mercy, Loving-Kindness and Gratitude – which He continually makes known to us through revelation of Holy Spirit: The Way, the Truth and the Life is found only in Christ Jesus.



God's desire is for His people to recover from sickness and disaster. That we recover life and strength, a robust faith, cheerfulness and that

we know gladness, as sight is recovered so we can be filled with Holy Spirit (Acts 9:17), Who gives wisdom and revelation so we can know God and His Word better.

That our heart would be flooded with Light so we can clearly see and really understand Who Christ is and all that He has done for us and the future He has called us to share. God wants us to realize He has been made rich because those who are Christ's have been given to Him (Eph. 1:15-18).

It's not just with our mouths, but also with our hearts that we proclaim faith in God's Word. The Lord helps us to develop trust in God, in His gift of Life, which is so much more than remarkable. For now we are looking in a mirror that gives only a dim (blurred) reflection [of reality as in a riddle or enigma], but then [when perfection comes] we shall see in reality and face to face!

Now I know in part (imperfectly), but then I shall know and understand fully and clearly, even in the same manner as I have been fully and clearly known and understood by God (1 Cor. 13:12 AMP).

~

And though leaning on our own understanding may seem naturally desirable; finding the willingness to acknowledge God and His Word in all our ways makes it possible for our experiencing the fullness of His promise of Life and Rest throughout our time on earth.

God's power to help those who believe and trust in Him is incomparably and incredibly great. It is the same mighty power that raised Jesus from the dead, and seated Him in the place of honor at God's right hand in heaven. Yes, His honor is far more glorious than that of anyone else either in this world or in the world to come.

God placed all things under the Lord's feet, and appointed Him Head over everything for the Church, which is His body - filled with Himself, the Author and Giver of everything in every way (Eph. 1:19-23 TLB).



For those who believe, God's Word will fill in every valley (easing out fear, hopelessness, depression, unforgiveness...). God's Word will make low every mountain and hill (pride, arrogance, defiance, grudges, offenses...). God's Word will cause the crooked roads to become straight (confusion, doubt, disbelief, rejection...); God's Word will make

the rough ways to be smooth (bitterness, resentment, vindictiveness, loneliness....).

The Lord does all of this so we can not only see but rejoice in God's precious gift - Salvation - with (praise) and song that whole heartedly acknowledges God is so very, very good to us (Luke 3:5-6 & Prov. 3:5-6 & Ps. 13:5-6).

God's Word is with us throughout the storms, the fires, the disappointments and abuses that arise within and around us. Yes, God will bring us back from all that holds us captive (Jer. 29:14); because, He delivered Jesus for us so the Spirit of Truth could be sealed and His Word of Truth could flourish in us.



However, in order to understand God's love and mercy a better view is quite necessary. Instead of a mere earthly perspective, we can gain a heavenly one by moving our "BUT/TS" out of the way. By doing as John the Baptist did to prepare the way of the Lord to come to those who are willing to allow God's Word to become greater; so the will of me, myself and I would be less (John 3:30).

This can be accomplished as Paul's instructions, as described in the Message Bible, are applied: Here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for Him. Don't be so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. God brings the best out of you not always dragging you down (Rom. 12:1-2).



How does it become apparent that God's divine power gives us everything we need for life (2 Peter 1:3a)? Knowledge! Knowledge of God and His Word is imperative.

When the Lord is heard and believed, no matter the contradictions, the resurrection power of Holy Spirit that raised Jesus before the world, will raise Him within us so we can live as Jesus did giving honor and glory to our heavenly Father in all that we think and say and do (1 Cor. 10:31). For this very reason this ministry For God, Fore His Glory was

founded to share knowledge of God and His Word so the limitations of our human condition could be better understood.

With inadequate understanding regarding the knowledge of Good and Evil, and the natures of pride and Love we fall into error. For instance, making Love about heartfelt emotion and doing and expectations all of which prove impossible to satisfy.

There is so much to learn about ourselves and our human nature before it is possible to share Love without expecting something in return; before we can really just give without trying so hard to convince or manipulate or change another; before we can truly remember Love isn't expecting something we may need or desire from someone else because Love is simply being kind and gentle and peaceful; while the sheer magnitude of Love requires being faithful and patient and good.



God's love is unconditional. Unfortunately, not to be personally experienced by those who elevate their own feelings and opinions and beliefs above God's Word. When the Word of the Lord, Christ Jesus, is not acknowledged as being One with God (John 10:30), it will be

impossible for Him to be seen sitting on His throne, and the whole heavenly host standing by Him at His right hand and at His left hand (1 Kings 22:19).

Why? Because a heart is sitting on its throne peering out at all this world of Evil has to offer.

Though I was familiar with the Word of God, I was totally unfamiliar with certain issues that have an effect on our general welfare. So God set me on a course of renewal so Truth could help me think differently, and I could receive what I need most inner healing while on this journey of renewal and recovery.



A definition from the Merriam-Webster dictionary states recovery is the act, process or an instance of recovering. And recovery means learning about and dealing with the entire package of “self”-defeating, compulsive behaviors, hurts and habits, and especially those things we’re unaware of. It’s important to understand the behaviors we’ve used were survival tools – we’ve been coping – doing the best we could – protecting ourselves.

The first issue I had to confront was denial. The following are different patterns of denial developed by Terence Gorski:

1. AVOIDANCE – is a hallmark of the anxiety disorders.
Healing occurs when confronting replaces avoidance.
When we avoid we never learn that we can triumph over our fears. When we avoid we never learn new coping skills, and we remain controlled by the past.
2. MINIMIZING – problem is less serious
3. RATIONALIZING – finding ways to justify the problem
4. BLAMING – refusing to accept responsibility
5. COMPARING – other people have the same problem
6. MANIPULATING – to gain influence so needs are met; however, habitual manipulators do so for power and control and often display passive-aggressive behavior
7. SCARING SELF INTO RECOVERY – fear of consequences
8. COMPLIANCE – say anything – leave me alone
9. FLIGHT INTO HEALTH – feeling better means I’m better
10. STRATEGIC HOPELESSNESS – nothing works don’t try
11. DEMOCRATIC DISEASE STATE – right to do as I please – live my own life
12. ABSOLUTE DENIAL – refusing to admit



Rest Ministries www.hvmi.org placed this article online: How to Recognize Self-Protective Defenses and the Lies Behind Them.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53d01de8e4b00188fd0c5fd6/t/542c94fde4b0137c7e560a33/1412207869736/Defensive+Personality+-+REST+Min+Resource.pdf>

One of the definitions of the Biblical Greek word for salvation (sozo) is the idea of restoration, wholeness, or healthiness. God's salvation is not merely forgiveness of sin so that we get to heaven someday, but a blueprint that includes our maturity, renewal and restoration.

Becoming emotionally whole and spiritually holy is the journey God desires for each of us as we work out our salvation within the context of our relationships. (Leslie Vernick, *The Emotionally Destructive Relationship*)

A healthy person will learn how to defend themselves against hurtful and abusive relationships, while allowing healthy and nurturing relationships to develop. A healthy person uses their defenses to keep them safe from those who would bring harm. A healthy person knows

when it is ok to relax and let their defenses down so they can enjoy open and healthy relationships.



Mature adults are flexible - they are capable of a range of defensive maneuvers ranging from reactive pain avoidance (moving away from a damaging situation) to constructive and adaptive efforts at problem solving (I see that Joan was hurt by what I said. I will apologize for hurting her with my words).

They are able to meet their needs through this flexibility - the need to protect themselves, and the need to connect with others. In contrast, adults who grew up in abusive homes or experienced trauma, often develop self-protective defenses and lack this flexibility.

At the time of the abuse or trauma, these defenses were a normal reaction of the body to protect itself. Unfortunately many of these defenses are based on lies. As a person matures if these lies are not dealt with they will be carried over into adulthood and become strongholds in their lives.



When the abuse or trauma has been resolved but these lies have not been dealt with the person operates at a level of defensiveness that causes isolation and fear that can influence a person's life.

How can we know if these lies are still in our belief systems? What truths can we use to replace these lies? Sometimes these defenses are easy to recognize but many times they are not. We must take time to get to know *ourselves* and the way *we* relate to *ourselves* and others. The following information provides some of the most recognizable actions of a person believing defensive lies.

Seven Major Areas Affected by Defensive Lies and Truth as found in God's Word: Spiritual, Personal, Relational, Rational, Emotional, Volitional and Behavioral.

1. **SPIRITUAL** – Lies believed – a deep sense of being unlovable, unforgivable which leads to feeling alienated, disappointed and angry at God; Instead, believe Truth – and gain a deep sense of “Belovedness.” A new mindset of being fully known, fully loved and freely forgiven by your loving Father, God

F.A.I.T.H. = Fantastic Adventure In Trusting Him

- Jesus committed no sin, and no deceit was found in His mouth (1 Peter 2:22)
- However, you live in the midst of deception; many in their deceit refuse to acknowledge Him (Jer. 9:6)
- The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? (Jer. 17:9)
- God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us to justify us by His blood (Rom. 5:9)
- For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16)
- As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us (Ps. 103:12)



2. **PERSONAL** – a deep sense of being hopelessly flawed, inadequate and worthless. Is inclined toward unbiblical shame; Instead, grow in knowledge of Truth so you can shift your focus to God’s adequacy rather than your own feelings of inadequacy.

Remembering! Feelings and core beliefs are not facts.

- See, I lay in Zion a Stone that causes men to stumble and a Rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame (Rom. 9:33)
- Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart (Heb. 12:2-3)
- God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Cor. 1:27)
- So let us go out to the Lord beyond the city walls [that is, outside the interests of this world, being willing to be despised] to suffer with Him there, bearing His disgrace. For this world is

not our home; we are looking forward to our everlasting home in heaven (Heb. 13:13-14 TLB)

- In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood (Heb. 12:4)



3. **RELATIONAL** - Insecure in the sense of belonging, but has a deep need to earn acceptance and approval from other people; Instead, trust Truth and become secure in the sense of belonging and ultimate acceptance with a growing capacity to tolerate criticism.

F.E.A.R. = False Expectations Appearing Real

- I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "Plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find Me when you seek Me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the Lord (Jer. 29:11-14)

- God predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:5)
- [We pray] that you may be invigorated and strengthened with all power according to the might of His glory, [to exercise] every kind of endurance and patience (perseverance and forbearance) with joy. Giving thanks to the Father, Who has qualified and made us fit to share the portion which is the inheritance of the saints (God's holy people) in the Light. God has delivered and drawn us to Himself out of the control and the dominion of darkness and has transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col. 1:11-14)
- Because in Jesus those who believe in Him have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence (Eph. 1:7)



4. **RATIONAL** – Many lies about God, self and others; Instead, seek Truth in God’s Word so Holy Spirit can work at renewing your mind.

Aim for progress, not perfection

- I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You (Ps. 119:11)
- Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way that you think. Then you will learn to know God’s ways as you experience how good and pleasing and perfect they truly are (Rom. 12:2)
- Therefore, fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right and pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all that you are learning and receiving from God’s Word (Phil. 4:8-9)

- Think carefully about Jesus Who is God's Messenger and High Priest of our faith. He was faithful to God Who appointed Him (Heb. 3:1)



5. **EMOTIONAL** - Sadness, depression, anxiety and anger. Pick Scriptures that will help you flip these emotions into contentment, joy, peace and being grateful. God wants you to experience a full range of emotions and to express them appropriately. Believing, Trusting, Remembering:

Every day is a new beginning, take a breath and start again

- True godliness (devoutness and devotion) with contentment is to be truly rich (1 Tim. 6:6)
- Be not grieved and depressed, for the joy of the Lord is your strength and stronghold (Neh. 8:10)
- And God's peace shall be yours. That tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ, and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever

sort that is. For God's peace that transcends all understanding will garrison and mount guard over you heart and mind in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7)

- How grateful and thankful I am to the Lord because He is so good (Ps. 7:11)
- If a person learns to truly love God with affectionate reverence, willingness to trust and follow His Word, with gratitude recognizing His blessings, they are known by God (1 Cor. 8:3)



6. **VOLITIONAL** - Choices are made to gain and maintain acceptance from other people; Instead, acquire tools and keys for renewal and recovery: Gratitude, Accountability, Responsibility, Acceptance, Detachment... to combat and overcome denial, fear, anger, issues of control....with Truth by making biblically informed choices with an ever- increasing willingness to own them and their consequences

**No more excuses, no more wasting of precious time,
Now is as good a time as any,**

To begin doing what matters most

- Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him (Heb. 11:6)
- We are not trying to please people but God, Who tests our hearts (1 Thess. 2:4)
- Letting your sinful nature control your mind leads to death. BUT, allowing Holy Spirit to transform your thinking leads to life and peace. The sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey His Word and never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature cannot please God (Rom. 8:6)
- If anyone lacks Wisdom, they should ask God, Who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to them. However, when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because those who doubt are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind (James 1:5-6)

- Because of the Pharisees the people would not confess their faith in Jesus for fear they would be put out of the synagogue, for they loved praise from people more than praise from God (John 12:42-42)



Remembering:

- Fear and Faith walk side by side with us; however, F.E.A.R. - is - False Evidence Appearing Real
- My faith didn't remove the pain, but it got me through the pain. Trusting God didn't diminish or vanquish the anguish, but it enabled me to endure it. - Robert Rogers
- Faith is unquestioning belief. - Ronald Hopper
- A grateful heart is a beginning of greatness. It is an expression of humility. It is a foundation for the development of such virtues as prayer, faith, courage, contentment, happiness, love, and well-being - James E. Faust
- I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else — C.S. Lewis

- Faith is building on what you know is here so you can reach what you know is there. – Cullen Hightower



7. **BEHAVIORAL** - An unbalanced focus on relationship with others leads to “neediness” and overwhelming others: Instead, as your faith grows and you mature into a son of God your actions will become more Christ-like characterized by genuine conviction and compassion.

You cannot expect miracles to happen over night,

Be patient, be loving

Little by little the change you seek will come

- If through the power of Holy Spirit you put to death the deeds of your sinful nature, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Rom. 8:13-14)
- Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and your lives will produce every kind of good fruit. All the while, you will grow as you learn to know God better and better. He will strengthen you with all His glorious power so

you will have all the endurance and patience you need. So you can always be thanking the Father and filled with joy knowing He has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to His people, those who choose to live in the light (Col. 1:10-13)

PRACTICING THESE PRINCIPLES FOR TAKING
STEPS TOWARD RENEWAL AND RECOVERY
TO BE GOD-DEPENDENT NOT
CO-DEPENDENT

- The first key is to maintain an honest view of reality not only considering particular circumstances and events as substantial, but recognizing the substance of Truth – the Life, the Alpha and Omega, the heart and the spirit as we work on taking steps of faith
 - God exists and I matter to Him
 - We admit we are powerless
 - We admit in certain areas our lives have become unmanageable
 - We believe God will restore us with Love, a Sound Mind and Power
 - We believe He will help us stay committed to this decision to put all of who we are into His possession and safekeeping

- We believe the Word of God will encourage, support and strengthen us as we make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
- Because of God's loving-kindness we are willing to admit to God, to ourselves and another person the exact nature of our wrongs
- With Truth as our solid foundation we are entirely ready to have God remove all our defects of character
- Having received faith and hope and love for the Surety God has given we humbly ask Him to remove our shortcomings
- Having gained knowledge and insight and understanding we make a list of anyone we have harmed, and become willing to make an amends to them all
- Having gained confidence and trust in God's refuge we step out with the mindset we are doing this with and for God to make those amends whenever possible unless to do so would cause injury to others
- We embrace our covenant relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit by continuing to take a personal moral inventory, and when we are wrong being prompt to admit it
- We invest in our relationship with God by communicating through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious

contact with Him seeking knowledge of His will and the power of grace to carry that out

- We seek Revival, Restoration and Reconciliation a spiritual awakening as a result of taking steps to carry God's message to others and to practice these principles in all our affairs.



- As we apply these steps, we are taking our eyes off other people, and are looking at ourselves
- We see just what we're working with, how we have been affected, what we are doing, what our characteristics are, and we write on a piece of paper what we see
- We look fearlessly, not in self-hate and being self-abusive, but in an attitude of respect, honesty and self-care
- While taking these steps we are asked to honestly evaluate our lives because many of us:
 - Come from troubled or dysfunctional families
 - Blame ourselves for everything
 - Pick on ourselves for everything, including the way we think, feel, look, act and behave

- Get angry, self-righteous, and indignant when others blame and criticize something we regularly do to ourselves
- Reject compliments or praise
- Get depressed from a lack of compliments and praise (stroke deprivation)
- Feel different from the rest of the world
- Think we're not quite good enough
- Feel guilty about spending money on ourselves, or for doing unnecessary or fun things for ourselves
- Fear rejection
- Take things personally
- Have been victims of sexual, physical or emotional abuse, neglect, abandonment or alcoholism
- Feel like victims
- Feel we can't do anything right
- Afraid of making mistakes
- Wonder why we have a tough time making decisions
- Expect ourselves to do everything perfectly
- Wonder why we can't get anything done to our satisfaction
- Have a lot of "Shoulds"
- Feel a lot of guilt

- Feel ashamed of who we are
 - Think our lives aren't worth living
 - Try to help other people live their lives instead...
-
- We may even discover that hating ourselves, not caring about ourselves enough, has been a real moral problem
 - We root out any other problems, including earned guilt
 - It is important that we also look at our good qualities
-
- The emotional trauma/s you have suffered make you feel vulnerable -- naked -- exposed -- you know it and others sense it too
 - It could be the hesitancy in your decisions -- the look in your eyes - - the quaver in your voice, or the "dead giveaway" that your confidence has become shaky
 - Sometimes, being trigger-happy means that you are quick to blame yourself for your suffering
 - You sense your vulnerability is an open book, and you don't like it one bit
 - You sense that someone is going to pounce on you
 - Living with emotional trauma is often like waking up feeling backed into a corner

- You know the saying “The best defense is a good offense”
- You attack first -- you become trigger-happy
- When people speak, you make sure you get your point in first
- You become easily offended or hurt by something someone says because you don’t slow down enough to get the whole story
- When you hear people whispering, you may end up jumping to conclusions, convinced that they’re talking about something you’ve said or done
- The effect of our being wounded is that we work overtime not to get injured again
- It may seem to make perfect sense, but being on guard most of the time makes it hard to develop close relationships because so much energy is spent wondering what someone has “up their sleeve”
- Trauma causes people to live their life under the gun

Jesus, there are times when I feel under the gun. Help me to remember to “Take a Deep Breath” that it is normal to react strongly to the threat of harm. But I also need to remember, the nature of trauma causes a person to respond to situations as though they are in danger when there really is no threat. Trauma sounds a lot of false alarms. Help me to learn to follow my

instincts as to when I should invite people into my space and when I should keep them at bay.

Lord, there are moments when I feel afraid, and believe I have to take things into my own hands in order to be safe. Help me to “Learn From My Mistakes” so I would pay special attention to my reaction track record. That I would become intentional and note when my read on people and situations is on the money, and also those patterns I come to recognize that stand out when I read people incorrectly so I can make the necessary adjustments.

At those times remind me, Lord, the only safety is in You. Help me to trust You more. Help me to trust Your Spirit that is inside of me -- Your Spirit Who leads me to let go of the trigger finger, and to hold on to Your promise that You are with me regardless of the circumstances.

Help me to trust Your Word as unconditionally as Your love is for me. Father, with Your Word inside me, Christ Jesus, Your Word, surrounding me with Your love, I can face anything. I can respond thoughtfully and prayerfully to my life rather than react impulsively and fearfully. Today I step out on the comfort of Your promise that You are with me and I can be at peace.

Knowing You will bring reconciliation and restoration in my life.
Amen.

- During these steps we are taking toward renewal and recovery, we examine our hurts and angers
- We examine ourselves and the part we have played in our lives
- These steps also give us an opportunity to examine the standards we judge ourselves by
- We are now on our way to dumping our earned guilt, getting rid of our unearned guilt, accepting the package we call ourselves, and starting on the path to growth and change

God's program for growth and change: ASK, SEEK, KNOCK

For anyone who asks receives; those who seek find; and to those who knock, the door will be opened (Luke 11:10)

- These steps will help us to realize we are responsible for ourselves – our circumstances and whether we choose to remain in them and our attitude toward these circumstances
- They help us to realize we are responsible for what we have created in our lives, and what we will create

- They help us to acknowledge we are responsible for our feelings – they are ours
- Many struggle with delusions such as this:
 - We would be feeling different if someone else would just do something
 - If we were somewhere else
 - If we had something we wanted – not true
- Working these steps help us realize we could jet to every state and five foreign countries, and until we've dealt with our feelings, we'd be feeling the same way in each location we visited
- Our natural tendency to lean on, depend on and place our trust in others and ourselves creates in us codependent patterns of behavior
- Renewal and recovery from these behaviors requires deep work based on shifting our relationship with ourselves so we can enjoy a deep and more `meaningful relationship with God
- Renewal and recovery from our self-defeating traits is about us, not about anyone else in our life

- Renewal and recovery from our personality deficits is ALL about -- learning to take responsibility for our own actions, feelings, behavior, issues and lives, to ensure that our real needs are met
- Renewal and recovery is about self-acceptance and self-respect
- Working these steps helps us realize we have been victimized by diseases and people, and we have to determine what part we played in our victimization
- The self-defeating habits we have acquired lead or keep us in destructive relationships, relationships that don't work
- These behaviors can sabotage relationships that may otherwise have worked
- These behaviors can prevent us from finding peace and happiness with the most important person in our lives - ourselves
- These behaviors belong to the only person each of us can control - the only person we can change - ourselves
- Having problems does not mean we are bad, defective or inferior
- Some have learned these behaviors as children; others later in life -- even from our interpretation of religion
- These self-destructive behaviors grow out of need - to protect ourselves and meet our needs - we performed, felt, and thought

certain things to survive – emotionally, mentally and sometimes physically – trying to understand and cope with our complex worlds in the best ways possible

- Many have been trying to cope with outrageous circumstances, and these efforts have been both admirable and heroic – doing the best we can
- Unfortunately, some of the things we do to protect ourselves turn on us and hurt us – they become self-destructive
- Leaning on, trusting in and relying on others is a way of getting needs met that doesn't get needs met – doing the wrong things for the right reasons
- Many don't understand what they've been doing that hasn't been working
- Most have been responding to the problems of others – not having or taking the time to identify, much less take care of, our own problems and needs
- The first step toward change is AWARENESS
- The second step is ACCEPTANCE

- Working these steps helps us face and deal with our feelings – because if we feel miserable, it doesn't matter who calls or where we go, that's how we'll feel until we look within and face what's there
- These steps help us realize we will find ourselves less and less affected by external events, and more and more empowered to deal appropriately with what is happening
- These steps and principles help us recognize when we honestly face ourselves and take responsibility for ourselves we will discover this is where true empowerment lies
- These steps enable us to take responsibility for ourselves within the framework of reality
- They help us to realize the by-product of looking within is that we master the lesson of our present circumstances, so we can avoid repeat performances
- They help us to heal enough to enjoy life and love
- They are the beginning of our own housecleaning
- These steps are where we begin looking within for the solution to our problems and pain
- They help us to find problem areas in our lives –
 - Like protecting ourselves from negative emotions and fears
 - Living on other people's lives

- Being more concerned about others than ourselves
- Avoiding ourselves because we feel empty, drab or superficial
- During these steps, we begin to learn how to maximize the growth and minimize the pain
- We realize there is no way to go around or jump over the pain
- The only way to get rid of the pain is to go through it
- It has been said, “We need to use our past as a springboard, not a sofa – as a guidepost, not a hitching post”
- There are many who spend their time rationalizing the past, complaining about the present, and fearing the future – not moving forward on this spiritual journey to Renewal and Recovery
- If you choose to openly examine and confess your faults to yourself, to God, and to someone you trust guaranteed - growth will occur
- Pastor Rick Warren calls the process of “Coming Clean” “Truth Decay”
- During these steps, we chip away and clean out all the decay of the past that has built up over the years and has kept us from really seeing the truth about our past and present situations
- The word “Moral” simply means honest
- We list all the significant events in our lives – good and bad

- Being as honest as we can, will allow God to show us our part in each event, and how that affected us and others

Physical/Emotional/Sexual Abuse

Characteristics of Survivors of Abuse

- Hesitate to identify themselves as victims of abuse.
- Feel isolated, depressed, worthless, shameful and helpless to change.
- Struggle with negative feelings about God.
- Condemn themselves as responsible for the abuse.
- Deny that being abused in the past somehow affects present circumstances.
- Lack self-control; defeated in areas of compulsive behaviors.
- Feel angry and/or bitter.
- Have trouble with authority figures.
- Have difficulty trusting others or place unwarranted trust in unsafe individuals.
- Lack self-worth.

- Are preoccupied with thoughts of what it means to have a “normal” relationship with others: friends, family, the opposite sex.
- Lack a healthy sexual identity.
- Act in sexually inappropriate ways.
- Question their self-identity – “Who am I?”
- Question whether life has a purpose or is worth living.
- Feel “at home” in crisis situations
- Struggle with perfectionism or “all or nothing thinking”.
- Desire or fantasize about a better life.

The Problem

We have experienced some form of abuse, which has damaged our emotions and identity in ways that continue to affect us. We have developed incorrect ideas about life and destructive ways of dealing with the pain. This is harmful to us emotionally and physically, and damages our relationships with others. We need healing from the traumas done to us. We also need healing from the influence these experiences continue to have in our present lives.

The Solution

By walking with Holy Spirit and actually working through the Christ-

centered Steps and Renewal and Recovery Principles with God's Word, Jesus Christ as our Higher Power, we can and will change. We experience the true peace and serenity we have been seeking when we admit we are powerless to heal ourselves from the effects of abuse and give our lives and our wills over to the care of God. It is only when we become dependent on God for our happiness, believing that His plan for us includes victory over the abuse, that we stop living and reliving the past and experience complete and lasting emotional healing.

Here we learn a new way of living. We recognize that the persons who abused us are responsible for their abusive acts and we reject the guilt and shame resulting from those acts. We look to God and His Word to find our identity and standards for living. We honestly share our feelings with God and others to help us identify those areas that need cleansing and healing. We accept responsibility for our responses to the abuse. We rely on God as we go through the process of forgiving ourselves and our perpetrators. This enables us to establish and fully participate in healthy relationships and share this life-changing message with others. Those of us who have experienced life change through this program encourage you to keep coming back. It works, by God's power, if you work it.

The Steps we are to take for Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse

1. We admitted we were powerless over the past and as a result, our lives have become unmanageable.

“I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.” (Romans 7:18)

2. We came to believe that God could restore us to wholeness, and realized His power can always be trusted to bring healing and wholeness in our lives.

“For it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose.” (Philippians 2:13)

3. We made a decision to turn our wills and our lives over to the care of God, realizing we have not always understood His unconditional love. We daily choose to believe He loves us, is worthy of trust, and will help us understand Him as we seek His truth.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship.” (Romans 12:1)

4. We are willing to make a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves, realizing all wrongs can be forgiven and renouncing the lie that the abuse was our fault.

“Let us examine our ways and test them, and let us return to the Lord.”
(Lamentations 3:40)

5. We are willing to admit to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of the wrongs in our lives, including those acts perpetrated against us as well as those wrongs we committed against others.

“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed.” (James 5:16)

6. By accepting God’s cleansing, we renounced our shame and were entirely ready to have God remove all our distortions and defects of character.

“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will lift you up.” (James 4:10)

7. We humbly asked Him to remove all our shortcomings, including our guilt. We released our fear and submitted to Him.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

8. We made a list of all persons who had harmed us and became willing to seek God’s help in forgiving them, as well as forgiving ourselves. We realized we have also harmed others and became willing to make amends to them.

“Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (Luke 6:31)

9. We extended forgiveness to ourselves and to those who have harmed us, realizing this is an attitude of the heart, not always confrontation. We made direct amends to those we had harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others.

“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.” (Matthew 5:23-24)

Information taken from:

<https://celebraterecoveryibc.wordpress.com/small-groups/womens-groups/physicalemotionalsexual-abuse/>

Dear God, You know our past, all the good

And the bad things that we've done.
We ask that You give us the strength
And the courage to list them so that we
Can "Come Clean" and face them and the truth.
Please help us reach out to others
Who You have placed along our
"Journey to Renewal and Recovery."
Thank You for providing them to help us keep
Balanced
As we do our moral "honest" inventory.
In Christ's name we pray. Amen