

GETTING STARTED



IN
EXTREME LIVING

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THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LIKE A PUZZLE— IT WORKS BEST WHEN ALL THE PIECES FIT TOGETHER.

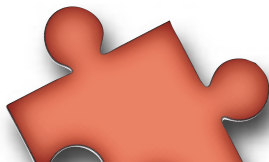
Are you a new Christian who desires to grow in your faith? Or, have you known Christ for some time...but haven't seen much progress in your walk with Him? Jesus wants you to know His will and awesome plan for your life.

Have you ever wondered what God's will is for you?

The Bible tells you that it is God's will that you grow in your relationship with Christ, and live the awesome life He planned for you. (Eph. 2:10)

God has given you answers in His Word to the "puzzle" of how to grow and live an extreme...awesome life in Christ.

In this small study you will learn the "secrets" of **HOW TO LIVE AN AWESOME LIFE WITH CHRIST...** and how all these important "pieces" fit together. Take time to read the Scriptures and other reading materials listed.



MAKING THE PIECES FIT

Congratulations!

If you have made the decision to receive Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord, you have begun an awesome journey with Christ that will never end.

The Christian life is more like a marathon than a sprint. Don't expect the emotions that begin your walk with Christ to carry you through when you get back to your daily "grind".

Running a marathon requires much time in training. But training definitely pays off in a better race.

In order for you to run your best race for Christ, you also need to spend time in training. Set your sights on Christ at the finish line...and run to win!

WARNING!

The temptations to quit the race will come from all directions. Perhaps even those who are closest to you

God wants you to be a winner in the Christian life, and is totally committed to your success, and His Holy Spirit will empower you and help you during each mile you run in life.



USING GOD'S TOOLS

Once you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, you will want to learn the secrets of living the awesome life He has planned for you. Get ready for extreme living as you connect the “pieces” of His awesome plan for you.

CONNECTING THE PIECES



THE HOLY SPIRIT



PRAYER



FAITH



FELLOWSHIP



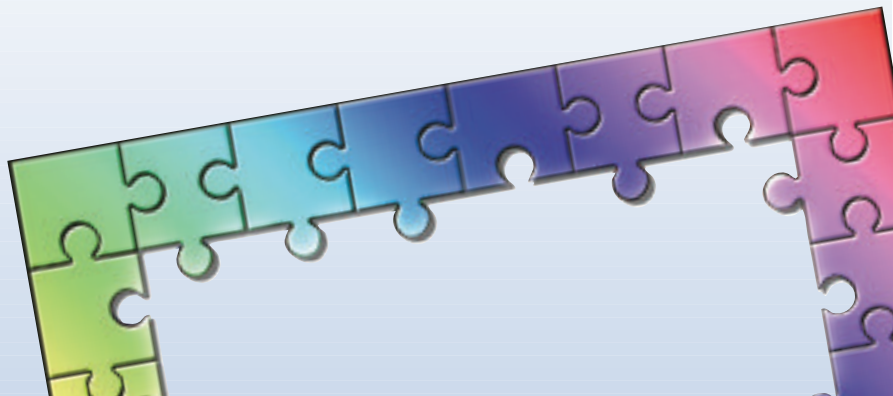
GOD'S WORD



OBEDIENCE

Each of these “pieces” is interrelated, and works together to strengthen your walk with Christ. The more time you spend in understanding and applying what God’s Word says about each “piece”, the more awesome your walk with Christ will become.

But, these “pieces” will only fit together if the “puzzle frame” is in place. In this illustration, the “frame” means that you have put your faith in Jesus Christ...and are one of His children. Without the “frame” none of the “pieces” will fit.



Chapter One, Extreme Purpose, will help you to determine the certainty of your eternal future with Christ. Even if you have invited Christ into your life, it is vital to have assurance that you belong to Him forever.

EXTREME PURPOSE

Most people live without the foggiest idea of what life is all about. Some even think life is a lucky “accident”.

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN

Have you ever wondered what life is all about?

How Did You Get Here?

What Were You Created For?

Where Are You Going After You Die?

So what is life all about? What is its purpose...and how can you be sure that your Creator will accept you with open arms when you stand before Him...face to Face?

Read this chapter, and learn about God's awesome plan for you for all eternity.

On September 11th, 2001, nearly 3000 people were tragically murdered in a violent act of terrorism at the World Trade Center. They immediately faced their Maker. None started his day with any clue it would be his last day on planet Earth.

You and I will also face our Maker at some point in the future. Then it will be too late to live for God.

Are you ready to face your Creator? The Bible says you can be ready. It says that you can be absolutely sure that, as one who trusts Christ, you actually have God's guarantee of His acceptance.

HOW YOU GOT HERE

You are no accident! (Psalm 139:13-18)

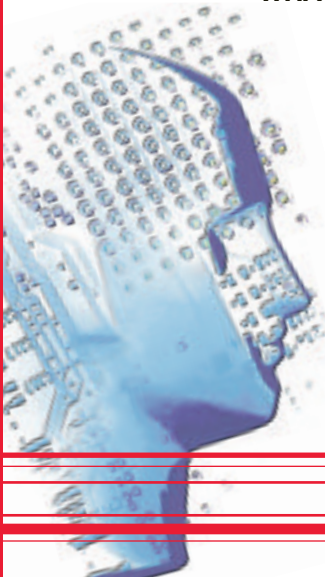
The Bible says that our awesome God created everything from nothing--and it says that it was mere “fingerwork” for Him. There are more stars in the universe than grains of sand on the entire Earth, yet God says you are more important to Him than all of them put together.

Psalm 139 tells us that God’s thoughts about you as a person are more than all the grains of sand. He thinks about you and me all the time!

WHAT YOU ARE HERE FOR

The Bible reveals God is your loving Father, who planned and designed you to be His child for all eternity. He wants you to share in the awesome treasures He has for you in Christ. (Eph. 1:3-11)

God could have made you like a robot who had no other choice but to love Him. However, He wanted you to choose to love and obey Him of your own free will. God gave you free choice!



WRONG CHOICES

The first man, Adam, was given the choice to obey or disobey God. When Adam chose to disobey, he began the sad plight of selfishness and rebellion that's rampant in our world today. Read Genesis Chapter 3 to find out how sin originated.

Q What does Romans 5:12 say Adam passed on to us?

The problem is that we all have made wrong choices in life.

The Bible calls these wrong choices—sin—which in the original Greek language means “missing the mark”... like an archer missing his target.

Sin is the reason for wars, terrorism, social injustice, selfishness, greed, jealousy, and addictive behavior.

Q What does Isaiah 53:6 say we have done with our choices?

Q What do Gen. 6:5; 8:21, and Jer. 17:9&10 say about the human heart?

Q In Romans 3:23, how many have sinned?

Q Does that include you?

SEPARATION FROM GOD

The Bible says that God is absolutely pure and holy, and cannot allow unforgiven sinners to pollute His holy Presence.

(Hab. 1:13 & Isa. 59:2)

Paul told the Roman believers what God's attitude is toward open rebellion and sin:

“For God’s [holy] wrath and indignation are revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who in their wickedness repress and hinder the truth and make it inoperative.”

Rom. 1:18

Q In Romans 6:23, what is sin's penalty?

If we were to stop at this point, life would be hopeless and full of despair . But, in spite of our unworthiness, our loving and merciful God, found a way to give us hope and favor.

And...He paid the ultimate price to do it...His only Son!

JESUS CHRIST – GOD'S SOLUTION

The Promised Messiah

In the Old Testament Scriptures, a spotless, unblemished lamb was the picture of a sin offering. This offering pointed to the future spotless Lamb of God, the Messiah, who would be God's perfect sacrifice for our sins. (John 1:29)

For centuries the prophets of Israel had foretold the coming of the Messiah. (Read Isaiah 9:6, and 53:1-12, written 700 years before Jesus was born).

Over fifteen hundred years, nearly three hundred specific references were made to His coming. All are recorded in Scripture.

JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY

Following are a few Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah which were fulfilled by Jesus. Look them up, and write down the specific prophecies that were fulfilled:

| OLD TESTAMENT: | NEW TESTAMENT: | FULFILLMENT: |
|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| Micah 5.2 | Matthew 2.1 | |
| Isaiah 9.6-7 | Luke 1.31-33 | |
| Psalms 22.1 | Matthew 27.46 | |
| Psalms 22.18 | Matthew 27.35 | |
| Isaiah 7.14 | Luke 1.35 | |

The odds against one person fulfilling merely eight conditions in these prophecies would be the same as a blindfolded person picking one special silver dollar from a two foot high stack of silver dollars over an area the size of Texas (greater than the entire nation of France.)

Yet, Jesus Christ fulfilled over two hundred of them...exactly! And His sinless life qualified Him to be God's perfect sacrifice for all of our sins. (Heb. 9:14)

Jesus Claimed To Be God

Jesus claimed that He was the “I AM” that God had called Himself in the Old Testament. (Ex. 3:14,15; John 8:57-59)

Jesus made other “I Am” statements of Himself:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|------------|
| “I AM the bread of life” | John 6:35 |
| “I AM the light of the world” | John 8:12 |
| “I AM the good shepherd” | John 10:11 |
| “I AM the door” | John 10:9 |
| “I AM the resurrection and the life” | John 11:25 |
| “I AM the way... truth... and life” | John 14:6 |
| “I AM the vine” | John 15:1 |

Q

Who is Jesus according to the following verses?

John 1:1-14

John 14:9

Colossians 1:15-20

Hebrews 1:1-8

John 10:30

Philippians 2:6-11

Colossians 2:9

Revelation 22:12-16

All the evidence points clearly to the fact that Jesus Christ is God!

Incredible!

The One who created the universe became a man!

It is sometimes hard for people to accept the fact that Jesus claimed to be God. 'Doubting Thomas' was like that. Read John 20:24-29.

Q What convinced him?

Q What convinced you?

Jesus Died On The Cross

The religious leaders knew Jesus was making statements that only God could make, and accused Him of blasphemy against God. (John 10:33) In a mock trial they convicted Him, and turned Him over to the Romans to have Him executed.

Jesus then was beaten mercilessly, nailed to a cross between two thieves, and buried in a heavily guarded tomb. All hope seemed lost.



Jesus Conquered Death!

But, He rose from the dead on the third day...just as He had promised! (Matt.16:21) Historical records from eyewitnesses testify that Jesus Christ was then seen alive by over 500 people. (1 Cor. 15:3-8) He is alive today!

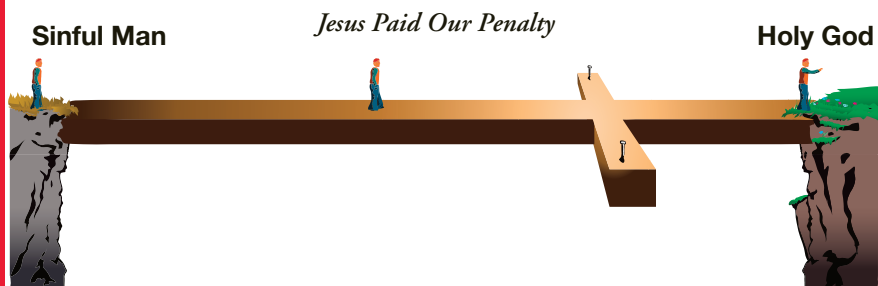
To check out the historical evidence, read, Evidence That Demands A Verdict, by Josh McDowell, or, The Case for Christ, by Lee Strobel.)

Buddha is dead
Mohammed is dead
Confucius is dead

JESUS CHRIST IS ALIVE!

Jesus' disciples fled in fear when He went through the torture of the cross, but they became men of great courage when they saw Him alive after 3 days! They lost all fear—even when, later, they too were tortured to death for their faith.

Wow! Isn't that awesome? Jesus Christ is alive today! The Bible calls Jesus the "King of kings and Lord of lords." (Rev. 19:11-16) And, it states that Jesus Christ will return to the earth in power and great glory! (Zech. 14:4; Luke 21:27)



This illustration shows how the cross of Christ becomes your "bridge" to God. (Heb. 4:14-16)

"There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them."

Acts 4:12

Jesus told His disciples:

"I am the way. The truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."

John 14:6

GODS FREE GIFT

The awesome truth is that Jesus Christ paid for all your sins on the cross...and has given you direct access to God.

God's perfect justice is totally satisfied by the blood of Jesus. He "bought" you, and there are no "returns"! (Heb. 7:25; 9:12) But, you might wonder, "What about all the good things I've done in my life?"

Q In the following verses, who is responsible for your salvation?

| | You | Jesus |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Romans 5:8 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Ephesians 2:8-9 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Titus 3:5-6 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1 Peter 3:18 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**ETERNAL LIFE IS A GIFT FROM GOD.
YOU CANNOT DO ANYTHING TO EARN IT!**

However, like any gift, you can choose to accept or reject it.

IT'S YOUR FREE CHOICE!

HOW TO JOIN GOD'S FAMILY

Q If you had been one of the victims at the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, what would you have said to God if He had asked you, "Why should I let you into my heaven?"

Q According to 1 John 5:11-13, and John 3:15-18, what is the one requirement of having eternal life in heaven?

In the original Greek language, the word "believe" means to:
TRUST IN ; CLING TO ; RELY UPON

In other words, "believe" in the original Greek language is an active faith...much like the faith rock climbers have in the rope to hold them secure.

Becoming a Christian is putting your faith in Jesus' death for you on the cross, and in His resurrection for your eternal life.

FAITH VERSUS FEELINGS

Christianity is a relationship with Christ—based on faith alone!

Your faith is to be based on the facts in the Bible...not feelings! (2 Tim. 3:16)

Faith in Christ may result in feelings...and often does. But, emotions are changeable, and you can't depend upon them. You can only depend on what God says in His Word!

ACCEPTING HIS FORGIVENESS

The most important decision you will ever make in life is to receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord.

Coming to Jesus is not about “giving up” things. Rather, it is about accepting His forgiveness by faith.

PERSONAL INVITATION

In order to receive God’s forgiveness for your sins, you must personally invite Jesus Christ into your life. (John 1:12) God knows your thoughts and motives. He desires you to come to Him in faith and humbleness, thanking Him for His death for you on the cross.

You receive Jesus Christ into your life by personally asking Him to come into your life and forgive your sins. Simply pray the following words, trusting Him to answer you.

“Dear Lord Jesus, thank you for dying for all my sins – past, present, and future. Thank you for giving me eternal life which you made possible by your death and resurrection. I receive You as my Savior by faith, and desire You to be Lord of my life.”

Date:

WHERE YOU ARE GOING AFTER YOU DIE

Q If you have Jesus Christ in your life, what else are you sure of? (1 John 5:11-13)

Q Once you have put your faith in Christ, is there anything that can separate you from God's love? (Romans 8:38,39)

Q Will Christ ever leave you? (Hebrews 13:5)

Q For how long will God forgive your sins? (Hebrews 8:12)

If you have put your faith in Jesus Christ, your eternal destiny is with Him in Heaven...forever!

As God's child He will always love you—even when you fail Him. He will never give up on you—even when you give up on Him. *Never quit running the race!*

YOUR INHERITANCE IN CHRIST

As a Christian, you are granted an awesome inheritance:

- Your sins are completely forgiven. (Col. 2:13,14)
- You become a child of God—forever. (John 1:12)
- Christ actually comes into your life. (Rev. 3:20)
- The Holy Spirit is your guarantee. (2 Cor. 1:22)
- Christ gives you His nature. (2 Cor. 5:17)

Take time to read these verses that tell you about your awesome inheritance, and thank God for giving it to you.

LIVING FOR CHRIST

Faith in Christ, over time, will result in obedience to God's Word, even though there will be ups and downs. (James 2.17)
However, the Bible says, the Christian life is like a battlefield.

**Satan will try to discourage you.
The world will offer you cheap substitutes.
Your own desires will attack you.**

SATAN: Satan is a vicious enemy who will aim to destroy you and your walk with Christ. The Bible calls him a "roaring lion" who is always looking to destroy believers. (1 Peter 5.8) His biggest weapon is to keep you away from God's Word...and your dependency on Christ. Then he can launch his weapons of doubt and discouragement. You don't need to fear him. He can only defeat you if you let him. Prepare for battle. (Eph. 6:10-18)

THE WORLD: Although there is nothing wrong with money or material success, it is very easy to get so focused on possessions and success, that God becomes secondary to personal ambition. God wants to be your first and highest focus in life...and you will only be truly satisfied when you give Him His rightful place. (Matthew. 6:33)

"FLESHLY" DESIRES: We all are assaulted daily by images and desires that are outside the will of God. This includes temptations such as sex (outside of marriage), gossip, anger, addictions, and other destructive behavior. (Gal. 5:17)

As you grow in Christ, you will experience more and more victory over these attacks. Your growth in Christ, and your victory over temptation will largely depend on you following God's growth plan. In the Christian life you are either growing or shrinking.

GROWTH IS GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU

God's Growth Plan for You as a Christian is as follows:

Walk in the Spirit. (*Holy Spirit – Chapter 2*)

Trust God with Your Life . (*Faith – Chapter 3*)

Know and Trust God's Word. (*God' Word – Chapter 4*)

Pray to God. (*Prayer – Chapter 5*)

Fellowship with other Christians. (*Fellowship – Chapter 6*)

Obey Christ. (*Obedience – Chapter 7*)

CONNECTING THE PIECES

Extreme living with Christ begins to take shape as the pieces of the puzzle connect.


SO...ARE YOU READY TO RUN THE RACE?
EVEN THOUGH IT MEANS CHANGING DIRECTIONS?



If you are serious about growing in your new relationship with Christ, then spend time going through the next chapters—looking up the Bible verses—and telling God you want to live the awesome life He has planned for you.

AND...RUN TO WIN!

In the following chapters you will learn how each “piece” of the “puzzle” is a vital part of your growth in Christ.



GOD'S AWESOME GIFT TO YOU... THE HOLY SPIRIT

When you run a race, such as a marathon, it is your race to win or lose...without any help or encouragement.

Living for Christ is different.

When Jesus left the earth after His resurrection, He told His disciples to wait for the “promise” He would send them from His Father.

“And now I will send the Holy Spirit, just as my Father promised.”

Luke 24:49

**THE HOLY SPIRIT IS CALLED MANY THINGS IN THE BIBLE,
BUT HIS MAIN ROLE IN YOUR LIFE IS TO BE YOUR
“ENCOURAGER AND COMFORTER” AS YOU EMBARK ON
YOUR NEW AWESOME JOURNEY WITH CHRIST.**

(John 16:7-15)

Without Him, living for Christ is impossible. With Him, you can do anything and everything through Christ!
(Phil. 4:13) Chapter's Two and Three will show you how.

EXTREME FRIEND

THE HOLY SPIRIT PART ONE

THE INDWELLING HOLY SPIRIT

When you invited Jesus Christ to be your personal Savior and Lord, He actually entered your life—and He will be with you forever. You will never be alone!

“...that Christ may actually live in your hearts by your faith.”

Ephesians 3:17

As your invited guest and Lord, Jesus desires to “settle down” in each “room” of your “house”. He brings warmth, light, and music. Christ lives in you through the Person of the Holy Spirit. Read the booklet, *My Heart, Christ’s Home*.

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Even though The Holy Spirit is invisible, He is a real Person—the Spirit of Jesus. (John 14:16-21)

Q What do these verses say about the Holy Spirit?

Acts 5: 3,4

John 14:16,17

1 Cor. 6:19

Yes, the Bible states clearly, that just like the Father, and the Son, the Holy Spirit is God! One God in three Persons.

Jim Rayburn, founder of Young Life said:

“My whole life was completely changed when I found out the Holy Spirit was a real Person—God living in my life, doing things for me that I could never do myself.”

The Holy Spirit will take each area of your life which you commit to Him and connect the pieces into an awesome picture of God’s best for you!

WHY DOES THE HOLY SPIRIT INDWELL YOU?

A NEW YOU

“Those who become Christians become new persons.

They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone.

A new life has begun.” 2 Cor. 5:17

You are now a totally new creation—just like this new butterfly, which was formerly a caterpillar.

You may not always feel...or act new. But in God’s eyes you are totally new!

The Father sees you as one whom His dear Son has purchased with the price of His own blood. You are His royal child! (Heb. 2:9-11)



YOUR BEST FRIEND

The Bible tells you that Jesus is your best friend. (John 15:15)

Ashley's Story

"I always put my friends above God. In fact, my life revolved around my friends so much that I began to get involved in reckless behavior just to seem 'cool' to others.

"Pretty soon I got involved in drugs, sex, and alcohol. My life got out of control, and I felt worthless, with no purpose other than to get "high." Then I even lost my friends, who called me "trash."

"One day someone told me that Jesus Christ not only created me, but wanted to be my best friend. I couldn't believe it at first. Later I decided to ask Him into my life. Since then, God has given me a new purpose in life and helped me break my addictions. I now have many new friends, but the greatest of all is Jesus Christ. He accepts me for who I am, and tells me that He will never leave or forsake me." (Hebrews 13:5)

No other friend loves you so much or will stick with you so closely. (Prov. 18:24) Jesus is totally loyal and faithful! (Prov. 20:6)

MORE LIKE CHRIST

God's awesome plan is to change you into Christ's image. (Romans 8:29) Jesus' Spirit living in you has begun this change, and He will continue His work throughout your life. (Phil. 1:6)

Q WHAT QUALITIES DO YOU LOOK FOR IN A FRIEND?

Q Whose work is it according to Philippians 2:13?

TEMPTATION TO ABORT MISSION

When a space shuttle launches, it is too late to abort the mission without the potential of grave danger. Now that you have “launched” with Christ, you need to be aware of the danger of aborting your mission.

The lure of life’s pleasures will tug at you. Your own hormones and desires will crave to be fulfilled.

Those temporary pleasures are not worth aborting your “mission” with Christ... and quitting the “race”!

In Romans 8:32, Paul says:

“Since God did not spare even His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, won’t God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else?”

In other words, your heavenly Father loves you so much that He delights in giving you your heart’s desire. If you live for Christ and trust him, you will experience...

EXTREME JOY
EXTREME PEACE
EXTREME LOVE
EXTREME CONFIDENCE
EXTREME HOPE
EXTREME CONTENTMENT

WARNING!

Satan will attempt to get you to abort your “mission” of living for Christ by telling you, “God wants to take all the fun out of your life,” or, “He doesn’t really care about my problem.”

CONTINUAL BATTLE

In addition to satanic attacks, as long as you live, you will also have your own flesh with you, and its desire for self gratification.

Life will be a continual battle between the desire to do things your way—or Christ's way. Read Galatians 5:16-23

Q

What does Galatians 5:16-18 say about this warfare?

Choosing to listen to the Holy Spirit and follow His leading will always be the right choice!

From Galatians 5:16-23, contrast the two different lives:

The Self-Controlled Life

| |
|--|
| |
| |
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| |

The Spirit-Controlled Life

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| |
| |

THE "FILLING" OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Bible says:

"So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."

Galatians 5:16

The word, "filled" means to be directed and controlled. A basketball player voluntarily puts himself under the control of his coach. He does this so he can play his best...and win the game.

The player is not a robot. But he freely chooses to let his coach direct him, because he wants to play well...and win!



Q What does Ephesians 5:18 say?

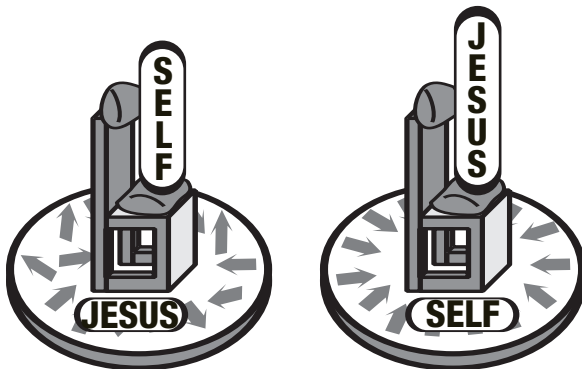
A NEW WAY TO THINK

God's awesome plan for you is to mold you into the image of Christ. This life-long process is the work of the Holy Spirit...as you give Him control of your life. (Rom. 8:29)

The Holy Spirit will gradually conform us into the image of Christ as we submit ourselves to Him. Of course, we will never be totally like Christ until we are with Him in Heaven.

TWO TYPES OF CHRISTIANS

The circles on the next page represent two types of Christians and the throne represents who is in control.



The circle on the left depicts a Christian who has given his/her life to Christ, but has chosen to rule his/her own life. All activities, interests, desires, and choices are self-directed, leading to a life of frustration and defeat (represented by the arrows).

Galatians 5:19-21 illustrates the Christian who has self at the center of his life.

The circle on the right depicts a Christian who has put Christ as the focus of his life. All activities, interests, desires, and choices are directed by Christ,

resulting in harmony with God's plan. This is the abiding life which results from being obedient to the Word of God. Galatians 5:19-23 illustrates the vast difference in a Christ-directed life and a self-directed life. The key to yielding your life to the Holy Spirit is "thinking right."

"...I plead with you to give your bodies to God... When you think of what He has done for you, is that too much to ask?" Rom. 12:1

(A one time act, according to the original Greek)

It is God's great love for you that should be your motivation to trust the Holy Spirit completely with your life. (2 Cor. 5:14,15)

Todd's Story

"For three years I had been consumed with the desire to join the elite club for 'cool' guys in my high school... the 'Mavericks'. Before coming to Christ, I would have 'sold my soul' to have been asked to join. Although I was a Christian, I thought it would still be okay... even though it was a drinking club.

"I began to seriously think about going all out for Christ, and putting aside things that were self-destructive. Finally I decided to make a decision by the end of the week.

"It was during that week that I got asked to join the Mavericks! I immediately knew that the stakes were high, and that Satan was trying to derail my decision. I didn't give him the pleasure... and turned my life completely over to God. God gave me true freedom... and an awesome life!"

A NEW WAY TO LIVE

As Romans 12:1 says, giving your life to the Holy Spirit is a decision...a free choice for you to make. It is done by simply putting your life into the hands of a trustworthy God.

Just as you came to Christ by faith for the forgiveness of your sins, you must by faith ask the Holy Spirit to control your life. When you think of what He has done for you...and how much He loves you...is there any other choice?

IN RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S LOVE FOR YOU, SIMPLY PRAY THE FOLLOWING:

“Dear Lord, I want You to change my life from being self-centered into one that is Christ-centered. I confess my sinful thoughts and actions, and give You, Holy Spirit, control of my life right now.”

If you sincerely spoke those words to your Lord, you are ready for extreme living!

Q What does this commitment mean to you?

You are now ready for the Holy Spirit to connect the other pieces of the “puzzle”. In the next chapter you will see how trusting His Word empowers you with the extreme power of God Himself!

SO...HOW WELCOME IS JESUS IN YOUR HOUSE?

Are you afraid that Jesus will take all the fun out of your life? Do you keep Him out of the main rooms of your “house”, perhaps in the garage?

Jesus will not force Himself into any room in your house—but He will patiently work in your life to prove that He can make every part of your life totally awesome!

Don't blame yourself when your emotions lead you to willingly sin and disobey God. Although you may suffer the pain and consequences of those decisions, God has awesome ways of transforming your cocoa beans into chocolate.

He will take you just as you are...and begin re-weaving the strands in your life... when you come back to Him in confession and repentance.

**Spend some time thinking about how much Jesus loves you,
and what He did for you on the cross.**

If you haven't made Him feel welcome, now would be a good time to tell Him you want to change that!

Q What did you tell Him?

EXTREME POWER

The Holy Spirit Part Two

FAITH....

THE KEY TO WALKING IN THE SPIRIT

In Chapter Two, you learned several things that the Holy Spirit does for you:

He lives in you, and gives you Christ's nature.

He is your best friend and Lord.

He molds you into Christ's image.

He directs your paths.

He controls you when you yield to Him.

He offers joy, peace, contentment, love, hope, and power to live for Him.

In this chapter you will learn about the extreme power the Holy Spirit gives you as you walk in the Spirit on a moment by moment basis...regardless of your circumstances.

Paul told the Galatians the secret to winning the race:

"I have been crucified with Christ. I myself no longer live, but Christ lives in me. So I live my life in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Gal.2:20

Faith in God and His Word is the way Paul ran his race, and it is the “piece” of the “puzzle” on which all other pieces hinge!

Faith is how you received Christ.

Faith is how you turned your life over to the Holy Spirit.

Faith is how you walk in the Spirit on a daily basis.



Q What does Heb. 11:6 say about faith?

It is by faith that God’s extreme power is available to you.

“PUMPED”..BUT NO POWER

Jesus was giving His disciples final instructions before He went back to His Father. They were all totally “pumped” after His resurrection...and ready to give up everything to follow Him.

But Jesus knew they were not ready. Even after three years of His training and discipling them...they didn’t have the strength to live the life He had called them to live. They would fail miserably if they tried to live for Christ in their own strength!

Jesus knew they needed His power. He told them:

“But you are to be given power when the Holy Spirit has come to you”

Acts 1:8, J.B. Phillips

FEELINGS ARE FICKLE

Many believers have mistaken the Holy Spirit's power for an emotional feeling or euphoria. Sadly, when the emotions and feelings depart...they think they have lost the Holy Spirit's power. They don't believe God's promise:

"I will never leave or forsake you."

Hebrews 13:5

Q Can you think of a time when you wanted the Holy Spirit to "pump you up" with "feelings"?

Q Why are feelings not enough?

The power the Holy Spirit brings to you is much more than emotions or feelings...although they may be part of it. He brings you His power so that you can live the awesome life Christ has planned for you.

- Power to abide in Christ and love others.**
- Power to overcome trials.**
- Power to overcome temptation.**
- Power to overcome sin.**
- Power to produce fruit.**
- Power to obey Christ.**

Jesus does not give you a list of rules to follow. Rather, He empowers you by His Holy Spirit to live a life of obedience. It's all about relationship—not rules!

EXTREME LIVING...YOUR CHOICE

Every moment of your life, the Holy Spirit is waiting to guide you into extreme living. But, He always allows you free choice.

The Apostle Paul (formerly named Saul) had been a strong opponent of the early Christians. As a high ranking Jewish leader, he was angry at everything Christians stood for... and wanted to abolish Christianity and the worship of Christ, even having Christians put to death.

On his way to Damascus, Jesus miraculously appeared to Him in a vision. When Paul heard and saw Jesus... recognizing Him as Lord... He asked Jesus, "What will You have me to do?"

Acts 9:6

Paul's attitude of willingness to serve Christ is what God wants from you.

BELIEF CAUSES BEHAVIOR

How you act and behave is motivated by what you think.

Many people fill their lives by chasing after money, sex, or toys, thinking it will bring them happiness. They think, "He who dies with the most toys, wins!" As a result, they waste their lives.

Some people leave God out of their lives because they believe life will be boring. They believe God is against fun...and doesn't care about their dreams. They don't want to trust Him with their future.

The Bible says that God loves you so much that He desires and plans the very best for your future. Read what the psalmist said:

*"Take delight in the Lord,
and He will give you your heart's desires."*

Psalms 37:4

If you accept God's Word as truth, you will give all your plans and dreams to God because you believe that He will "give you your heart's desires."

Q What does Romans 8:32 say about God's trustworthiness?

Q Are you ready to make the truth of God's Word the foundation of your beliefs?

OVERCOMING DOUBT

Joni's Story

Joni Eareckson was an attractive, athletic teenager who had everything going her way in life—until she dove head first into a shallow lake...breaking her neck.

Joni had trusted Christ for salvation in Young Life, but most of her hopes and dreams were for self-fulfillment. Suddenly Joni's world totally fell apart. She would never walk, or be able to use her hands again! Joni's faith was shaken. Joni relates:

"In those first few months after my injury, the promises of God seemed anything but true....How could I be expected to believe when everything inside and outside of me screamed just the opposite?"

Joni struggled greatly until a friend from Young Life named Steve Estes encouraged her to trust God. Through time, and hearing God's Word,—Joni began to believe God's promises.

Joni did overcome her despair...by faith—and today runs an international ministry, (Joni and Friends) which shares Christ's love with disabled people all over the world.

"Today as I look back, I am convinced that the whole or deal of my paralysis was inspired by God's love. I wasn't the brunt of some cruel divine joke. God had reasons behind my suffering, and learning some of them has made all the difference in the world." (Joni, A Step Further)

EXTREME FAITH

The Bible tells us that it is possible to live a life of extreme faith. Hebrews Chapter 11 gives us examples of men and women who trusted God in spite of great adversity and opposition. Such a life pleases God greatly, and results in a life of extreme power and victory over our circumstances.

Q Hebrews, the eleventh chapter tells about these men and women who had extreme faith. Read Hebrews Chapter 11 and write down your thoughts:

When God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt He performed many miracles, including drying up the Red Sea so they could escape the armies of Pharaoh. They saw God's mighty hand at work, but soon forgot and began to doubt His promise to provide for their basic needs.

God told them through Moses that He had a place of rest for them to dwell in, called the Promised Land, "a land flowing with milk and honey." But all they did was complain and doubt God's promise. (Read Exodus Chapters 3 through 20.)

They sent 12 spies to scout out the land and discovered it to be a paradise "flowing with milk and honey." But there were also giants there. When they came back and reported their findings, only Joshua and Caleb were willing to trust God and face the giants. The other 10 scouts were afraid and convinced the doubting Israelites they were unable to overcome the giants. For the next 40 years they wandered in the wilderness unwilling to trust God and enter His place of rest. (Read Numbers Chapter's 13 and 14.)

Q What are the giants in your life?

Q God has a place of rest for you. Read Hebrews 3:7–4:16. According to this passage, how do we enter God's rest?

Q What are we warned against?

If you will simply trust the promises in His Word, you will discover that wonderful rest. That is extreme faith!

Is there something in your life keeping you from trusting God? If any of the following areas are keeping you from trusting God—confess them to God, and repent, (change your thinking) now—before it is too late

| | HELPING | HUR | TING |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| FRIENDS | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| RECREATION | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| HABITS | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| TIME IN GOD'S WORD | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| THOUGHTS | <input type="checkbox"/> | | <input type="checkbox"/> |

God can be trusted in all areas of your life.

Q Spend some time evaluating the list above, and write down any area with which you need to take prayerful action in changing.

RENEWING YOUR MIND

Romans 12:1 speaks of giving control of your life to the Holy Spirit as a one time decision. (The Greek “Aorist” tense)

Romans 12:2 in the original Greek uses the present tense, which means a continual renewing of your mind.

“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect His will really is”

Romans 12:2

This verse says that you can choose to confess your sin... and yield your life to the Holy Spirit at any moment.

Walking in the Spirit is a moment by moment decision.

BROKEN FELLOWSHIP

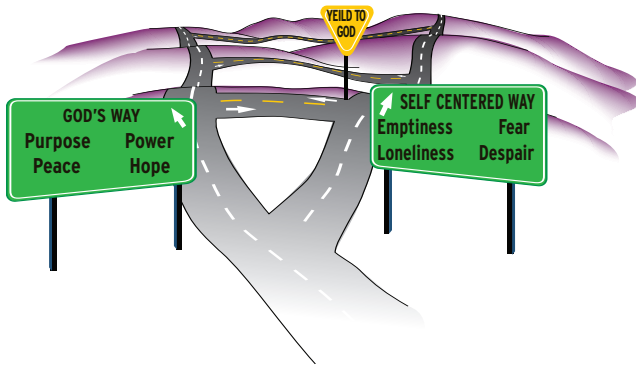
Every believer sins and breaks fellowship with the Holy Spirit at times. (1 John 1.8) Broken fellowship does not mean your sins aren’t forgiven. Jesus paid for all your sins on the cross, once and for all, past—present—and future!

Broken fellowship means that you are not abiding in Christ, and therefore are not experiencing God’s extreme power to live.

CHOOSING GOD’S WAY

“God’s way” in life results in purpose, power, peace, and hope. God wants to direct your life all the time.

But the sinful part of you will always want your own way... the “self-centered way.” A self-centered life may get high on short term pleasures, but usually ends up in fear, emptiness, loneliness, and finally despair.



The illustration above shows you that at any moment of your day, you can get back on “God’s Way” and restore fellowship with Him. Simply take the following steps:

1.
Choose to yield to God.
 (Romans 12.2)

2.
Confess your sins.
 (1 John 1.9)

3.
Trust God that He is in control.
 (1 John 5.14-15)

“SPIRITUAL BREATHING”

To better understand how to walk in the Spirit on a moment by moment basis, Bill Bright compares it to breathing. When you breathe, you exhale impurities, and inhale pure air and oxygen. In spiritual breathing, you exhale sin – by confession, and inhale the Holy Spirit’s control – by faith. (Read: Spirit-filled Life, by Bill Bright)

Once the Holy Spirit is in control of your life, He gives you extreme power to live for God.

EXHALE:

- Confess your sins
 (1 John 1:9)

INHALE:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to control you
 (Gal 5:16)

Remember– Christ has freed you from the bondage of sin.

POWER TO OVERCOME TRIALS

“...whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything.”
James 1:2-4

The truth is that trials will come to all of us. Trusting in God and His promises is the only way to overcome them.

Lars's Story

As an unknown golfer, Lars Hansen had stunned the Canadian golf community by winning the Ontario Bantam Golf Championship at the young age of 13. With his flashy smile, charming good looks, and winsome personality, it seemed like Lars had what it takes to bring happiness. But an inner void and lack of purpose led him to accept Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord.

Soon Lars began reading the Bible, and sharing Christ with his friends. After playing collegiate golf in California and graduating in mathematics, Lars began working for a major corporation. At age 28 Lars began feeling weak, and was diagnosed with severe kidney failure. He eventually lost his kidneys, his eyesight, and finally his life, at age 35.

During the seven years that Lars's athletic body, sight, and mobility deteriorated, his faith in Christ actually deepened. He listened to Christian radio broadcasts, and never asked “why?” Even in his deepest pain, he believed that God loved him, and had some unknown purpose for his trial. On his last night, Lars weakly prayed to his heavenly Father, trusting him with his future.

“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.”

Rom. 8:28

Q What is God telling you in this verse that you can trust Him for?

The test of whether or not you are living in the will of God is not that all your circumstances are trouble-free, but that you are living in faith and obedience to your Lord.

POWER OVER TEMPTATION

We all face numerous temptations daily. Being tempted is not a sin...it is normal.

When tempted, your choice is to give in or to trust God. Giving in to temptation is sin, and breaks fellowship with God.

Read the following verse carefully, and apply what it says to any temptations you are currently facing.

“...the temptations that come into your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will keep the temptation from becoming so strong that you can’t stand up against it. When you are tempted, He will show you a way out so that you will not give in to it.”

(1 Cor. 10:13)

In this verse, God tells you how to overcome temptation:

Trust God... that your temptation is normal.

Trust God...for the ability to withstand it.

Trust God...to give you a “way out”.

Q Are you trusting God to help you overcome temptation?

Don't ever say, "the temptation is too strong," and give in to it. If you are abiding in Christ, the Holy Spirit has promised to give you the power to withstand temptation.

But...you must be willing to take God's "way out", and as Paul told Timothy, "run from anything that stimulates youthful lust."

2 Timothy 2:22.

Darrel's Story

"I was involved in a sexual relationship with Tori whom I had been dating for two years. When I got back from Malibu [Young Life Camp], I wanted to please my Savior. But, I tried to rationalize my behavior—thinking that God might approve. I thought God would understand my "needs".

But, because I wanted to please Christ, I read the Bible to see what it said about sexual purity. I realized the importance of obedience to Christ, and that sex outside of marriage was wrong. I knew though, that I didn't have the strength to break off the relationship with Tori.

So, By faith, I asked for the Holy Spirit to empower me to obey Him.

The temptation to have sex with her was so strong, that I realized Tori and I needed to quit seeing each other.

When I chose to obey Him and quit having sex with Tori, the Holy Spirit gave me a tremendous peace and joy. Since that decision, life has been truly awesome!"

Darrel took God seriously, and "ran" from the temptation that could have entrapped him and hindered his walk with Christ. By faith Darrel chose to obey God... and he won a great victory! (John 14:21)

Q What are you going to do the next time you are tempted?

POWER OVER SIN

Sin can become addictive, but the Holy Spirit can break that bondage by His extreme power.

Matt's Story

"My breakthrough came when I began believing and claiming God's promises. Whenever I am tempted, I think about a promise in God's Word that applies to that particular temptation. I then simply focus on His Word, and pray for the Holy Spirit to give me strength to overcome.

"There are really four keys to my victory over the bondage of sin:

First, I needed to take the time to memorize and meditate on God's promises. I discovered a treasure of God's many promises throughout Scripture that are vital to victorious living.

"Second, I confess my sins whenever my thoughts are wrong. According to 1 John 1:9 I take Him at His Word that I am forgiven. (Exhale... See Ch. 3)

"Third, I surrender my thoughts and actions to the Holy Spirit by telling Him I want to please Him. (Inhale... See Ch. 3)

"Finally, I spend time with my mentor and other Christians who hold me accountable and encourage me in my walk with Christ.

"As I've applied God's Word to all areas of my life, I have been free from bondage to sin and addiction. God has blessed me with a wonderful Christian wife and family. My wife and I are now teaching others how memorizing God's promises can help overcome sin and addiction. I feel so free and joyful now that I have turned my life completely over to the Holy Spirit's control."

“In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan.”

Eph. 6:16

If you are involved in a battle over temptation, sin, or addiction to a substance or lifestyle, the power of the Holy Spirit is able to lift you out and give you total victory. Choose to trust Him!

POWER TO BEAR FRUIT

The Holy Spirit will empower you to bear fruit when you are trusting Him, and abiding in Christ. Abiding in Christ means walking in the Spirit. In John, Jesus told His disciples:

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

John 15:5

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Jesus compared your life to a branch that is totally dependent on the grapevine. The purpose of the vine is to produce big juicy grapes. The more fruit...the more the farmer is pleased.

The Holy Spirit wants to produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life, which is identified as:

Love
Joy
Peace

Patience
Kindness
Goodness

Faithfulness
Gentleness
Self-control

The Fruit of the Spirit results in a heart that God uses to reach others for Christ. Read John Chapter 15.

YOUR DAILY POWER

When you get up in the morning, do you call on God's power to help you through the day's challenges?

Q Who are you depending on in each area below?

| Daily Issues: | My Power: | God's Power: |
|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Relationships | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health/Fears | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Trials/Temptations | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Emotions | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| School/Work | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Goals/Dreams | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

You can ask the Holy Spirit to give you His power for all the details of your life.

God gives you this great promise that you can make yours every single day.

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear...but of power, love, and self-discipline.”

2 Timothy 1:7

Q In this verse, what does God tell you is not from Him, and what does He promise to give you?

SO...ARE YOU READY FOR AWESOME LIVING?

Simply trust God...and His extreme power will connect all the pieces in your walk with Christ!

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”

Prov. 3:5&6

Q What are you trusting God for right now?

Faith is like a muscle. It must be exercised!

The more you know God's Word, the better equipped you will be to exercise your faith.

Q Where does Romans 10:17 say faith comes from?

God's Word, the Bible, is the next vital piece of the “puzzle”. Your growth in Christ is directly related to your knowledge of and obedience to the wonderful promises in God's Word!

EXTREME PROVISION GOD'S LOVE LETTER...to YOU!

If you received a special letter or email from Jesus...telling you how much He loves you...and giving you the guidance and direction you need for your daily issues.....

would you read it? Would you keep it, cherish it, memorize it, and continually think about it?

That's exactly what the Bible is...it's God's love letter to you! God's Word is as important to your Christian growth as milk is to a new baby. It is a vital "piece" of the "puzzle".

BEFORE YOU START

Begin this study by getting a Bible with good references and helps. You may find a modern translation easier to understand.

Begin memorizing key Scripture verses from *Beginning with Christ*. These are promises you will want with you daily! And to better understand the Bible, read *What the Bible is all about*, by Henrietta Mears.



YOUR ROAD MAP

If you were trying to drive to a distant small town you had never been to before...would you drive by your emotions and instincts... or would you look at a road map?

THE BIBLE IS GOD'S "ROAD MAP" FOR YOUR LIFE.

"The road of life can be a baffling route indeed: smooth at times, but sometimes full of potholes...one day a well marked expressway, the next a maze of detours. But your heavenly Father has provided a road map—the Bible—to keep you moving in the right direction."

Closer Walk New Testament

While the road map won't tell you what's around the curve, or how bumpy the road is...it will keep you from heading in the wrong direction, giving you guidance for daily living.

The Bible also gives you God's wonderful promises for each step of the way. In this booklet you will learn how to use your map to help you grow and become more mature in Christ.

CHANGING HABITS

Every day you do things out of habit. You get up, eat breakfast, shower, get dressed, go to school, go to work, etc.

In order to make God's Word part of your life—you need to make it a daily habit. Pick a time, (mornings are usually best), then pick a quiet spot...and spend time reading the Bible and thinking about how it applies to your life. Once you have done it for thirty days, you will have established a habit that will change your life!

GOD'S VIEWPOINT

God's Word gives you God's answers to all of life's most important questions:

GOD'S NATURE
YOUR PURPOSE
HOW TO GROW IN CHRIST
MORAL DECISIONS
RELATIONSHIPS/ SEX
EMOTIONS/ COMFORT
TRIALS/ DEATH

*"For the Word of God is full of living power...
It exposes us for what we really are."*

Hebrews 4:12

YOUR MIND...A "VAT"

Every moment of every day, your mind is flooded with information... most of it the world's viewpoint.

Your life, and the decisions you make are greatly influenced by what goes into your VAT!

In order for God's viewpoint to prevail in your life, you must get a good "dose" of God's Word...not just a few minutes each day.



Studies have shown that the average teen spends between two and three hours a day watching the "tube". Whether it's TV, the computer, or some other form of entertainment, you have time each day to spend on your favorite things.

Author, Matthew Henry, said:
“If you want to get close to God, you must study His Word”

Q How does Col 3:16 apply to you personally?

GETTING FED

There are five basic ways for you to get fed on God's Word:

- 1 HEAR IT TAUGHT
- 2 READ IT
- 3 STUDY IT
- 4 MEMORIZE KEY VERSES
- 5 MEDITATE ON ITS PROMISES

All of these ways to make God's Word a bigger part of your life are important. Let's look at each of them.

1 HOW TO HEAR GOD'S WORD

There are several ways to hear God's Word taught:

- At Church
- Bible Teachers/ Schools
- Christian Seminars
- Bible Web Pages
- Bible Studies
- Bible Tapes/CD's/DVD's
- Christian Radio
- Christian Books

Q How are you hearing God's Word taught, and what can you do to increase hearing it?

Q Hearing God's Word should make you want to read and study it for yourself. What does Acts 17:11 say?

Whenever you hear God's Word taught, attempt to learn what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach you personally, taking good notes, and writing down your thoughts.

2 HOW TO READ GOD'S WORD

When reading the Bible, it's best to read it slowly and thoughtfully. Have a good pen or marking pencil handy to write down your thoughts, and underline key verses.

Make it fun. Go on a "hunt" to find promises God has for you. Then write down the reference so you can locate it later.

If this is your first adventure in reading the Bible, it's best to start in the New Testament, reading at least one of the four Gospels. Many teachers recommend starting with John.

The book of Acts tells about the actions of the early Christians. Acts is must reading for all Christians.

After Acts, are the letters to the first Christian churches, which give instructions and guidance for daily living. And finally, in the book of Revelation, you will see how Christ is going to end all things in this world, and begin ruling as "King of kings and Lord of lords." It's awesome!

"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipping for every good thing God wants us to do." 2 Tim. 3:16,17

Q What book in the Bible are you reading?

There are several ways you can study the Bible:

Study an Individual Book. (eg. Acts)

Study a Passage or Chapter. (eg. 2 Cor. 5)

Study a Biblical Theme. (eg. Love)

Study a Verse. (eg. 2 Cor. 5:17)

Study a Biblical Doctrine. (eg. Redemption)

The reason to study God's Word is to gain insight into who God is, and what He wants to do in your life.

Example: A Study of "Discouragement" (from Bert Harned)

"Do you get 'discouraged, depressed'? I have found an instant cure for it! YES! It is in Psalm 118. 6-8. The NLT says,

'The Lord is for me so I will not be afr aid.

What can mere mortals do to me.

Yes the Lord is for me. He will help me.'

It was a beautiful cloudless morning when I noticed these v erses, and took the time to think on them. I wrote one word at a time down on the left margin, and took time to think as deeply as I could about each wor d, making notes as I went. Start like this:

| | |
|------------------|--|
| THE LORD: | <i>the mighty, almighty, creator, sovereign, loving, glorious God. That's who is for me!</i> |
| IS: | <i>means right now...presently, an absolute certainty!</i> |
| FOR: | <i>means He knows me, has my best interests at heart, is not against me, He is on my side, and knows what is best for me.</i> |
| ME: | <i>means BH, personally, not in general, but specifically, by name. It is awesome and exciting to contemplate "me" having such intimacy...with God Himself!!</i> |

When studying the Bible, use tools such as a concordance, the Amplified Bible, a Bible handbook, or a good study Bible. Also use Christian books such as Secrets of the Vine, to help you understand important concepts, like "abiding."

One reason to memorize Scripture is because our memories are short. After 24 hours you may accurately remember:

- 5% of what you hear.
- 15% of what you read.
- 35% of what you study.
- 57% of what you see and hear.
- 100% of what you memorize!**

Noted author, and counselor, Henry Brandt, in his book, *The Heart of the Problem* says:

“I still consider Bible memorization the single most important aid in my Christian life and in my counseling”

Make Scripture Memory Fun!

It's actually easy to memorize verses:

- Start with one verse.
- Repeat it several times.
- Explain it in your own words.
- Say it to a friend.
- Test and challenge each other to apply it.

Once memorized, review it without looking for 30 days. It will be yours to take with you wherever you go!



“How can a young person stay pure? By obeying Your Word and following its rules... I have hidden Your Word in my heart that I might not sin against You.”

Psalms 119:9,11

There is no better way to abide in Christ than to meditate on God's promises throughout the day. Whenever something stressful happens (and it will), think about a verse that applies to your situation.

Q What does Phil.4:6&7 say?

POWER OVER BONDAGE

In 1977, New York City was in turmoil because a troubled twenty four year old man, David Berkowitz, who the media labeled, "Son of Sam", went on a killing spree. His target was young women, and before he was finally caught, five young women and one man were dead.

During his time in prison, he was approached by a young prisoner named Ricky Lopez, who told David that regardless of what he had done, Jesus loved him and died for him.

Ricky gave David a Bible. As David Berkowitz read the Bible, God's power began breaking him of his addiction and bondage. In time, the Word of God brought him to a point of complete repentance—and the "Son of Sam" surrendered his life completely to Christ.

Today, David Berkowitz is the Chaplain's Assistant at Sullivan Correctional Facility. (Read this, and other stories of God's transforming power in Fresh Power, by Jim Cymbala.)

David Berkowitz was transformed because he replaced man's viewpoint with God's viewpoint. And, He believed God's viewpoint! He put the right "stuff" in his VAT.


SO...ARE YOU LETTING GOD'S WORD CHANGE YOUR VAT...AND YOUR LIFE?

Getting rid of the “junk” in your VAT, and replacing it with God's Word takes time. The amount of time you commit to the Bible is probably the single best indicator of your walk with Christ, and the best predictor of your future growth in Christ.

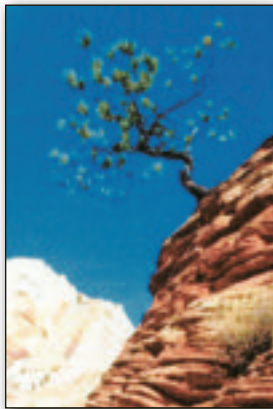
“Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts, and make you wise. Use His words to teach and counsel each other....”

Col. 3:16

All the “pieces” of the “puzzle” required to make your life in Christ awesome...depend on your commitment to God's Word.



As you run the race God has set ahead of you, make sure your roots are deeply planted in God's Word...just like this tree that survives and grows out of this dry rock...because its roots tap deep into the soil below.



Q Read Psalm 1:1-3, and write your thoughts:

Q How are your roots doing?

EXTREME COMMUNICATION TALKING TO YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER!

Suppose you were hanging out with your friends one day, and your cell phone rings. You answer, and an unfamiliar, powerful voice calls out your name. You ask, “Who is this”?

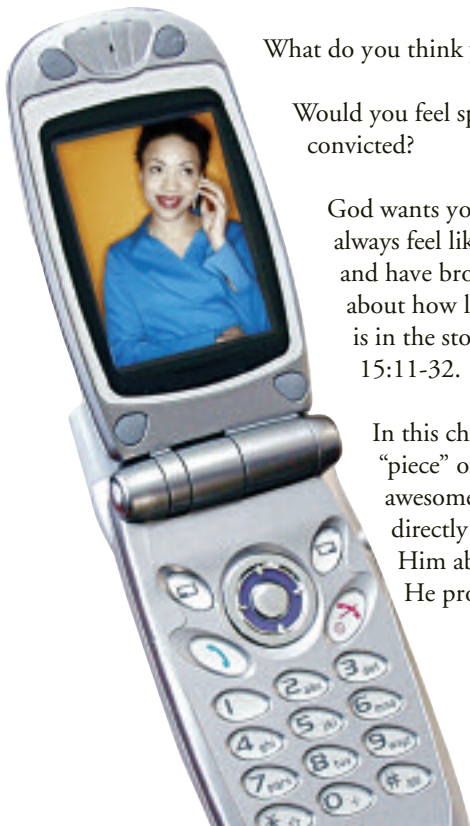
You are totally “blown away” when the answer comes back, “I’m your heavenly Father. I’m calling to talk with you...because you’re my child...and I haven’t heard from you for awhile!”

What do you think your reaction would be?

Would you feel special... scared... excited... nervous... convicted?

God wants you to know Him so well that you will always feel like talking to Him...even when you sin and have broken fellowship with Him. Read about how loving and forgiving your Father’s heart is in the story of the “Prodigal Son,” in Luke 15:11-32.

In this chapter, you will see how this vital “piece” of the puzzle, prayer, is the most awesome privilege a believer has...to come directly into God’s presence and talk with Him about whatever is on your heart. And, He promises to listen!



RELATIONSHIP... NOT RULES

When you invited Jesus into your life, you began a relationship with God that is very personal and intimate. All relationships need good communication to be healthy.

Jesus' death for you on the cross made it possible for you to talk directly with your Father in heaven. Your Father wants you to seek His guidance, comfort, peace, and intimate companionship at all times...not just when you want things. He actually desires your companionship! (Galatians 4:6)

FITTING THE "PIECES" TOGETHER

Prayer requires the other "pieces" of the "puzzle".

THE HOLY SPIRIT helps you pray.

FAITH makes your prayers effective.

GOD'S WORD teaches you Who God is and How to pray .



Now that you know Christ, begin this study by asking Him to make Himself more real to you.

"You haven't done this before. Ask, using my name, and you will receive, and you will have abundant joy."

John 16:24

KNOWING YOUR FATHER

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”

A.W. Tozer

The first part of this study will focus on God’s character. Then you will know Who your Father is... and how to talk with Him.

Before you begin trying to grasp how totally awesome your Father is...you need to know that His greatness is far beyond human understanding. But His Word does give us part of the picture... and it truly is awesome!

ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

- God is Sovereign (In Charge)
- God is Eternal (Always Existed)
- God is Omniscient (All Knowing)
- God is Omnipresent (Everywhere)
- God is Omnipotent (All Powerful)
- God is Immutable (Unchanging)
- God is Holy (Righteous and Set Apart)
- God is Just (Absolutely Fair)
- God is Love (Unconditional Acceptance)
- God is Truth (Totally Trustworthy)

As you look at this list, and the following descriptions, take time to think about each of them, and how each awesome attribute affects your view of God... and your relationship with Him.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN (In Charge)

God alone is Ruler of the universe. He has complete authority to do whatever pleases Him.

When you talk to your Father, approach Him with humility and respect for His absolute authority.

Q Read Job 1:6-12. Who was in control at all times?

Q Whom can you trust at all times?

Q What does Romans 8:28 mean to you personally?

GOD IS ETERNAL (Always Exists)

You live in a time dimension. God doesn't. God has always existed, and He always will exist. When you join God in heaven, you will live forever with Him. He gives you eternal life!

When you talk to your Father, think about the time ahead when you will be with Him forever and ever! Awesome!

Q What else has God told us is eternal? (Is. 40:8)

Q How long will God rule? (Ps. 45:6)

GOD IS OMNISCIENT (All Knowing)

God knows everything in the past. He knows everything that is going on in the universe now. And He knows everything that is going to happen in the future.

Q Read Psalm 139, and jot down your thoughts:

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that He knows what you are going to say...before you say it. He even knows what is going on deep in your heart. And, He knows what is best for you!

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT (Everywhere)

This universe is about thirty billion light years across...and contains at least ten trillion stars. (More than all the grains of sand on earth!) Yet God is present on every star, and in every inch of space.

Q Your thoughts on Psalm 139:7&8:

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that wherever you go... He is already there. Even during your darkest time...you can count on His being there.

GOD IS OMNIPOTENT (All powerful)

Since God is all powerful, nothing is difficult for Him. Even the enormous power to create the universe was just “finger-work” for Him (Psalm 8:3).

The Prophet Jeremiah said:

“O Sovereign Lord! You have made the heavens and earth by Your great power. Nothing is too hard for You!”

Jer. 32:17

When you talk to your Father, humbly realize He can do anything. And, although He cares about every detail in your life, think about how small your problems are when compared with how awesome He is!

GOD IS IMMUTABLE (Unchanging)

Since we are always changing our minds or moods...it is hard to imagine a God that is always the same, “yesterday, today...and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8)

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that because He never changes...His love for you also never changes. It doesn't fluctuate with your emotions or deeds. It is also important to understand that because God never changes... His Word will never change!

GOD IS HOLY (Righteous and Set Apart)

God has never thought an unrighteous thought...and never will! He is absolutely pure and perfect in every way! (Ps. 145:17)

Sin is the exact opposite of God's nature...and without Christ's death for you on the cross, you would be totally rejected from His presence. God's holiness is beyond explanation.

Q Read Revelation 20:12-15, and put down your thoughts:

When you talk to your Father, think about His holiness and righteousness...and how Jesus has made it possible for you to come directly into His awesome presence.

GOD IS JUST (Perfectly Fair)

God is the Supreme Judge of the universe. He cannot make a mistake...and is always totally fair. There is no "Court of Appeals!" (Jeremiah 9:24)
God cannot "look the other way" regarding your sin.

When you talk to your Father, think about the fact that He will always be fair by His perfect standard. You need to trust Him even when you think He has been unfair.

(Gen 18:25b)

GOD IS LOVE (Unconditional Acceptance)

God will never love you less...and He cannot love you more!

The Bible tells us that God doesn't just have love...but it tells us that...
"He is love!" (1 John 4:16)

The fact that your Father sent Jesus to suffer and die for you on the cross...illustrates the depth of His love for you. (1 John 3:1)

When you talk to your Father, think about the high price He paid for your salvation, even though you will never fully understand it or appreciate it. Then thank Him!

GOD IS TRUTH (Totally Trustworthy)

God cannot lie. Everything He says is true. (Titus 1:2)

Q Who claimed to be the "Truth" in John 14:6?

Q What does Jesus say is the "Truth" in John 17:17?

Since God is "Truth", you can always count on Him...and you can always trust His promises to you!

When you talk to your Father, thank Him for the promises in the Bible. Review the promises...one by one...with Him. Tell Him you want to trust Him!

Read and pray David's prayer in 1 Chron. 29:11-13.

PRAYING BOLDLY

Now that you begin to see how awesome your Heavenly Father is, you may be afraid to approach him in prayer. God's word tells you that as his child, you are always welcome in His presence. Go to Him... **boldly!**

“So let us come boldly to the throne of our gracious God. There we will receive His mercy, and we will find grace to help us when we need it.”

Heb. 4:16

PRAYING WITH HUMILITY

Although God wants you to talk to Him at all times, it is important that you approach Him with a humble heart. (1 Peter 5:5-6) God opposes human pride, and wants you to be totally dependent upon His resources.

PRAYING WITH CONFIDENCE

PRAY ACCORDING TO GOD'S WORD

God has given His word to teach you how to pray expectantly, and with confidence. Learn the following prayer principles and look up the Scripture references and then... pray expectantly!

FAMILY ONLY

God answers the prayers of His children. He also hears and answers prayers of non-Christians when they come to Christ in faith for the forgiveness of their sins. (John 16:24)

ABIDING ANSWERS

Jesus said that an abiding Christian can be confident in his prayers being heard...and answered according to God's will.

Q What does John 15:7 say?

Q What does Psalms 66:18-20 say?

“THY WILL BE DONE”

Jesus modeled the attitude you should have when you come to your Father. You should desire His will above yours, even though it may be difficult to accept. Read Mark 14:32-40.

“And this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us: And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.”

1 John 5:14

Now that you know Him, you can be confident...if you are abiding in Him...that He will answer any prayer that is according to His perfect will.

GOD'S PERFECT TIMING

Don't give up on prayers that don't get answered right away. One of the signs of a Spirit controlled Christian is “patience”. (Gal. 5:22)

Countless Christians will tell you stories of God's faithfulness in answering prayers after many years of continual prayer.

YOUR PRAYER LIFE

You began your prayer life as a member of God's family when you invited Jesus into your life.

Q How has it been going since?

Q What is different?

BEGINNING YOUR DAY

If you want your relationship with Christ to grow, plan to meet Him every morning. Read *7 minutes with God – How to plan a daily quiet time.* (Navpress)

Most Christians who are abiding in Christ begin their day with a “quiet time.” You can start talking to God “before your feet hit the ground,” as you get out of bed. Say something like this:

“Good morning Lord! Today, before I get going, I just want You to know I love You...and want to live for You today!”

CLAIMING HIS PROMISES

If you really want to have an awesome day, take some of God's promises with you, and claim them for your day. Like this:

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.”

Proverbs 3:5&6

Pray: “Lord, today, I am going to trust You to direct my paths, and I am going to seek Your will for my life in each situation.”

RESTORING FELLOWSHIP (BY CONFESSION)

When you slip and fall, and feel like no one cares, run to your Lord's waiting arms. He will comfort you and dry your tears.
(Read: Romans 8:26-27)

To restore fellowship with the Holy Spirit, simply tell Him that you sinned, (name it), and choose to let Him control your life. He will then restore you to fellowship with Him. (1 John 1:9)

THANK, PRAISE, AND ADORE HIM

God has done so much for you that it is important to take some time to thank Him, and think about His love and grace. Read the Psalms, and as you read the many praises...stop and make them your own. Think about His greatness and His great love for you...and adore Him.

(Begin with Psalms 95,107, & 145-150)

REQUESTS

God wants you to bring Him your requests. In fact, He delights in you doing that since it is an act of faith and obedience. Never quit asking Him for things that are biblical and within His will. He promises to answer those prayers...in His time!

"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done. If you do this, you will experience God's peace..."

Phil. 4:6,7a

SO...ARE YOU TALKING TO YOUR AWESOME FATHER?

Suggestion: For the next 30 days start a prayer list. Then keep it going.

Write down the following:

- Your personal growth in Christ.
- Prayer for specific issues you are dealing with.
- Prayer for friends and family.
- Prayer for non-Christians you desire to know Christ.
- Prayer for other Christians you can help grow.

Are you beginning to see how all the pieces fit together?

If you are reading God's Word, and allowing the Holy Spirit to control your life...you will naturally talk with Him more. As you put all these "pieces" together, your faith will grow.

When it all starts coming together...life gets truly awesome!

In the next chapter, you will see how you are to grow together, along with all other believers in the Body of Christ! Get ready for the next vital "piece", "Extreme Relationships"!

To read more on this vital subject, the following books and devotionals are recommended: *Intimacy With The Almighty*, (Swindoll), *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire, Cymbala, Humility*, (Murray), *31 Days of Praise*, (Myers).

GOD'S AWESOME FAMILY... AND YOU!

The next “piece” of the “puzzle” for your growth in Christ, is Christian Fellowship... getting rightly connected to others in God’s awesome family.

Do you want great relationships? Awesome relationships? Extreme relationships? God wants that for you too. And, His Holy Spirit makes such relationships possible.

Extreme relationships with others will occur as you abide in Christ...and join other believers who are training together to be winners in God’s great “race”.

Christian fellowship is a vital “piece” of the “puzzle” you will want to make a continual priority.



GET CONNECTED!

EXTREME RELATIONSHIPS

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

The Apostle Peter told the early believers to think of themselves as part of a building...with Jesus being the “chief cornerstone”.

“And now God is building you, as living stones into His spiritual temple....You are a chosen people. You are a kingdom of priests, God’s holy nation, His very own possession.”

1 Peter 2:5&9

God is saying awesome things about you as one of His children. He is saying that you and all other believers are:

- Living Stones in His Spiritual Temple
- A Chosen People
- A Kingdom of Priests
- His Very Own Possession
- A Citizen of God’s Holy Nation

It doesn’t matter what color your skin is, how smart you are, how pretty you are, what gender you are, or how wealthy or important you are...you are part of Christ’s body with believers from all time. You are a full citizen in God’s Country...heaven! (Ephesians 2:19)

Q Your thoughts: _____

CHRIST'S LOCAL BODY

You, along with all other Christians of all time make up the body of Christ, the Church.

The Bible also calls a local gathering of believers a “church.”

Jesus made an awesome promise to you and me. When we come together, with Him as our focus...He is there:

“For where two or three gather together because they are mine, I am there among them.”

Matt.18:20

THE EARLY CHURCH

The book of Acts relates the establishing of the early churches, which met primarily in homes. The Letters of the New Testament are the instructions written to them by the Apostles. Everything the Holy Spirit commanded and instructed the early believers applies to the church today.

The commitment of the early church was so strong, and their love for one another so great, that within three hundred years, Christianity had spread throughout the entire Roman Empire. They truly changed their world for Christ!

EXAMPLE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

To get an understanding of how committed the early Christians were to one another, read the Book of Acts in the New Testament.

Q What stands out the most to you in your reading of the book of Acts?

Q How important were the other believers to Paul, Peter, and the other Apostles?

Q How important are other believers to you?

Q What are you doing to develop extreme relationships with other believers?

GETTING “CONNECTED”

One of the main reasons so many Christians live defeated lives, is that they have isolated themselves from other believers.

Paul told the early Christians that they were each vital “parts” of the “body of Christ”.

Every part of your body is important. If your little toe hurts, it can make your day miserable. The invisible parts, such as the heart, liver, and kidneys are vital for the life of the entire body. It is similar in the body of Christ.

Read 1 Cor. 12:14-27, and write what Paul said about each part of the “body”:

Q Who is the “HEAD”?

Q Who are the “MEMBERS”?

Q Are any “MEMBERS” insignificant?

Q What are some of the most important “PARTS”? (v.22)

When you are joined together with other believers who are growing in Christ, you each encourage one another, and keep each other “fired up” in your mutual faith. You enjoy each others company and build meaningful relationships together.

Coming together with other believers in Christ’s name is similar to hot coals which keep each other hot when lumped together. However, a coal that is separated from the others will soon grow cold.

AWESOME GIFTS

You are a unique creation of God. He has given you unique gifts that are needed in the body of Christ. In 1 Cor. 12:4-11, Paul tells you some vital things about your gifts:

Q Who gave you your gifts?(v.11) _____

Q Which gift is most important?(v.21-23) _____

Q What are you warned against?(v.25) _____

Q What are you to do for others?(v.26) _____

Satan is very clever in convincing many Christians that they are not important to Christ's work on earth. Many leave the job of doing God's work to those with gifts that are more obvious... such as the speaking gifts. God's Word is clear that each gift is vital to His Kingdom!

The entire body of Christ is commissioned and gifted to accomplish Jesus' Great Commission...to "go into all the world and tell the Good News to everyone". With God, there is no distinction between clergy and laity.

In one way, your role in the church is similar to a player on a basketball, football, or soccer team. Unless each player uses his skill and talent to play, the game could be lost. To win, each player must do his job well.

As an important part of God's winning team, you need to play the position He has gifted you to play!

THE KEY TO EXTREME RELATIONSHIPS

Jesus knows your heart. He knows the difficulty we all have at times with one another. As humans, we all are tempted to gossip, judge, get angry, and accuse one another.

And yet, Jesus truly desires for us to love one another...and model His love to the world. Listen to what He told His disciples in some of His last comments to them:

"So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples."

John 13:34-35

How many times have we failed Jesus by disobeying this command?
Unfortunately, far too often.

Love is the key to extreme relationships...but how do we get it? God gives us the answer in Paul's letter to Timothy:

“For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self discipline.”

2 Tim. 1:7

Q Look closely at this verse. Where does love come from?

As you learned in Chapter 3, love is a “Fruit of the Spirit”, and is a gift the Holy Spirit gives to all who abide in Christ.

Since “love” is the key to extreme relationships, it is vital to know what love really means, and how it “plays out” in your daily interaction with others. (Read Gal. 5:22)

The Corinthian Church was full of “baby” Christians whom Paul called “carnal”, or “fleshly”. They had accepted Christ’s love for them, but treated each other largely from a selfish point of view. They were jealous, and continually griping and arguing. (1 Cor. 3:1-4)

Q What do you think is the solution to that kind of behavior?

Paul told the Corinthians what Christ’s love would look like if they were controlled by the Holy Spirit:

“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” 1 Cor. 13:4-7

Read the entire 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians, and put down your thoughts:

If you recall from Chapter Three of this study, the Holy Spirit gives you His extreme power to love with Christ's love by faith. You can't generate it on your own. Love is the result of abiding in Christ.

LOVING BY FAITH

Corrie ten Boom was one of the few women who survived the torture and humiliation of Ravensbruck...a Nazi prison camp during World War II.

Corrie's faith in Christ had remained strong, even during times of degradation when she and all the other women were paraded naked in front of heckling male prison guards.

The war was now over, and Corrie had devoted herself to speaking in churches of Christ's love and forgiveness.

One day, at a church service in Munich, Corrie was startled to see the SS man who was her former prison guard when she and the other women were herded into the showers like cattle.

Corrie recalls the incident in her book, *The Hiding Place*:

“He came up to me.. ‘How grateful I am for your message...to think that, as you say, He has washed all my sins away!’

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often... the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side. Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more?

‘Lord Jesus’, I prayed, ‘forgive me and help me to forgive him.’

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so, I breathed a silent prayer.

‘Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me your forgiveness.’

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than our goodness that the world’s healing hinges, but on His.”

“When He tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself”

(The Hiding Place, Fleming H. Revell Co.)

No matter how hard Corrie tried...she didn't have the power in herself to love this former enemy who had humiliated her.

Yet she knew that Christ had commanded her to love everyone...even her enemies.

By faith...Corrie confessed her sin, and turned the matter over to God. Her faith resulted in the power to obey. And, her obedience resulted in the great joy and peace that only comes when we abide in Christ.

Q Are there people in your life you can't forgive?

Q What does God tell you to do? (Eph. 4:32)

Take some time alone with God to confess your un-forgiveness, and ask the Holy Spirit to forgive them through you. As you abide in Him, He will give you the power!

And...then join other believers in running the race.

Q Jesus was our greatest example of forgiving others. Who did He forgive in Luke 23:34?



SO...ARE YOU READY TO GET CONNECTED WITH OTHER BELIEVERS?

It is truly awesome to “fellowship” with others who love Christ...and are living for Him! When each believer is using his gifts, it truly creates the “oneness” Jesus prayed for us. (John 17:21)

Remember though...abiding in Christ is the key to love. And love is the key to every relationship!

HOW TO GET STARTED:

- Ask God to direct you to other believers.
- Attend a Bible teaching and outreaching church.
- Join a small Bible study and prayer group.
- Use your gifts to reach others for Christ.
- Find a mature believer who will “disciple” you.
- Ask God for someone you can disciple.

“...If we are living in the light of God’s presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other...”

1 John 1:7a



Read Hebrews 10:24&25.

How do you plan to live according to those verses:

EXTREME PRIZE OBEDIENCE GOING FOR THE GOLD!



In John 15 Jesus tells us that an abiding life is essential if we are to produce fruit for Him. Jesus also tells us that the only way to abide in Him is to be obedient to His commands.

“If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in His love.”

John 15:10

If you are truly running to win the extreme prize God has for you... and are “going for the gold,” then aim to please Christ by obeying His commands. Jesus said,

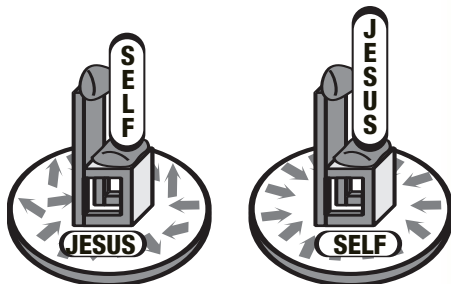
“If you love me, obey my commandments.”

The entire Christian life is to be lived by faith, not works. Other religions give lists of rules to follow. But when we see how much God loves us, and that Jesus paid the ultimate price for our sins, we will want to obey Him. Trusting the Holy Spirit with your life will result in a life of obedience to his Word.

Don’t be disappointed when progress in your Christian walk doesn’t happen as quickly as you want. Christian growth is a lifelong process. God is patient with you, and will never take His love away from you. However, the Holy Spirit will give you victory any moment you choose to obey Him.

Many Christians say they trust God with their lives, but refuse to obey His Word. James calls their faith “dead.” The abiding life however, is to be lived by faith, trusting in God’s promises even when we are going through trials and don’t understand how God is answering our prayers.

Remember the two circles from Chapter 2?



Q Which circle represents your life? _____

If Christ is directing your life, it will result in a transformation of both your walk and your talk. In other words, your character will become more like Christ's character, and your words and actions will sound and look like Him.

THE WALK

We have already seen that a life of obedience to Christ is based upon faith in His Word. You and I are totally unable to live the Christian life in our own strength. However, by faith in His promises, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to overcome trials and temptations. As we surrender our lives to Him, He conforms us into His likeness.

Jesus is totally unlike us. Let's take a look at just a few of the differences:

| JESUS IS: | MAN IS: |
|------------------|----------------|
| Holy | Sinful |
| Loving | Unloving |
| Humble | Proud |
| Forgiving | Unforgiving |
| Obedient | Disobedient |

But, in spite of the differences, the Holy Spirit is continually conforming us into Christ's image. What does Paul say in Galatians 4:19?

PERSONAL HOLINESS

The highest attribute of God is holiness, which means He is morally pure and righteous, set apart from any unclean thought or deed.

The Holy Spirit is working in our lives to remove all filthiness and lustful thinking.

Nancy DeMoss writes, "True holiness starts on the inside – with our thoughts, attitudes, values, and motives – those innermost parts of our hearts that only God can see. It also affects our outward and visible behavior: 'Be holy in all your conduct.'"

Q What does Peter say in 1 Peter 1:15&16?

Q What does Paul say in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20?

LOVE FOR OTHERS

The Holy Spirit is actively at work in giving us His supernatural love for others. His love is forgiving rather than judgmental, patient rather than irritable, and compassionate rather than easily angered and embittered towards others. Corrie ten Boom was only able to love the prison guard who demeaned and abused her when she made the choice to love him by faith.

Many Christians are able to put on a good front which appears loving, while holding deep grudges and resentments inside. Christ's love is totally different; it begins on the inside.

Since it is impossible for us to simply improve our sinful natures, our act of obedience is to surrender our lives to the Holy Spirit, and allow Him to make us Christ-like.

Q What does Paul say in Galatians 3:3?

Q What is Paul's solution in Galatians 2:20?

Q What does a Christ-centered life look like? (Galatians 5:22)

Q What areas of your walk with Christ have changed to become more like Him?

Q What areas have not changed that need to be surrendered to Him?

Q Why not surrender those areas to the Holy Spirit now? List any areas you need to surrender:

THE TALK

You and I as followers of Jesus Christ have the awesome privilege of sharing the good news of eternal life with others. There is tremendous joy in winning other to Christ.

“Jesus came and told His disciples, I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations...”

Matt. 28:18,19a

As you continue your race, remember that Jesus’s command is to all believers...including you!

In this chapter you will learn how to invest your life to win others to Christ, thus fulfilling your Lord’s Great Commission.

YOUR GREATEST INVESTMENT

Have you ever thought of your life as an investment? Jesus did. He continually compared your life with an investment of money. Jesus wants you to invest your life for the greatest possible return. He wants you to help build His Kingdom.

Q How are you investing your life?

THE THREE SERVANTS

(Luke 19:12-27)

Jesus told the story of a prince who had left his three servants a huge amount of money to invest for him. He would settle with them when he returned years later. When the time came to settle, and reward them for their faithfulness, the prince asked them for an accounting:

The first servant said, “Master, I doubled your money”

The prince was elated, and said, “Great job! Because you’ve earned me so much on

that small investment, I'm going to put you in charge of ten cities!"

The second servant said, "Master, I made a fifty percent return on your investment." The prince said to him, "I'll put you in charge of five cities."

The third servant said, "Master, here's your money, safe and sound. I kept it hidden in the basement since I was afraid to lose it. I know you... don't put up with fools."

The prince was extremely disappointed... and told him, "You're right that I don't put up with fools... and you have been a fool! Why didn't you at least invest the money in a savings so that I would have gotten a little interest on it?"

Then turning to the others standing nearby, the prince ordered, 'Take the money from this servant, and give it to the one who earned the most.'

They objected, and said, 'But master, he already has double...'

The prince then said, "That's what I mean: Risk your life and get more than you ever dreamed of. Play it safe and end up holding the bag."

(Luke 19:26 The Message)

Jesus told His disciples this story to give them the picture that God expects a return on our lives. In other words,

HE WANTS OUR LIVES TO "COUNT" FOR HIM.

Life on earth is short. Soon it will be over – then it will be too late to invest your life for Christ.

THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST

The Bible makes it abundantly clear that when your life is over, you will have the great honor to stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ and receive rewards for your faithful service to Christ. (2 Cor. 5:10)
All believers will give an account of their walk with Christ, but unfortunately not all will receive rewards.

Q What does Paul say in 1 Cor. 3:11-15?

Jesus wants you to invest your life for the greatest possible impact for His Kingdom. Like the prince who rewarded the first servant who doubled his investment, Jesus greatly desires to reward you.

EXPAND YOUR TERRITORY

In The Prayer of Jabez, the author Bruce Wilkinson relates how a relatively unknown man from the Old Testament, Jabez, asked God for “expanded territory.” (1 Chron. 4:9&10)

Jabez wanted to be special for God. He wanted to invest his life for the greatest return. (This book will greatly challenge you.)

D.L. Moody was a man who asked God to expand his territory. He made this statement:

“The world has yet to see what one man who is totally sold out to Jesus Christ can accomplish. By God’s grace, I want to be that man!”

--D.L. Moody

Q What “expanded territory” are you asking God to give you?

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

In the same passage of Scripture that Paul tells the Corinthian believers about the Judgment Seat of Christ, Paul tells them another awesome fact:

“We are Christ’s ambassadors”

2 Cor. 5:20a

A country selects an ambassador to represent them in the highest manner to another land. Great care is made by the King or President to select the finest representative.

Your King has selected you to represent Him. You are God’s choice to reach others for Him. You are Christ’s “witness”.

YOUR WITNESS FOR CHRIST TAKES TWO BASIC FORMS:

**WITNESS BY YOUR “WALK”
WITNESS BY YOUR “TALK”**

WALK BEFORE YOU TALK

One reason to grow in your relationship with Christ is so others can see Christ by your walk. This can have a huge impact on others. Jesus said:

*“Let your good deeds shine out for all to see,
so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”*

Matt. 5:16

Q Your thoughts on being Christ’s Ambassador:

WORK IN PROGRESS

Don't let the fact that you are a "work in progress" stop you from sharing Christ with others. Satan would love for you to keep silent about your new relationship with Christ.

However, if you are not living for Christ, that behavior will be obvious, and sharing Christ will appear hypocritical to others.

Q Is there anything holding you back from sharing Christ with your friends and others?

TELLING OTHERS THE GOOD NEWS

Have you ever thought about how many kids you know, or rub shoulders with who are hurting...and are disillusioned with life? In fact, some get so despondent that they consider ending it all. Bob Phillips was one of those kids.

JUST IN TIME

Bob Phillips had everything going for him in high school. As the son of a multimillionaire, money was no problem. When Bob was sixteen his parents bought him a new Jaguar convertible.

Bob had an aura about him. His good looks and captivating personality made him Mr. "Cool"...the most likable and sought after guy in his class.

Girls were "blown away" by his flamboyant manner. He was elected president of an elite club for only the very "coolest" guys.

Since Bob had so much going for him, I was reluctant to witness to him. As a

new Christian, I had never witnessed to anyone personally. I thought kids would think I was weird...or some kind of religious fanatic. Since Bob was my best friend, I thought he would let me know if he wanted to know about Christ. Of course, that was just a “cop out”.

As the weeks went by, I realized I was not really being a friend to Bob by hiding the truth of Christ. I told him what Christ meant to me, and introduced him to my Young Life leader, “Doc”, who then led Bob to Christ!

Years later, Bob shared this shocking true story with me:

“I had reached a point in my life where I was fed up with what life had to offer. Everything had been too easy for me... money... toys... friends... girls... kicks. Nothing satisfied. None of it meant anything anymore!

I finally came to a day when I wanted to end it all. I asked God to show me if there was any reason for me to keep living. I decided to put off my decision to take my own life for a week to see if God would answer me.”

Bob then told me to my amazement, “It was during that week you told me about Christ...and ‘Doc’ led me to receive Jesus as my personal Savior!”

Years have passed, and Bob and I are still good friends. It’s great to know we will spend eternity together. It is a truly frightening thought to think that he came so close to dying before he had a chance to hear how much Christ loved him.

Q Can you think of some people you have the opportunity to share Christ with?



HOW TO SHARE CHRIST WITH OTHERS

You don't need to be an expert in the Bible, or have years of experience with Christ to witness for Him. There are several ways you can verbally share Christ on a daily basis:

INFORMAL SHARING

You don't have to make a complete presentation of the Gospel to make an impact for Christ. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to someone who is open to hearing more about Christ:

- Invite a friend to church or youth group.
- Give your personal testimony.
- Ask a kid to join you at a Christian camp.
- Introduce a friend to other Christians.
- Give out a Christian book or tract.



**The key to informal witnessing is to be available...
and ask God to lead you. He will! He has been waiting for
you to ask Him!**

PRESENTING CHRIST'S CLAIMS DIRECTLY

Everyone needs an opportunity to hear the complete story of how much God loves him/her personally. Once you have established a relationship with a person, and “earned the right to be heard,” pray for an opportunity to share Christ with them.

Most people reject Christianity because they don't “have a clue” what it is all about, or they misunderstand... and think it is just “religion”. They don't realize that it a totally awesome relationship with their Creator...Jesus Christ! The best way to witness...so that people really understand what the Bible says...is to make a concise presentation of the Gospel with your testimony and biblical references.

**IN THE FOLLOWING AREA BRIEFLY WRITE OUT YOUR TESTIMONY
ABOUT HOW YOU RECEIVED CHRIST, AND HOW HE HAS
CHANGED YOU. (USE ANOTHER SHEET OF PAPER IF NECESSARY.)**

Pray
“Go to God about men... before you go to men about God.” Ask God to prepare the person’s heart and to control you by His Spirit.

Use a Gospel Tract
In order to be concise and not get side-tracked, use a good Gospel tract, such as **The Four Spiritual Laws**, by Bill Bright. (New Life Publications), or **The Bridge**, (Navpress). You can also use Chapter One of this booklet.

Use a Bible
Carry a small Bible with you that has the key verses underlined. It’s best to use a modern translation, such as the New Living Translation. Try to memorize the key verses for each point of the Gospel.

Share Your Personal Testimony
Write out your personal testimony, and review it with a friend until you can present it naturally in 3 to 5 minutes. Keep focused on how Christ has changed your life...and how awesome He is to you. Be enthusiastic...but not phony. Be transparent...and let them know you’re “real”.

Stay Focused
You fight a spiritual battle when you share Christ with an unbeliever. There may be unusual interruptions...or the person might try to evade the real issues and get you off track. Pray, and keep focused on Christ’s love...and His death for them on the Cross. Emphasize how important they are to God.

□ Ask For A Decision

As the Holy Spirit leads, expect God to be working in their heart. Ask one of the following questions:

“Does this make sense to you?”

“Would you like to accept God’s Gift?”

“Would you like to make sure?”

“Would you like to ask Jesus into your life?”

□ Lead Them In Prayer

If they are ready to receive Christ, pray with them, using the prayer in your tract, or from Chapter One in this booklet.

THE NEXT STEP

Once a person has come to Christ, it is vital that you show them how the “pieces” of the “puzzle” fit together. Schedule a time to go through this booklet with them.

It is also vital that they immediately get “connected” with other Christians...preferably people they can relate to.



PASSING THE BATON

When you lead a person to Christ, you are “passing the baton” to them. Teach them from God’s Word the discipleship principle Paul taught Timothy, so they will pass it on to others:

“Teach these great truths to trustworthy people who are able to pass them on to others.”

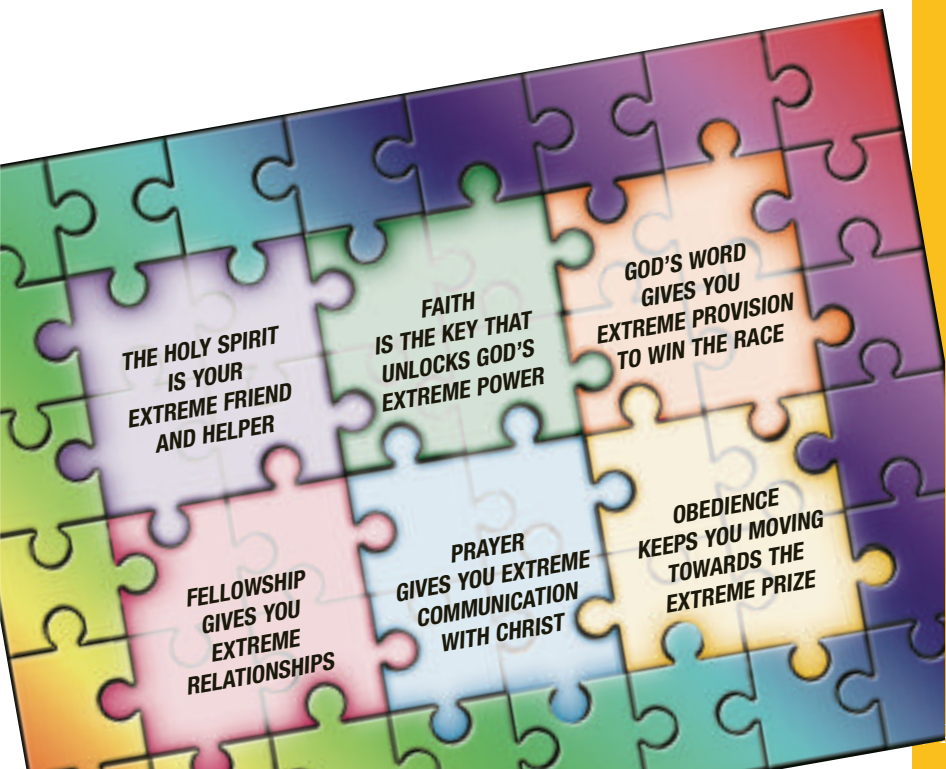
2 Tim. 2:2

For those who take God's Word seriously... and want to be discipled, it is strongly recommended that you schedule regular meetings (at least every other week), to get deeper into the Bible. Both a small group Bible study, and one on one discipleship are recommended for a new believer.

RUN TO WIN

Although this chapter concludes this study, your race goes on! There are many miles to go.

You now see how each "piece" of the "puzzle" is vital for your growth in Christ...all contributing to the awesome life God wants you to live.



Marathon runners often get weary during the long race. Some quit. Those who finish strong are focused on the finish line... the satisfaction of doing well, and the prize ahead.

God's Word tells you how to finish strong:

"...let us strip off every weight that slows us down...And let us run with endurance the race that God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, on whom our faith depends from start to finish."

Hebrews 12:1&2

Q What weight is slowing you down?

Q What changes have you made to assure a well run race?

Q What's the most important thing you have learned in this study?

SO...ARE THE PIECES COMING TOGETHER?

By now you should have a good understanding of what the “picture” of the completed “puzzle” looks like.

When Christ is the center of your life, everything will be different. Your life will be full of joy and peace. You will want to please Him. God will give you love for other people, even your enemies.

God can take ordinary people like you and me---and make our lives truly awesome and extraordinary. This is the extreme life God promises to every believer who trusts and obeys Him.

“By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.”

Eph. 3:20

Are you ready to risk it all for Christ? He is completely trustworthy...and will be with you in every mile of your race...even when you are weary and feel like quitting.

“But those who wait on the Lord will find new strength. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint.”

Is. 40:31

It is the will of God that you keep on running. Run well, and receive the prize! (1 Cor. 9:24-26)

**GOD HAS GREAT
PLANS FOR YOU!**

(Jer. 29:11)

LIVING THE EXTREME LIFE MOMENT BY MOMENT

In the final few pages we will learn from God's Word how you can overcome every trial and hurdle you encounter during the race set before you. Memorize God's promises. Knowing and trusting God's promises is the key to victory.

PROBLEM #1: *"I don't feel forgiven. I feel so dirty from my sins."*

MEMORIZE IT!

Ephesians 2:8,9
1 John 1:9
Isaiah 1:18

SOLUTION: Read of Jesus' total forgiveness in Chapter one.

PROBLEM #2: *"I find it difficult to trust Jesus with my problems and the details of life?"*

MEMORIZE IT!

1 Peter 5:7
Philippians 4:13,19

SOLUTION: Read about the Holy Spirit's supernatural help for you in Chapters 2 & 3. Jesus is God, and knows everything. He promises to take care of you and meet all your needs because he cares for you.

(Needs and wants are different.)

PROBLEM #3: *"How can I know God hasn't forgotten me when I experience trials and down times? If God cares about me why doesn't He take my trials away?"*

MEMORIZE IT!

John 16:33
James 1:12
1 Peter 1:7
1 Peter 4:12,13

SOLUTION: God's Word tells us we will each experience trials and hardships. (Remember Joni?) Jesus Himself and His disciples had many trials and were ultimately killed for their Faith. But God was always present through their trials and gave them supernatural peace and joy.

PROBLEM #4: *“I keep struggling over and over with the same sins and can’t seem to break free. How does the Holy Spirit give me the power to obey Him?”*

MEMORIZE IT!

Romans 12:1,2
Galatians 2:20
Galatians 5:22

SOLUTION: You must choose to trust the Holy Spirit with each thought and deed in your life. Practice Spiritual Breathing (Chapter 3). You will never totally eliminate sin in your life, but you can choose at any moment to confess your sin and walk in the total forgiveness and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

PROBLEM #5: *“Why don’t I experience the joy and peace Jesus promises to His children?”*

MEMORIZE IT!

Isaiah 26:3
Philippians 4:6,7
Acts 20:24

SOLUTION: It’s easy for all of us to take our eyes off of Jesus and get discouraged by our own circumstances. Jesus wants us to put our complete trust and hope in Him---not in this world. When our eyes are on Him, He gives us His peace and joy.

PROBLEM #6: *“Why aren’t my prayers being answered?”*

MEMORIZE IT!

John 15:7
John 16:24
1 John 5:14,15

SOLUTION: Read Chapter 5. God promises to answer prayers when they are the result of pure motives and in accordance with His will and purpose. However, God’s ways and timing are not the same as ours, and He answers our requests in the way He determines best.

Don’t despair, but keep trusting God and bring your requests to Him. Often God answers prayers in ways we don’t understand or realize. Someday we will fully understand His purposes, but until then, we must trust Him, and keep praying.

PROBLEM # 7: *“I believe Satan or an evil spirit has control over me. How can I be delivered from the forces of evil?”*

MEMORIZE IT!

Ephesians 6:11
1 Corinthians 15:58
Ephesians 5:18-20

SOLUTION: Satan has no power over an obedient Christian. While he may attack us, he is powerless when we are walking in the Spirit. However, a disobedient Christian who doesn't wear his armor (Read Ephesians 6:10-18) is not protected against Satan's attacks. The best way to defeat Satan is to walk in total obedience to Christ.

In cases of demonic oppression, one should call for the elders of the church to pray for you. Neither Satan nor his demons have any power or authority over you when Christ directs your life. You need to trust God's Word on that. Read 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

PROBLEM # 8: *“How can I live an obedient life in the face of so much temptation?”*

MEMORIZE IT!

Philippians 1:6
2 Corinthians 5:14,15
John 14:21

SOLUTION: Review Chapters 2 & 3 and make sure you have surrendered your life to the Holy Spirit. Obedience will only come if you yield your life to the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

Strength to overcome temptation is greatly increased when you read and memorize God's Word, pray, fellowship with other believers, and share God's love with others. Begin each day with Him, and breathe spiritually throughout the day.

PROBLEM # 9: *“I can’t seem to have victory over sexual sins.”*

MEMORIZE IT!

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

1 Corinthians 10:13

1 Corinthians 10:31



SOLUTION: God made your body, and he understands your desires. Sex was created by God as a good thing when it is an expression of love between a husband and wife. God’s Word condemns sex outside of marriage, but He still forgives us when we fall.

The Christian who has yielded his or her body to God can have complete victory over sexual sin. Satan will attack our thought life and tell us that we can’t win, but God’s power is greater, and He will give victory to those who truly want it.



Read Ephesians 6:10-18.

PROBLEM # 10: *“I don’t seem to be growing in my walk with Christ.”*

SOLUTION: Here is a secret. Most men and women who live godly lives spend time in God’s Word reviewing, and even memorizing His promises. Then throughout the day they “chew on” them, applying them to each situation they face. Living in the power of the Holy Spirit and spending time in God’s Word go hand in hand.



***“So I run straight to the goal
with purpose in every step.”***



1 Corinthians 9:26

GETTING STARTED IN EXTREME LIVING

"This booklet, Getting Started is a tremendous tool that provides direction and information for both leaders and new believers! I am anticipating using it to reach more teenagers with Christ's love."

Rich Sweum, Metro Director, Snohomish County Young Life

"This book, Getting Started In Extreme Living, will inspire and challenge anyone serious about their growth as a new Christian. It will help them to go the distance and run the race...to win!"

**Mike Rohrbach, Founder/Director, Run To Win Outreach, and
University of Washington Huskies Football Team Chaplain**

"The direction for tackling life is contained in this book. A few weeks hard work learning the contents of this book will be well rewarded."

Henry Brandt, Ph.D., author of several books including *Heart of the Problem*



Reorders of this booklet, and its companion book, Getting Started - Leader's Guide, may be sent to the address below, or e-mailed to: chap@whidbey.com

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