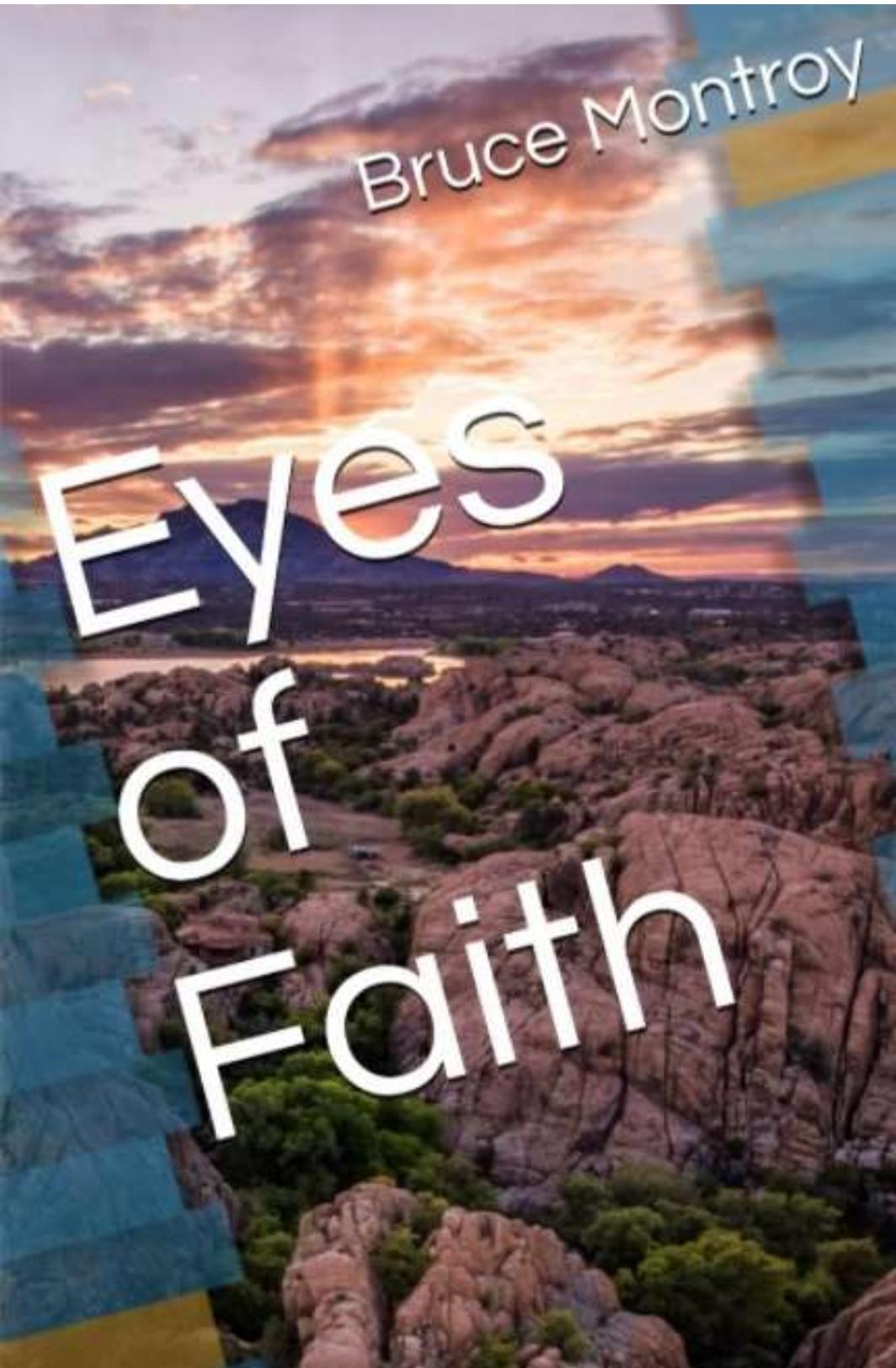


Bruce Montroy

Eyes of Faith



EYES OF FAITH
[Formerly: Tapping the Power of Denial]

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First Printing - December, 1998
Revision as Eyes of Faith - April, 2002
This Edition – January, 2015

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How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and salvation, the news that the God of Israel reigns! Isaiah 52:7 (NLT)

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Introduction

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age... Titus 2:11,12

God's grace is pure power! For the Apostle Paul, God's grace was sufficient for anything he faced. The beauty of this power, he tells us, is that it is manifested in our human weakness. Using a literary device called parallelism, Paul says that God's grace is His power: *And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness"* (2 Corinthians 12:9a). God's grace is God's power! Yahweh is grace! Yahweh is power! Yahweh is love! Our God can do anything and He freely offers His sufficiency to us for any need, any mountain in our path!

God's grace does a lot of things. In our key verses for this study, we see grace performing three very important things for the believer:

Grace brings salvation to all men;
Grace instructs us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires;
Grace teaches us to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

Much has been written about God's amazing grace. Songs, poetry, and virtually everything relating to Christianity sooner or later gets around to grace. The third thing on the list above is what most Christian instruction is about—successfully living the Christian life. But, when was the last time you read something about the value of denial—the second thing on the list above?

Denial is an ability of the human mind that has received a lot of bad press. We hear folks say something like, “Poor Fred, he's living in denial.” People are said to be suffering from repressed memories (denial) that surface in anger toward symbolic representatives. The forefathers of modern psychiatry used word association, dream interpretation, and various forms of catharsis to delve into the archives of the mind, hoping to find the missing pieces of the puzzle that explained a person's present aberrant behavior.

As the pendulum swung back, seeking balance between digging into the past and living in the present, some decided that behavior is more the reality of the present and that our responses can be programmed irrespective of the past. Given powerful stimulus/response treatments, a patient could alter their present behavioral patterns— “How about a little electrical shock for breakfast?” The mind was seen more as a computer than a living organism that housed a God-created soul.

Not being a psychologist, and actually lacking a proper respect for their discipline, I find myself fighting, more than occasionally, the temptation to judge them as grossly naive for their failure to recognize the reality of the unseen aspects of life. Many either ignore or are oblivious to the presence of a very real, yet invisible kingdom of darkness. Many counselors coax their clients from hiding in the bushes of denial, yet turn right around and themselves deny the presence of an actual devil who accuses people twenty-four hours a day (Revelation 12:10). When they remove from their discussions the reality of God, His moral standards, and the presence of a diabolical foe, they are in fact denying the greater reality— they are living as though the screen play is true reality and real life is fiction!

You don't have to know where an orange was grown in order to enjoy eating it; however, if it is diseased and you are concerned about stopping the spread of the disease, its origin and background are essential. If you deny which produce warehouse handled the orange, you may never be able to track down the source of the

infection. Denying the origin of our problems increases the difficulty of solving them!

I feel that for all the noise about improper denial of deep inner feelings, those yelling the loudest have consistently denied the greatest truth of all – why we're here on earth, what God has in mind for us, and how to please Him during our short journey called life. If they deny that which has eternal significance in deference to that which leads them farther away from the Almighty God, they are in big trouble!

My premise in this study is that we all deny some things. In fact, it is essential that we deny those things that, when focused on, will destroy us:

For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. Romans 8:6

I want us to learn to use denial-power to maximize our enjoyment of a Spirit-filled life while destroying the accuser who continually harangues us all.

Denial is a powerful tool. The ability of the human mind to focus so strongly that it overlooks or is oblivious to distractions, is a gift from God. Such denial can trigger great faith, and make it possible to live joyfully even in the presence of distasteful events. But, as with most tools, denial can be abused! I feel that the previous title of this little book discouraged some from allowing its simple message to stimulate their faith, when my purpose is for us to use every available tool to enhance our faith! The eyes of faith see past problems to the Almighty God, the One who meets all our needs and can transform situations so quickly!

The flesh will scream so loudly that we are denying its deadly advice (painted up as help), but the eyes of faith see a bigger reality! The Living God!

The brand of denial I want us to consider is a change of focus that does not bog down with weights that hinder or disqualify us from the race before us. Rather, it focuses faith into such

mountain-moving power that it actually alters “reality.” Focused faith changes things – you can't deny it!

Chapter 1

DO I HAVE TO ANSWER THE DOOR?

Picture a child holding their ears and humming so they can't hear their big brother taunting them. Is this your idea of denial? "I'll make more noise to drown out the confusion flooding into my mind." When the world makes more noise to get your attention, you'll have to make even more inner clatter to drown it out. This could hurt!

You're standing, talking face to face with a man who smells like a brewery. You ask him a simple question, "Sir, have you been drinking?" The stupid question is met with a stupid answer, "No, I've been dry for some time." Could this be classified as denial? This is not the kind of denial that yields power. Lying to cover up irresponsibility is not what I'm after. Rather, my desire would be to teach the drunk how to deny the liquor when it calls and instead pick up God's line! When the alcoholic can deny the lie "I need a drink" and reaffirm the truth "Jesus, You're all that I need," power begins to flow!

The power of denial I want us to tap into is what Jill needs. She comes home from work at the end of an exhausting day. All the way home her mind has been going over a seemingly endless list of things that need to be done. Her mental focus produces irritation and frustration, which increases her weariness. By the time Jill enters the door, she is giving off the signs of being in a bad mood. Her husband Fred takes one look at her and says, "Bad day, huh?" The next words that come out of her mouth verify her husband's astute observation!

Haven't you found yourself in a similar situation where you were growing irritated and some bystander pushed you over the edge with a detached comment that appeared to say, "What's your

problem?” When people close to us read our body language of irritation they can unknowingly add to our frustration by putting another obligation on top of the pile. “Get a grip” is just one more impossible task. It’s like what you feel when you’re covered with grease and someone hands you a phone saying, “It’s for you.”

Do we have to answer the door every time someone knocks? It’s rude to not answer the door if it’s your mother-in-law, but what if it’s an escaped convict? Suppose you see a suspect coming up your walk wearing prison stripes, dragging a ball and chain and that matches the description just given over the radio! Surely you wouldn’t answer the door, nor would you feel like a bad person for running and hiding or calling the police.

Not all knocks deserve our attention! As we deny some people admittance to our homes, so we must deny certain thoughts and influences entrance into our inner chambers. Lofty thoughts held up against the knowledge of God must be destroyed, not entertained!

We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:5

Thoughts that increase our weariness, exhaustion and irritation must be denied entrance into our mind if we want to enjoy life. Jill is tough. She will make it through the day, the evening, the next day, and so on. Somehow she will find the strength to keep going, but in the meantime, family life is a zoo. It’s not just her fault, nor is it the sole blame of her “team”!

While others are denying the obvious plea for “Help Wanted,” Jill is denying the reality of the ever present Comforter! She will get through the maze of duties, but she can cruise more cheerfully or she can travel tormented! Which inner voice will she deny? The small voice of the Holy Spirit or the loud noise of the accuser?

Busy people will never eliminate their living, growing list of things to do, but they can learn to deny the demons of distraction that taunt and tangle situations. Life is too short to live under the tyranny of demands that produce anger and alienation. My encouragement to Jill would be to deny the negative forces and sing a little internal tune: "He's able, He's able, I know He is able, I know my Lord is able to carry me through!" When she gets through her day, we will know which inner tune she was listening to, won't we!

A change of focus from the evil taskmasters called "Should and Must," to the loving Savior beckoning her to come apart for a few minutes of refreshment could make a world of difference for Jill. Denying exhaustion's claims can clear the head and trigger a fresh inner secretion of energy. Seeking first the kingdom of God both changes our perspective as well as taps into spiritual power. The favor of the Lord goes to work for us. Things miraculously get accomplished smoother, take less time, and in the annals of eternity, our time-out for "trust" made what we did that day count as done personally for Jesus (See Ephesians 6:6-8).

King Uzziah in the Old Testament is an example of this truth. It was said of him....

*He continued to seek God in the days of Zechariah, who had understanding through the vision of God; and **as long as he sought Yahweh, God prospered him.** 2 Chronicles 26:5*

The constant pressures and interruptions that face a king could distract devotion from the Lord, or force greater dependence upon God. As long as Uzziah denied the knocking of distractions and reaffirmed allegiance to the Almighty, he prospered. When he took his eyes off of God and entertained the other voices, he got into serious trouble. The same is true for our example of Jill and her busy life. The same is true for us.

What if, on the way home, Jill dismissed the pressure to become anxious and instead, thanked Jesus for His awesome love. When she arrived at home, she could sit down, put her feet up, close her eyes and see Jesus pouring out His strength and wisdom on her and her household. After a few minutes of refreshment, she would have twice the energy, and would be able to navigate successfully between everyone's problems and schedules.

Colossians chapter three calls us to set our affections on things above. The only way we can do this is to deny the list of urgent things that we must do, deny the noisy TV, and deny the lie that if everybody doesn't eat in the next five minutes they'll die (they've all been snacking since they got home!). It's a fact that we can do twice as much in half the time when we're rested and full of love rather than frustration. This is the good side of denial!

As Jill allows Jesus to minister to her, not expecting others to give her what they don't have, life trickles back into her exhausted body that has been running on adrenalin for the past few hours. Anger and frustration, both known disease-breeders, dissolve under the Master's gentle touch. Death is denied and life is embraced. Impossible you say? I didn't say seeing life through eyes of faith will be easy! But, it is possible! Read on.

Denial is deadly if it doesn't come from God's grace. Our lady Jill could turn to a more common form of denial—run away! She could lapse into depression and find that far less is accomplished when she is bed-bound by sickness and disease.

Taking a few minutes for Jesus-focus may seem like a luxury, but the resulting peace and love will be appreciated far more if yelling, name calling and intimidation have been the more typical coping device!

Pressing on through the uphill trek of exhaustion strains relationships, health, and spirituality! Denying the Master who is standing nearby is both foolish and unspiritual. Look! There is an alternative to confusion right before your eyes. Reach out and take His hand!

Our theme verse could be paraphrased to say: **God's grace teaches us to deny the stuff that will kill us!**

Jesus didn't say that the mountain in our path would be thrown into the sea if we freak out, run wildly around it, and fall exhausted at the foot of it. Faith moves mountains. Faith comes from putting Father God first! When facing an impossible task, the intelligent seek the involvement of the One for whom nothing is impossible! To do this though, you will have to develop the ability to deny god status to Mr. Urgent! Our priorities prove our worship.

Something will be denied in life—**what is denied will judge us as much as what we do!** Will we see God's provisions or the pressures? We know we'll get into trouble when we're irritated, frustrated and grouchy, but these are results of our mental focus! What are your eyes set on?

I can hear someone saying, "I can't rest knowing there is something I have to get done." Could I ask Jesus if that's the way you handle His frequent calls to intimacy? As with Mary and Martha, have you taken care of the truly important task **first** — sitting at the Master's feet, drinking from Him, or do you typically have to clean up the kitchen first?

If your response is to take care of physical tasks first before you spend quality time with the King, then you have inadvertently chosen second over first. What we see is that which is temporal and passing frequently outvotes that which is eternal just because we don't trip over it! It's all too easy to deny what we can't see because what our physical eyes see distracts us. Is it any wonder that fleshly trained humans are experts at denying God's refreshment?

Stress is killing Americans! Anger and frustration are escalating all forms of violence. Why? The rubber band of our minds are being stretched beyond their capacity. Voices, demands, problems, hound us like a pack of wolves on a reindeer. One problem, two, then there are three. Would somebody please take a number and get in line!

Who said we have to answer the door? What if we're up to our ears in goop and unable to answer the door? What if we were out back and didn't even know someone was at the door? Will life stop? What if the door is in our mind and Mr. Stress is knocking, like a pesky bill collector?

Can we simply deny stress and tell it to come back when we have sufficient resources to negotiate properly? We may not be able to do this just yet with people at our door or problems in our head, but most of us can do it quite well with the Savior who is knocking at our door, desiring to fellowship with us. How many times have you felt His gentle tug to take time to have sweet fellowship with Him, only to easily deny His request by focusing on some other matter.

The other day my wife and I were eating, or should I say, trying to eat at a restaurant. A well meaning employee (I think he was a busboy who was bucking for a promotion), brought my wife's plate of goodies and departed. Being the socially adroit person that she is, she just stared at the food. This produced tension – for both of us. The young man violated a law of the food industry: keep the food under the heating lamps until the full order is up. Deny the urge to “do” until the proper time!

Stress can be managed this way. Leave problems on the shelf until the right time. It may look like the smart thing to take what the cook has prepared and give it to the patron, but there is something more than efficiency at work. Timing is everything – *Seek first the Kingdom of God!*

It's time to hash out the unspoken problems you and your mate have been stewing over for a week. You finally get a few minutes, and you are actually listening instead of defending yourself. Maybe, just maybe there is light at the end of the tunnel! Maybe you really do love each other. You feel compassion rising inside of you. You are about ready to apologize for being insensitive, then...the phone rings! The external interruption is calling for a choice. What will you deny?

The power of denial is standing at hand ready to help your marriage; the house-divider is trying to tap denial's power to circumvent your reconstruction! Who gets denied? Your mate or the phone? I know, it helps to have Caller ID, but still, there is a choice before you – which deserves your preference? Which is more important? What if the mood is broken because of a salesman who rudely tries to push you into buying something? Even urgent calls will likely call back! And if it's real urgent, had they not better call 911?

Miracles cannot be harvested before their time. I feel that frequently we cave in before we receive our miracle. Why? Something distracts us!

For King Saul, his miracle was dependent upon waiting until Prophet Samuel arrived to offer the sacrifice. He was distracted as he saw the chicken-hearted leaving his army. Panic rose up to offer its suggestion – Do something! Now! The more King Saul meditated on what could happen if the prophet Samuel was much later, the greater his frustration and irritation.

This pressure provoked him to violate God's clear command. But what if Saul had chosen to meditate on the Scripture, especially where God told Gideon that he had too many soldiers in his army? If Saul reflected on how God loves to pour out His power on those who wait on Him, he would have been empowered to deny the lie that he needed numbers rather than quality!

Miracles, like a crop, need to grow by faith until they come forth as effortlessly as fruit on a tree. "Wait a minute," says Mr. Tree, "You don't know what it's like to give birth to a thousand oranges!" Hey, that's right. For us, the casual bystander, the tree is motionless, resting, calmly producing fruit. But if we could look inside the tree's system, we would see complicated processes going on.

The power of denial is not that we do nothing, but that we focus on that which triggers God's power! Instead of running around in circles, answering every knock at the door, we are drawing with our

focus from the fountain of limitless power! Faith locks on to the True Source of every blessing and draws first and foremost! Then, if there is sufficient time or energy to play panic, it will ponder problems.

Patience is not only a virtue and part of the fruit of the Spirit, it is also part of the building blocks of a miracle – believing until the request is answered. Persisting until the manifestation. Seeking until you receive. Knocking until the door opens.

How can we keep knocking when the lack of an answer mocks us? Not by focusing on how long we've knocked! We won't develop patience by concerning ourselves with how our knuckles ache! No, we can only persist in keeping on keeping on when we focus on something else.

We don't care as much about the person on the other end of the phone going on and on about nothing when we're winning at a game on our computer (forget I said that!). Distractions, profitable ones, can increase our tolerance and patience!

The best distraction I know of is praise and intimacy with our Heavenly Father! The second best is focusing on His written Word. The third best is getting taken up with ministering His love to someone in need. The worst way to deal with side-tracking interruptions is to try to solve them, while ignoring the Savior standing close by.

Remember the crazy movies where the person being held at gun point does the famous "Hey, there's somebody behind you" trick? If the gun holder can be tricked into denying his present duty to check on his safety, he can be apprehended. Works in the movies. Works for Satan all the time! Isn't it about time we tap into this power of denial and increase our batting average?

"But what if there really is someone behind us?" I thought you'd ask that. This is where we must have faith that God is our rearguard (Isaiah 58:8). If we're walking in faith and love, He will fight for us and turn everything to work for our good – even when we're ambushed! God can't be ambushed!

Be patient, therefore, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. Behold, the farmer waits for the precious produce of the soil, being patient about it, until it gets the early and late rains. You too be patient; strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. James 5:7,8

How do we strengthen our hearts? By what we focus on. To use the picture of the farmer in the verses above, what does he focus on while he's waiting for his crops to sprout and grow? He doesn't go out in the field and impatiently look at the ground until the soil bulges. He gets his equipment ready, spends time brushing up on his golf game, chases off the crows, and even pulls an occasional weed.

Focus on what you don't have and you'll end up denying what could be yours. Focus on loving Abba and the time will pass quicker and soon you'll be knee deep in miracles!

Try this the next time you need a positive distraction: think through a faith-building Bible story. See Noah building a huge ark. See his wife asking him to stop long enough to fix the leaking faucet. Maybe you can venture into the lion's den with Daniel like you were filming a Discovery Channel special! Let your imagination put a little life into it! You'll be surprised at two things. First, how much faster the time flies, and secondly, how your faith increases!

Which would young lovers rather do, mow the lawn or sit and make goo-goo eyes over each other? Somebody has to mow the lawn, but my illustration is supposed to help us make the decision to put off the clamoring voices – stress evoking problems – and put first things first. After all, mowing the lawn would be more fun if the young lovers did it together! Or, what if you just got a brand new lawn mower? Wouldn't you be tempted to cut the grass even if it wasn't Saturday morning?

Perspective! Tapping the power of denial is all about perspectives and how we make the final decision on what we'll

allow to distract us! And we don't have to answer the door if we don't want to – especially if we know it's Mr. Distraction, the bad guy!

Discussion questions:

1. What kind of “denial tricks” did you use as a child?
2. How well did they work?
3. Why do you think people allow things that they can’t do anything about to make them irritated, frustrated and angry?
4. Which is easier for you to deny, an irritating person or the Lord? Why?
5. Have you learned any “secrets” for shutting off the world long enough to get some quality time with the Lord? If so, what are they?
6. Have you had to work through denying the tyranny of the urgent in order to have quality time with your family? If so, how did you do it?
7. Do you think it shows God our faith when we wait on Him for answers and miracles before we take matters into our own hands? Why?
8. If you were in a deep discussion with someone special and the phone rang, would you interrupt the conversation or deny the caller? Why?
9. How do you feel when someone interrupts you in the middle of a serious conversation?
10. Think of a Bible story you could use as a positive, faith-building distraction. Describe it with colorful embellishments.

11. Do you agree or disagree that we make the final decision as to what we will be distracted by!
12. Why is it easier to deny Jesus the special time He desires with us than it is to deny everyday, menial chores?

Chapter 2

A RIGHTFUL PLACE

Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.

Titus 2:12

Everybody knows which chair is “Dad's chair.” His royal highness will probably sit on you if you accidentally park your person in his rightful place. Some folks let it be known at church which seats are “reserved” just for them. And sure enough, every Sunday we see them sitting in their own pew (pun intended).

What does the grace of God teach us to deny, and what does this mean? We are to deny ungodliness and worldly desires. Does this verse mean that we are to pretend that ungodliness doesn't exist? When worldly desires attack us are we to disassociate ourselves to the point that we break with reality? “What lust? I feel no lust!” No, like dad, we just tell it to sit somewhere else! It does not have a rightful place in our space.

Wouldn't it be great if we had the same understanding with sin that the average patriarch has in his domain? “Hey, Sin, get outta my chair!” The picture gains strength when you realize that the biblical concept of “sitting” was associated with authority and ruling. We are seated with Christ; we rule with Christ. “Devil, get outta' my chair, I'm ruling in life through the Lord Jesus Christ; sin will not have dominion over me!”

The world tells us that many things are “normal” or natural. Maybe so, but the “animal instincts” of humans are more like

evil appetites that can be cultivated and nourished, such as sexual sins and the craving for violence. The process of developing carnal appetites usually takes place so slowly and gradually that we hardly notice that we have a whole new perspective.

Like children growing up in a home where dad's chair is "off limits," there is a point where no one would even think of violating the sanctity of the seat. We can develop a limited vision. To others, the chair is a chair is a chair! To our trained eye, it is "reserved!" We can train our selves to see situations any way we want. The eyes of faith see what others don't.

This may be a negative use of the eyes of faith but someone serious about losing weight must use the power of denial or the eyes of faith when they see nasty, calorie-laden goodies! In fact, the diabetic needs to retrain their eyes to see sugar as poison. Can they do it? Those who live long do! They associate a negative message with an otherwise neutral picture. This is true faith when we do this in conjunction with the Bible's standards:

Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. Titus 2:12

The eyes of faith paint graphic warnings over the path more traveled! Faith says, without having to taste evil, that it is gross! The Father said not to go this way so I couple a message with this picture that says: "No Way!" Faith not only works for positive promises, it also protects us by agreeing with Abba that wickedness is deadly even when the world coaxes and celebrates immorality!

The fool looks longingly at the glitter and glamor of evil, and such a perversion of faith actually creates an appetite for the prohibited! God intends for us to train our eyes to see, by faith, that the path of the wicked leads to destruction.

Another example of this is how I picture in my mind the corruption one silly fly can breed if he walks on the rim of my glass.

Somehow I've been trained to see thousands of menacing germs left in the fly's every footprint! Can I see them? Are you kidding? Not without an electron microscope! But for all intents and purposes they are there! I would not think of drinking from the glass without wiping off the rim. Probably, I'd start with a fresh glass!

There are some things I imagine you would not allow to exist in your mind right now — inhuman treatment of others, etc. We just need to broaden this intolerance to include everything that will produce harmful consequences within us. This is the protective side of the eyes of faith!

Instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age. Titus 2:12

This verse is saying that denying ungodliness and worldly desires is **taught!** The verse before it says that the instructor is the Grace of God. How does this work? Not by harsh rules but rather by positive grace.

Statements of defeat are: "I can't help it. It was too hard for me. The temptation overcame me." Grace says, "I can do all things through Christ!" The strict intolerance I was referring to is a refusal to allow "victim" phrases to run around in your head. Negative thoughts steal our power — they deny the power of grace. Eyes of faith see solutions when the flesh says there are none! Where do they see the solutions? In Christ! *"I can do **ALL** things through Christ Who strengthens me!"*

Imagine the people walking around your house saying under their breath, "That's my space, stay out!" This, of course, would be rude. But in a very real way, we are subconsciously doing this all the time, and it becomes obvious when we discover someone violating our space. The eyes of faith I want us to develop will have us walking around, muttering softly under our breath, "This is the Holy Spirit's space. I am His and He is mine." Perhaps singing

something like a pop Gospel song of a few years ago, “I’m Yours Lord, everything I am, everything I got.” Bad English, but songs can get away with so much more.

Sing, mutter, ponder, speak in your mind that the chair of honor in your life belongs to Jesus. Invite Him continually to both occupy it as well as rule from it as His throne!

See the war for our soul as a teeter-totter with our spirit sitting on one end and our flesh on the other. Our “eyes” can apply pressure to either side, thus insuring that it will win. We must do everything we can to get our eyes to see the Spirit’s side.

The world’s wisdom seeks to rid us of the pain of guilt by putting weight on the flesh’s side, saying “This is normal.” Such inner dialogue promotes an “Oh well” response that denies God’s righteous standards. We need to tell the “Oh well” to get off the teeter-totter because it has no right to be there – we deny it’s legitimacy!

We can weigh-down the positive side with our words. The sword of our tongue can create life with positive reinforcement and kill the surge of carnal appetites with Spirit-filled words. We should say to a lust feeling that tries to invade our temple, “Hey, get out of here! You may be natural, but I’m living in the supernatural!”

Another way to look at this is to imagine our flesh as a primitive savage brought into a fancy restaurant in New York City. When dinner is served and hands are used instead of forks, the primal response is quickly denied. The old patterns are not acceptable in the new environment. The natural is denied. It might have had its place, but not here!

A higher, more refined way of living denies the propriety of the lower, crude, more primitive. And the instructor called Grace doesn’t do this with harsh judgements, but with positive new ways. The savage is told calmly, “Here is how we do this in America!” The instructions by grace are both positive and exciting.

Learning new behaviors is empowering. Learning new ways to walk in victory over sin is so far from the harsh commandments in

the Old Testament: Old Testament – do this and die; New Testament: do this and live!

When sin comes to woo us, it has both “feelings” as well as thoughts. It would be so much easier to deny sin if it consisted only of words. But life is not about passing easy tests! It’s about walking in victory through faith! Our focus can trigger feelings as well as shut down feelings. When sin throws its line, hook and juicy bait (feelings), we must purpose to change our focus and trigger different feelings!

A friend of mine was trying to lose weight using this sort of conditioning. Every time she thought of fattening food she popped herself with a rubber band! Sadistic! Instead of pleasant feelings associated with tempting thoughts of tidbits, pain became associated with them. We need to associate “The wages of sin is death” with those things seeking to take over our chair!

What if you walk into the room and find guilt sitting in “your” chair? As you ask yourself why you have feelings of guilt, several of the dumb things you’ve done recently pop up on the screen of your mind. Being a normal human, you begin to defend yourself. You do have a right to a fair trial, don’t you? As you begin to defend yourself, the enemy’s hook sinks into your mind. He’s got your attention now! But wait, what are you doing trying to absolve guilt by self-justification?

Didn’t Jesus pay for all your mistakes and sins? Does the accuser of the brethren have the right of admittance, the right to berate us, harass us, beat us into a mind-set of failure? Or do we owe our new Master, Jesus, the right of “first try” at fixing our sin/guilt dilemma? One will be denied. The choice is ours.

If we deny Jesus, the God of great mercy, He won’t throw a fit and make a big noise. But our lack of peace makes a loud, obvious silence, especially when we’ve previously enjoyed His perfect peace. When guilt hits, the eyes of faith look to the Lamb slain for sinners. The eyes of faith see hope and restoration; the eyes of guilt see condemnation and repeated failure.

Try a simple test the next time you feel guilt about something – maybe it’s driving like a nut or failing to do something you promised. Whatever, turn on your eyes of faith and see Jesus standing in front of you. He actually is inside of us, but for this test, see Him standing in front of you. Tell Him you’re sorry and ask Him to fix it. Ask Him to cleanse you afresh. Now how do you feel? The eyes of faith could help prevent guilt that triggers chemical dependency and destructive denial behavior.

We will be able to tell which guest we allow to stay in the home of our heart. Like a person's cologne, so is the fragrance given off by the Lord Jesus. As a filthy vagrant usually is hard to handle, smell-wise, so the demonic make their presence more than obvious. What does it smell like inside your house? If we were as fussy over stinky flesh-thoughts entering our mind as we were about smelly people contaminating our physical homes, we'd be spiritual giants.

I can remember the awful smell of a mangy old dog that wandered into our yard when I was a kid. I think the folks said the poor canine was about to expire. Smelled so bad. We would have done whatever was necessary to keep the stray out of our house. That's the power of denial. Doing whatever is necessary to keep the foul, offensive odor of fleshly lusts out of our heart-home!

Let's break down our illustration to see if we can find ways to make it easier to deny sin and guilt a place in our lives. Dad had to do several things early on to condition the rest of the family to deny their own right to his high and lofty place.

First he had to have the desire to sit there consistently. Similarly, we must have a very consistent desire for Jesus to fellowship with us rather than do our own thing. If one minute dad was lounging on the davenport, then on the floor, then on his chair, the inhabitants would have confused signals as to where it was safe to sit. Likewise, if one minute we desperately want to be intimate with Jesus, then we want to flood our mind with filth and violence on TV, then we want to have a pity party, we will send out confusing

signals. Such double-mindedness sends the wrong message to our God and our eyes!

Secondly, dad had to refuse others the right to sit in his chair. The moral implications of this illustration might cause some consternation right about now, but we're just trying to make a correlation. If Dad didn't put forth the effort to chase the kids out of his chair following his raid on the kitchen, he would establish a precedent. My point is that consistency and firmness are necessary if we are going to establish the parameters of the battle with our foe as well as convince our own subconscious mind that we mean business. We're not only convincing the devil, we're convincing ourselves that we're serious.

How can we develop a natural reflex that will automatically deny sin and guilt a rightful place in our heart? How did Dad establish that his chair was "Off Limits"? Did he just make one pronouncement to all the kids or do you suppose he had to chase little urchins out of his chair several times? Words and actions! Early on, especially if the children were young, they would have to be repeatedly denied the right to sit in Dad's chair when he was home.

We don't break old sin habits by one casual, positive affirmation. We repeat the process over and over until a new "second nature" response is cultivated. Threatening one's self doesn't produce long term success. We need new talk and new actions!

Make it easier on yourself – be consistent, be firm! Denial is serious business! Getting eyes of faith takes training!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What sins have you seen society take a softer stand on through your lifetime?
2. Which sins do you see as being more deadly and destructive to faith?

3. Have you ever had someone in your life who had a special chair that they insisted everyone else stay out of? If so, did you cooperate with their wishes?
4. Have you ever had someone try to help you deal with guilt by telling you to not be so concerned because it was a natural, normal temptation? If so, did their advice help you fight sin or did it take you deeper into trouble?
5. Think of a common temptation. Write out a phrase that a person could say to themselves over and over to build a new habit of denying the old sin a place in their life.
6. What new actions could be substituted for the old patterns?
7. Where in the Bible does it say believers are seated with Jesus?
8. Does it say anywhere in the Bible that we are to reign with Christ?
9. Draw a mental picture of you reigning with Christ. What things do you need to run out of your life – things that want to get you off of your throne?
10. Someone comes to you asking for help on how to be more consistent in their Christian walk. What advice would you give?
11. Think back to my example of a teeter-totter. What kinds of things does the evil one use to weigh down his negative side?

12. What do you see if a fly walks on your food? How can we use this reaction to avoid sin?

Chapter 3

YOU'RE NOT PAYING ATTENTION TO ME!

What's going on when Mr. Well-meaning husband says "Uhuh" from behind his newspaper, not having a clue as to what is being said to him? He is aware that someone is speaking, and perhaps later he could even tell us who it was who spoke to him, but as to what was said, not a clue!

This is a negative aspect of the power of denial. What if the scene we just painted had the accuser of the brethren standing on the outward side of the newspaper, ragging on the reader, rather than his wife talking to him. Then, this ability of the mind to focus on something to the exclusion of other data, becomes a valuable resource for the victorious believer!

What if the reader was denying faith-destroying, double-minded statements? This ability of the mind could then be proclaimed as a faith builder, a valuable tool of the sincere saint! Eyes of faith! Ears of faith! Instead of being lost in a newspaper, we need to be lost in God's promises, so much so that the devil's distractions are virtually ignored.

The human mind can get so focused that it becomes hypnotized or deadened to peripheral issues and events. Why is it so easy to do this with a favorite TV program, but so hard when pain hits the body? The distraction has to be more captivating than the pain!

How do you think a painful tooth would react if you answered the door to greet Ed McMahan telling you of your million dollar prize. The tooth would still hurt, but you most likely would not feel it as greatly until you came to your senses from receiving Ed's good news. The urgent can overpower the less demanding. This power of denial can be tapped on purpose to release its energy!

Or, perhaps you have a pain in your body during the evening, but it's no big deal. When you lay down to go to sleep, suddenly all the distractions are gone and the pain takes center stage. Now the pain is all you can think about. This is how fear works to torment us. Can we turn this around to make faith flourish? Oh yes!

Our senses and feelings can be focused for our good. As with the example of the doorbell ringing and a million dollar check being handed to us – something far greater than a mere million dollars is waiting our faith signals! The kind of faith that destroys sickness and disease must become more of our focus than any disease! This is easier to say than to do, thus the difficulty in obtaining a healing most times!

The 6:00 news tells us to get our flu shot or expect the worse. The latest disease or syndrome is thrown in our face by commercials that tout a grandiose cure – with these possible side effects! Suddenly you feel one of the symptoms tweaking your body. Oh my, I must have the huchagumba! To walk by faith in a world dominated by bad news will require us to have something for us to quickly redirect our focus on. Faith pictures!

We can't stop the evil rain, but we can get under faith's umbrella of controlled focus! We can't stop bad pictures from being thrown at us but we don't have to supply the brush and paints! We can train our eyes to see faith!

The confidence that God's Kingdom, though invisible, is more real, must become our focus. Surrounded by four-dimensional wolves, nipping at our heels, we must be able to hear the refrain of faith-building promises coming from the fifth dimension where God's provision is waiting to flow into our need. I have trained my spirit to say, "I love You Jesus," at all kinds of times. When I wake up in the middle of the night I can think: "I probably won't be able to go back to sleep...." or say, "Jesus, I love You." One acts as a sedative, the other response builds frustration.

I know this inner flow of worship is from Him for my flesh sometimes drowns out His faith-building confessions.

We don't have to understand the bigger picture or even know how faith is going to fix our situation – but we have to release it. We must train our eyes to look for the scarlet thread in every problem and pull on it on purpose with our confessions and our faith pictures. When the foe seeks to distract us in order to divide our mind and disqualify us we must do the “newspaper” trick and ignore his “common sense” and “what if” scenarios. How do we do this? How does the old boy do it with his newspaper?

The beauty of the eyes of faith is that we don't have to have all the facts or even a glimpse of a plan. We must, however, ignore the negative input! People try to help us by asking us... “What will you do?” Not a clue – except that Jesus has promised to take us through any situation. He will move any mountain. And for sure He will turn everything that touches our life for our good!

His supply is limitless, every believer knows, but because it operates according to the laws of faith, God's abundance is only **potential power** until it's drawn by faith. He won't force us to receive. And here's the zinger... if we have more faith in the lies of “lack” that are constantly thrown into our minds by the father of lies, God's sufficiency will be denied entrance into our lives!

Angels wait at the door of our faith. They can step over the threshold of passage from the spirit realm into our situation any time the Father gives the okay. The Kingdom of God operates by faith, therefore angelic help waits on our faith responses. The biggest muscle of faith, as I see it, is to have more confidence in God's **supply** than in the need.

This confidence is the byproduct of our human will focusing on God's truth. Our attention to His Word generates power. Meditating on His promises – turning them over and over in our mind – is like the field within a generator – the interaction between two different spheres! The more we do this in non-crisis times, the easier it is to focus on His promises in calamity! Like the husband lost in his sports page, this kind of faith is so obsessed with God's promised supply that it's oblivious to surrounding interruptions. It

may be a little irritated with the demonic noise that is always clamoring, but it couldn't tell you what the deceiver was saying.

Which is more real? Worry about things that haven't happened yet (and may never happen), or the track record of the Awesome God who never fails and is pleased with our faith? Is the greater reality situations subject to change or the changeless Almighty God?

Doubt is a futile attempt by the devil to rob God of His omnipotence! Though it can't take away any power from Yahweh, it can unplug us from His supply line! God's power flows by faith.

Do you remember what Jesus said to the woman who touched His clothes? He said it was her faith that drew the power! Has anything denied that power in your life?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith." Romans 1:16,17

We can paint an internal picture that evokes greater attention from our mind than the grousing, griping, faith-destroying diatribes of the devil. The ignored wife may walk over to the absentee husband and snatch his newspaper camouflage from him, and so might our foe use pain, guilt, and irritation to return our focus to the "real" world. But, as the wife in our example cannot force the husband's attention to yield to her completely, so we can maintain our inner focus on the images that we prefer.

I'm sure you've had someone look straight at you but you've felt, "Lights are on, but nobody's home!" The person has to yield their focus. It's a choice! We can choose what and who we allow to fill and control our mind.

When the Holy Spirit said, "*The mind set on the flesh is death,*" He didn't qualify the conditions. It really doesn't matter why our

attention shifts to the flesh's confusion, death will work regardless! Because this is just the way it is, the responsibility is ours – only ours– to force our focus not on the supposed “real” world, but on the supernatural world – the Kingdom of God! This is the sacrifice of praise! This is the stuff real worship is made of.

Our focus must “*Seek **first** His righteousness,*” not ours! His abilities, not ours! We must reach first for His supply, before we try to figure out how we can make things happen!

A simple, quick prayer of surrender and request rings the doorbell of heaven. Our focus pulls the door open when we hear the call from inside, “Come.” (see Revelation 22:17).

Taking the example I started this chapter off with even further (at the risk of being corny), if the husband knew his wife was going to remove his newspaper, the joy of his moment, he could lock his eyes on the attention-grabbing picture of his star football player making the catch of the century. As the cellulose manifestation vanished from his vision, he could internally re-roll the mind's digital photos. He could keep his focus on the desire of his heart. People do this all the time during altar calls at church to tune-out the Holy Spirit!

Inner faith pictures birthed by the Holy Spirit and the living Word of God can greatly increase our ability to focus our faith. Colossians 3:1, 2 calls us heavenward. Let the Lord paint an internal picture that will be easy to substitute for the devil's negative ones. See the Lord of Glory as He is described in Revelation 4. Purposely paint this picture in your mind's eye when the enemy is throwing a noisy fit – it will help you tap the power of faith! Here's a power-generator that fills heaven with God's glory; use it the next time you need a godly distraction. Say it over and over until the situation changes:

*Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying: "**Holy, holy, holy is the***

Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come."

Revelation 4:8 niv

Well-meaning gossips inform us of impending tragedy strictly for the purpose of eliciting prayer support, right? Don't be fooled by the fleshly exterior; it's really our adversary that is behind the scene, trying to steal our focus from heaven's luxury. If you doubt the gossip's integrity, ask them of their motivation. Purely godly! Remember though, it doesn't matter why you change your focus, separation from God's power results from giving our attention to the flesh. Negative people may be as sincere as cancer, but their deadly focus will likewise generate death!

Denial's power can be used like wrapping paper. Crummy gifts change their appearance when gift wrapped. When someone hands you an opportunity for depression, wrap the bad news in praise and present it as a gift to Father God. Grousing and complaints are not allowed in the throne room, so we can sneak them in if they are wrapped in praise!

We may not be able to deny every complaint because of the sheer volume, but we can alter their structure by saturating them with thanksgiving – by faith! Thus we can effectively deny problems of their right to distract and disable us. By denying their role as distractors, we transform them, by praise, into weights in a gym, tools we control to increase our strength!

The hardest thing for me to do when stressed is to not try to “fix” the situation – especially when someone comes to me with a problem. My first response should be to offer up a prayer for help, but so often I reach back into my memory banks, looking for some precedent or something that worked once before. The world thinks we're crazy to pray first – quick, do something, even if it's wrong (and it usually is if it's done under pressure). The ungodly are irritated when we deny problems and refocus on Jesus, saying this is not the smart way to resolve conflict. But, honestly, they know so little of God's miracles!

They may accuse us of not taking life seriously, but they are the silly ones. Imagine ignoring the Master Designer of Life, who wants to make us always successful. That's dumb. But no, they say it's a crutch. The same people run to the doctor or to a mechanic or professional with problems they can't solve. Who's not taking life seriously? The one who reaches for a flimsy fix rather than the ultimate solution!

Developing eyes of faith that can see past the cloud of smoke into the heavens where there's more than enough to meet every need, is taking life seriously – eternal life – and by so doing, we are making light of death!

Remember Romans 8:6 (nas)! When we take our faith-focus more seriously than the devil's distractions, we will be less stressed, more peaceful, and tapped into the Lord's unlimited power!

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Isaiah 26:3 nkj

Rigid focus on Father God's grace and power demonstrates our trust in Him and our contempt for the distractions. Reflecting on the river of grace that flows from His throne will trigger more creativity and refreshment than trying to “get” unwilling people to change.

God can and will work with others. He can touch their conscience, give them spiritual dreams, crowd their lives with road signs and waylay them with angels, but He works by faith! He's waiting for us to pass the test, and our denial of the irritation and reaffirmation of His ability gives us an A+!

Our smart focus denies the monster the right to consume us while reaffirming Abba's eagerness to bless us. Meditate on Ephesians 3:20 for a while and you'll see what I mean.

I am told that a “soft focus” can produce better peripheral vision. Soft focus is when we relax our focus and look generally straight ahead. Intensity of focus causes our mind to think that only

the target exists! Soft focus allows the mind to scan side perceptions as well as the field ahead.

This trait is great when driving and hunting. We can negotiate our trek along life's narrow path and still be aware of side issues; however, our foe uses this human ability of soft focus to snare us with the many "movements" in the bushes of life!

God has intended that our sharp, crisp focus deny the sideward movement and trigger, with laser accuracy, His flow of grace. His grace is His abundant supply that puts solutions into our head, or dispatches angels to fight for us. The lie is that if we deny problems they will grow. It may be true if we merely deny problems and do not focus on the Problem-solver (Father God). But faith works by being focused, and getting distracted with more problems just adds to the size of the mountain our faith has to move!

God's power is triggered with intensity – focus! Being double-minded is the fastest way to shut down faith!

To use old David the giant slayer for a word picture: when soft focus alerts you to a side issue, reach to Father God for a faith rock to sling at the problem. This action will not totally deny the problem, but the faith response to the problem will kill the problem's ability to distract us from walking in joyous victory!

Think of this kind of faith as all of David's strength being centered down into the small stone headed for Goliath's head! The devil wants us to throw a handful of rocks, while victory comes from one rock, backed with our full intensity!

Jesus, fighting the fight of faith during His 40 day desert test, was single-minded, focused on God's Word! Did His absorption and apparent denial of His physical needs mean that His body's needs went unmet? Hardly. Though He experienced a postponement of gratification, soon the angels came and ministered to Him!

Seek first God's Kingdom and soon every one of your needs will be abundantly met! Imagine, eating a meal cooked by an angel! Hey, I do that all the time!

Problems don't grow out of control when we "hard focus" on Yahweh – they get solved! Eternal resources do a much better job than our limited faculties could ever muster! And, phoney, phantom, smoke-cloud distractions fade away when neglected.

If anything dies of malnutrition, let it be the monsters of distraction! And consider this, if God can't fix a situation when asked by His sincere child, who on earth can? He can tell us what action will produce the best results.

No, dear brothers, I am still not all I should be, but I am bringing all my energies to bear on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead. Philippians 3:13 tlb

Could we try to squeeze just a little more out of the example of the husband hiding behind the newspaper? OK. I want you to think why the newspaper had such power to mesmerize. Could it be the search for answers to questions?

Perhaps the old boy, we'll call him Jerry, thought he knew what his wife was going to say, and he was trying to find out what the article in the paper had to say. Reporters know that clever captions and headlines draw interest. Why? Because they hook our attention by getting us to seek answers.

Simply, Jerry had a greater interest in what the articles had to say than what his wife had to say. That could change in a matter of moments if she were to say, "Guess what I got for your birthday."

Developing eyes of faith will require our asking questions, interesting, answer-seeking questions. Instead of, "Oh no! What am I going to do?" We could ask, "Wow, Heavenly Father, how are You going to pull this one off?" Or, "I know You're going to give the victory in this situation, Jesus. How can I help?"

I taught a speed reading course by management expert Ben Johnson. In his material he stated that the way to increase our comprehension while reading faster, is to ask questions as we read.

Our mind can think much faster than we can read or speak. This can cause us to get bored if we jump ahead to what appears to be obvious conclusions. The bored mind is prone to wander. The focused mind is what we're after. So, we can ask questions as we read, as we think, as people dump problems on us. The skill we need to learn is how to ask questions that will provoke faith.

God made our minds so wonderful. By just saying to yourself, "What kind of positive, faith-building questions can I ask?" you can come up with so many possibilities that it will amaze you!

Sometimes it's not so much a matter of creativity as it is we want to feel bad. We earned a depression – it's ours – and we insist on enjoying it in our own miserable way. When we get over our fit and decide to get back up on top of life, we can stir the positive pump with as little as asking our self the question above. When we get stuck on a problem, we can ask a friend who is prone to positive attitudes, "What kind of faith-provoking questions can I ask myself about...?"

Here's one of God's favorite questions...

Behold, I am Yahweh, the God of all flesh; is anything too difficult for Me? Jeremiah 32:27

Ponder such questions as,

"How could God work in this situation?"

"What kind of things could He possibly do?"

If you're having trouble with a stubborn person, ask the question of how God dealt with hard-headed people in the Bible. Your answer can possibly be used as the basis of a faith prayer. If He did something once, He can do it again because He never changes nor is He a respecter of persons!

For example, someone at work is giving you a hard time. You're trying hard to have eyes of faith – you don't want to tell them off. Haunting thoughts of them dog your heels even when you're away

from work. You want to deny the situation, but more than that, you'd love to solve the problem.

When the person or one of their actions comes to mind, turn the thought into a question for Abba. "Father God, how did You handle situations like this in the Bible?" Seemingly, out of nowhere a story or thought will come to you.

As you creatively ask the Lord more discovery questions, you will go deeper into the arena of faith – deeper into the realm where God is center stage and your faith is drawing Him into your problem.

The deeper your focus on Father God, the less the actual problem pulls on you and the greater your faith arises. Before you know it, your eyes of faith have stripped the problem of its power and ushered in the "More-than-enough" answer from Abba!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Have you ever been accused of hiding behind a newspaper or being lost in something to the extent that you didn't hear someone talking to you? Describe it.
2. Can you daydream while driving and not remember the last few miles? If so, what kind of things capture you the most?
3. What kind of picture of God would it take for you to get lost in focusing on Him rather than physical pain or nasty people?
4. How and why do emergency personnel use the power of asking questions while treating patients?
5. Do you agree with my paragraph on gift wrapping hurtful situations with praise? Why? How important is praise in prayer?

6. Can you give me a real life example of the power of distraction to preempt pain?
7. Have you been waiting for the evil rain to stop or have you gotten better at getting under the umbrella of denial?
8. Do you believe that the power of heaven is waiting for us to draw it by faith into our four dimensions? If so, give an example from the Bible.
9. Look up Romans 8:6 and tell me how you can use this truth to develop eyes of faith.
10. How can you fight the pressure to “Do Something” when problems hit and you desperately need to focus on Father God first?

Chapter 4

DENIAL'S ATONEMENT

Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4:8

The Hebrew word translated atonement, *kaphar*, literally means “to cover.” The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament merely covered the sins of the people until the blood of Jesus would once and for all completely pay for sin – ALL SIN!

The book of Hebrews says that the consciousness of sin under the previous covenant still lurked in the background, though the appointed sacrifices were offered. Animal sacrifices only covered sin.

What a picture of denial’s power: **able to cover, but not destroy**. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8), but the devil himself will not be destroyed until after the millennium when he is thrown into the lake of fire.

We believers sometimes miss this truth in our zeal and excitement over what Jesus did for us. Our daily task is to overcome evil by resisting, denying and seeing God’s provisions with our eyes of faith. We must not, however, be lulled into thinking that we will ever get King’s “X” until we’re raptured! No lasting relief until the enemy is chained and then thrown into the lake of fire!

We can level our faith guns at temptation thoughts and destroy them with a command, or we can turn a deaf ear and deny their very presence. When we feel like hurting something, we can strap

on our battle gear and slice the enemy to smithereens with our two-edged sword. Other times we will feel more like being so absorbed with our loving Master that His face is all we see. Like the dull groans of planes flying far above our head, the devil's enchantments will be ignored.

Covered but not destroyed. Faith knows that ignoring Satan's luring does not stop the foe, but it makes more of another, higher reality – Christ's sufficiency! But are we not told to resist the devil? Yes, but haven't you been guilty of resisting change by ignoring your need to change? There is more than one way to resist!

The pursued young maiden resists her suitor's affections many times by busying herself with other things. If she does not want to encourage unwanted sentiments, but does not want to be too cruel, she will wisely resist advances by denial. The young man's efforts are denied a legitimate place in her heart!

Atonement covers problems in hope of a forthcoming solution. We can use this strategy if we truly believe three things: First, that Jesus will take care of every single problem we face. We wrap real problems with His real promise – Romans 8:28! Where's the problem? I can't see it; it's wrapped in Jesus' promise! I atone the problem with Christ's soon-to-arrive solution!

Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:13

This “revelation of Jesus Christ” can be at the end of time or the end of your trial! Don't limit the Lord. Expect Him to walk into your every situation! The more we “see Jesus” in every problem, the more we will enjoy solutions! Creativity will seemingly come out of nowhere.

I think we can assist the “revelation” of Jesus (using the term above) by seeing with the eyes of faith. Picture Revelation 3:20, Jesus knocking at your door, and invite Him in with His answers to

your needs. Cover each problem with pictures of Jesus ministering life to you! He's here! He's waiting for us to open the door by our faith!

Secondly, we must believe that jumping in the middle of situations without clear direction from Jesus is definitely worse than doing nothing! Taking matters into our own hands when we do not have a clear go ahead from the Lord will lead to the sin of King Saul (1 Samuel 13:12).

Doing nothing is not a virtue either. I'm calling for atonement! Busy yourself covering every potential problem with **prayer and praise**. Wrap situations with promises. Spend the time you would waste undoing misguided zeal by praying in the Spirit and pondering in the Word! Sure, do something, but make sure it's faith-atonement!

A third thing we must believe is that the Holy Spirit will prompt us with the appropriate form of resisting the devil in each situation we face. This is being truly "Spirit led."

One time, at the first sign of Stinkin' Thinkin', we'll be led to bind the demons throwing gross thoughts into our head. We may even go so far as to send them packing to the Abyss, the jail for evil spirits (see 2 Peter 2:9)! The very next assault may be dealt with by ignoring the intruder and breaking forth in praise, tapping the power of Psalm 8:2...

From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger (niv).

If the Holy Spirit intends for us to reach for thanksgiving to draw God's grace into a problem, but we get lost in confessing a long list of healing Scriptures, we will miss His best for that moment! We will deny His best by our habit. On the contrary, if the Spirit intends for us to take up the two-edged Sword and destroy symptoms of sickness with powerful healing Scriptures, then that is our best

response, even better than singing or worshiping. We must seek our Shepherd's face for how He wants us to respond. Could this be why our battle strategy works so efficiently one time and not another?

Believer priests are to seek the Spirit (lean on His inner prompting) before they respond mechanically. Ask Him what this moment's challenge should be covered with! Whatever the response, the enemy will be resisted and his advances will be denied access into your heart! Your sanctuary will be covered with the Master's provision – atoned until the day our enemy is thrown into the Lake of Fire!

Speaking of denial and atonement, some believers fuss over the issue of healing being in the atonement. The last part of First Peter 2:24 reads...*by whose stripes ye were healed (kiv)*. One group says that this is only spiritual healing. Talk about denial!

Imagine saying that when a couple declares bankruptcy that it affects only their checkbook. Can we ignore the stress-destroying power of such a financial antidote? Surely every area of a couple's life will be affected when they have some hope for solutions.

Maybe this is a bad example, but the Scriptural correlation is that we are all bankrupt in sin. Every problem we have stems from our alienation from God because of this sin. When we come into the cure for the main cause, every peripheral issue will be affected.

Christians who fight the biblical doctrine of healing are denying a couple of things. First they minimize the real distracting power of illness. What does the common cold have to do with your spirituality? They would say, "Nothing." I suggest that they let us follow them around as they fight nature's winter revenge. Are they manifesting the fruit of the Spirit (who's as grouchy as someone in discomfort and pain)? Are they esteeming others as more important than themselves? Are they filling the atmosphere with praise and worship or coughing and sneezing?

Let's be honest. Pain and physical discomfort can easily distract us from a mature, spiritual lifestyle! A huge temptation for believers in great pain is to deny the promises of God's Word.

Let me rest my case by asking you to try an experiment. Go to one in great physical anguish and ask them to exercise their spirit, which I'm sure they will quickly agree is eternally more important than their physical body. Read these verses to them:

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

Ask them to begin praising God that His promises are more real than what they are feeling. Remind them how we give assurance of salvation to new believers by warning them to not walk by feelings.

If you try this experiment, make sure that they have nothing close by that they can throw at you, and keep your back to the door. Why do I say this? To poke fun at people who are sick or riddled with pain? Most definitely not!

What this graphic experiment will show you is that everyone truly, deeply believes that the physical body is important! The doctrine devised by the devil that healing is not in the atonement has only one piece of evidence that could possibly stand up in court – fleshly evidence. The bottom line for physical healing opponents is the worn out phrase, “If healing is in the atonement, then why are not all healed?”

On the surface, this argument appears to have some weight, but as we consider what it denies, it soon shrivels. Because God works by faith (1 Timothy 1:4 nas; Romans 1:16,17), and because

of the truth that Jesus frequently shared, *“Be it done unto you according to your faith,”* lack of receiving our miracle reveals we’ve misused the power of denial! Hebrews warns against coming short of receiving all of God's promises.

We can enjoy some of God's
bounty and still have Promise
Land to capture!

Jesus either meant the following or He was lying. Tell me which is the case...

...If You can! All things are possible to him who believes.
Mark 9:23

Either our faith is the limiting factor to receiving the impossible, or Jesus was fibbing. Which is it? And you know what healing-fighters will quickly grab as their main line of defense right now? Denial! What they see people experience or not experience is used to deny God's Word. Is physical evidence grounds to deny God's truth?

God wants us to have eyes of faith, not
be limited by fleshly vision! See
Hebrews 11:6.

Why then do so few experience physical healing? First, let me say that I think we all experience many healings; maybe not many miracle healings, but daily healings nonetheless. I believe, however, that the power of a double-mind is often tapped by our archenemy to keep God's promises from working in our lives.

But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man expect that he will receive

anything from the Lord, being a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. James 1:6-8

Entertaining doubt pushes the reset button on our faith. We all doubt from time to time, don't we?

Let's make a correlation to a savings account. We need "X" amount of dollars to get an item we want, so we begin saving. Another need arises, so we deny our "goal" and tap our savings. As our goal continues to be denied, and other "needs" are focused on, our savings shrivel up. We could soon slip into using our charge cards! Something is denied and something is focused on. The balance in our savings account will tell.

In the very real spiritual world you have a faith savings account. We are told to make it grow (see 2 Corinthians 10:15). The flesh wars against the spirit (Galatians 5:16,17), mainly by trying to get us to focus on physical, fleshly evidence that contradicts God's Word. Every time we agree with the flesh and call God's Word a lie, our faith savings account is reduced.

If we build our faith account by meditating on and speaking God's promises, our balance can be used to accomplish, what Jesus calls, "All things!"

Between making faith deposits and the time your balance is great enough to spend on your miracle, you can be robbed by evil spirits that stick play guns in your face (feelings) and demand your focus. Here's where we'll have to trust God that they are play guns!

The devil can never do something to you
that God can't change for your good!

Sickness works twenty-four hours a day. Disease speaks to our subconscious (hidden person of the heart) continually. It's message pumps our very being with doubt and unbelief. Feelings become a swamp filled with alligators separating us from God's island of promises. Monsters of pain continually jump up and scare the tar

out of us with their hideous chants that healing isn't going to work for us this time. Our focus is torn away from meditating on power verses by taunts of “What will people say?”

What the enemy doesn't do internally, he does by sending miserable comforters to surround us. This is war! The fight of faith! God doesn't spare us this opportunity. No, but He is coaching us from the sidelines. His Holy Spirit continually calls us deeper into the place where faith is birthed. Which side will we deny? Which side do we deny? The scoreboards will tell!

I'll never forget how upset people got with me when I said something similar to this years ago. When I preached that “All things are possible to him that believes,” people thought I was judging an older, mature saint, who, by the way, was a lot nicer than I was. He remained sick in spite of prayer. Did his lack of physical healing lessen God's “All things”?

I don't want to judge anyone, but I surely don't want to imply that God tells lies! Please hear the Spirit. They were willing to water down the Word of God based on what they saw! They twisted Jesus' promises because their eyes of compassion were tricked into honoring man over God. This is serious. We pick on lawyers for looking for loopholes for their obviously guilty clients! When men are low in their faith savings account, dare we implicate God for not moving their mountain? Is it right to limit God, touting “sovereignty”? Does not His sovereignty mean He **can't** lie and that He **can** do anything?

If we deny what is possible by settling for what presently exists, how can we ever get to our goal? Father God speaks of that which is not as though it already exists (Romans 4:17). This is pure faith. When we deny what God “can” do based on what we've observed or what others tell us, we have emptied our faith savings account! We are bankrupt! Because whatever is not of faith is sin, we have just sinned big time!

Wouldn't it be better to say “All things are possible with God” even if we never saw anyone healed? One focus takes us

downward to the lowest possible level, the other takes us upward, into the heavens where truly all things are possible!

Being exception-minded when it comes to growing in faith is a fatal attraction! Denial of the worst kind. Father-pleasing faith contradicts the flesh. If our hearts were filled with the living and abiding Word of God that does its work in us (see Acts 20:32), and if every time the enemy threw a lie or fleshly “fact” at us we countered with a dozen promises, our faith savings account would soon have a redeemable balance! It would be easy to “atone” our problems!

One final matter. Jesus did not atone for our sins. He completely paid for them – 1 John 2:2. Atonement is an Old Testament word. The New Testament word is propitiation – satisfactorily paid for our sin! The Old Testament sacrifices covered our sins until Jesus, the perfect sacrifice totally paid for past present, and future sins!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does atone mean? How can this concept be used to help us tap the power of denial?
2. Which is easier for you: to deny the devil’s temptations with eyes of faith or doing warfare with him? Why?
3. What three things do we need to believe in order to use denial power to fight Satan, according to this chapter?
4. Some people say God puts sickness on us to teach us. Which blesses you more, sickness or healing? How spiritual do you feel when you are sick?

5. Opponents of healing mock the Scriptures when they say that if healing is in the atonement then all would be healed. What are they overlooking with such a statement? See Mark 2:5-11.
6. The main teaching of this chapter is about building faith, not physical healing, but what lessons did you learn for developing your faith in regards to healing?
7. Why do you think some people would sooner implicate God than take a chance of embarrassing someone who didn't get healed?
8. What truth for developing eyes of faith can you extract from your answer to question number seven?
9. How has the devil used people to empty your faith savings account? What steps are you going to take to change this?
10. What do you think scares believers the most when people say, "All things are possible to him that believes"? What can we learn from this to grow in faith?

Chapter 5

REALITY IS RELATIVE

Picture a commercial airplane lifting off the runway, climbing to 30,000 feet elevation. As it majestically traverses the sky, it appears to be breaking the law of gravity. In reality, it is working alongside the law of gravity with several other physical laws: lift, thrust, and others I am ignorant of. But, without the law of gravity being in effect, the plane would be floating rather than flying.

Inside the plane, the stewardess asks you if you want something to drink. If gravity were suspended, this could pose a problem, one that the astronauts have to deal with. No, gravity is still working inside the aircraft.

Another obvious reality is that gravity is always a present influence. Lose power to the engines and gravity begins to demonstrate that it has the upper hand, with smashing effectiveness.

Life is filled with so many paradoxes/mysteries that we can begin to question if God's laws are really in control. The law of sowing and reaping is touted by some as being the greatest law (some call it karma and build a religion around it). When brother Whoseit bombs out financially, but is quick to tell us that he just began tithing and should not have crashed, the devil tempts us to deny God's laws in deference to man's predicament.

If we could see brother Whoseit's greater picture, we would notice that what appears to be an exception to God's law is in reality a confirmation that God's higher ways are indeed working, just as He said they would! As an airplane crash reaffirms that the plane was merely working alongside other laws when it was airborne, and that the law of gravity was never canceled out, so the bummed out brother's testimony is merely devoid of some crucial details.

People want us to affirm that their predicament is exceptional, and by so doing are being used by the deceiver to trick us into denying God's Word. Doesn't this smack of dark-ages' hocus-pocus? "We never know what God will do" (implying that He is out to trick us or rip us off, so we'd better not trust Him).

What God is teaching us is how we must deny what appears to be true if it contradicts His Word. This will take a lifetime to refine because there are so many different ways we will be tested: body, soul and spirit. In fact, we will likely be hit with contrary evidence concerning every promise of God's and some sensations will appear to overwhelm us.

More than once in our lives we will find the words creeping into our head, "I thought God said He would not allow me to be tempted above what I could bear?" The intensity of the immediate situation may appear to deny the reality of God's promises, but what we experience is relative to our view point.

Back to our airplane example. When they were filming the movie Apollo 7, the producers developed a situation that gave the appearance of weightlessness. In a specially altered cargo jet, they made a film set, took the plane to a very high altitude and then dove back to earth at a very precarious angle.

What was happening in reality was that everybody and everything inside the craft was free falling back toward earth under the full power of gravity. But because the plane accelerated slightly faster than the falling people inside the craft, they appeared to be floating. In relationship to the inside of the aircraft, they were indeed floating, but in reality, they, along with the plane, were falling quickly toward terra firma and in a matter of minutes, the truth would prevail – unless the captain pulled the plane out of the nosedive.

The end result of life, Judgment Day, does not point to exceptions, but to a symphony of interrelated actions and reactions. Just because we can't see all the details of our road through life, we are tempted continually by our foe to disbelieve

God and agree with his fiendish conclusions. He would trap us with circumstantial evidence.

The atheist who is not immediately struck down for belligerently mocking God uses the evidence of grace to say there is no God. His plane is in a nose dive and he doesn't even know it! The impact of the fall will be Judgment Day!

Can you see how we are tempted continually to use denial to negate God's power in our life? When the Lord's grace appears, it teaches us to deny contrary evidence (Titus 2:11,12). His grace gently tugs our trust toward His love. Will we believe His commitment to us, His care for us, in spite of all so-called contrary evidence?

HIDDEN WEALTH

We've heard stories about how someone died in poverty, not knowing they had gobs of money in the bank. One story is told of a man in Africa who sold his land, disgusted because it was covered with ugly rocks. The reality was that his land was covered with diamonds in the rough. One motivational speaker calls this story "Acres of Diamonds." Talk about denial in the negative! Imagine, tripping over wealth and denying it by living in poverty. "Lord, help us develop eyes of faith that can see hidden blessings."

I know that when things look the darkest, God has the answer right under our nose – literally as well as figuratively! What we say with our mouth will either encourage us to remain faithful until the answer breaks through and even stimulate creativity and insight, or the down-in-the-mouth syndrome will poison our faith.

The foundational issue is, do we trust Father God? Will I deny the "apparent facts" and cling to the Word of God, or will I throw a temper tantrum and side with the antagonist?

Magicians dumbfound us with their slight of hand tricks. I have noticed, however, that there is a point of diminishing returns. I still am awed by the guy who can pull a beautiful, live dove out of

nowhere, but I am less impressed when they make an airplane disappear. One TV special had a magician supposedly make a large building disappear. Ho-hum. Being continually bombarded by Hollywood's special effects makes this kind of big deal really no deal at all.

The point is this. For the enemy's tricks to continue to trip us up, he must stay within the limits of credibility. Occasionally he will pull the "nobody cares" line on us, but for the average believer, it's overkill. We know that someone, somewhere loves us. But the small foxes of stress or cares slip in virtually unnoticed because their grievance seems plausible.

If we allow the small taunts to trick us into denying God's grace, the monster of unbelief begins to stir. What couldn't be accomplished with getting us to deny God's promises directly, can be pulled off with many small assaults on the Father's love.

THE TAUNTING PAST

Why does the past get blamed for so much of the present? If I am a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17), then why should my past dog my present and intimidate tomorrow? Only because I give credibility to the accuser's evidence. I will either deny God's Word that says the old has passed away and new has come or I will deny the liar when he says I am trapped by yesterday's failures.

Is the past still a reality that has the power to trap us? Or, are we dealing with a supposed reality? If I believe the devil, I will act according to what "I believe" and **my faith** will energize his kingdom to entrap me! He uses his slight of hand tricks to trap us into agreeing with him. Like the bewildered audience, we say, "How did he do that?"

How could we ever be fooled with his showmanship? Don't forget, he pays us to fall for his allusions. He tells us that we're not to blame for our problems. We're really a nice person, a victim, a

helpless victim! We believe his show and he pours sympathy on us!
Some trade.

We are a tiny, microcosmic speck inside the universe that is held in Yahweh's hand! All power is His and we are in Him, therefore, we are never without power. Any and everything we need is already here! The eternal reality is that...

...in Him we live and move and have our being!

Acts 17:28

His supply may not be presently manifesting in my area of need, but there are valid reasons. And for sure, with eyes of faith we will find the answers and His supply!

BOGUS BONDAGE

If I can't break free from past chains... it
could be because they are not real.

I can't be set free from something that doesn't exist! I live in the present, and God's power is in the present. If I ask Him to set me free from something that's been done away with, He cannot answer that prayer.

If I'm waiting for some sign that an imaginary chain has been destroyed, I am in effect giving the evil magician more credibility than the risen Savior! This is the downside of denial. This is what millions of people are tricked into buying every day! Jesus' real deliverance is denied and the trickster's illusions are believed! Imaginary chains are strengthened with erroneous words and unneeded coping devices!

Old guilt that taunts through the years, even though it has been confessed a thousand times, has an accusing spirit attached to it.

Like a hungry lawyer, accusing spirits dig around for stuff to trump up a lawsuit.

If God has washed my heavenly account clean because I confessed my sin, but the enemy taunts me into re-opening the case, I will find heaven unwilling to discuss the matter. The case is not only closed, the records have been destroyed!

God won't give any grace for something that doesn't exist!

He won't send a letter to an address that doesn't exist! We might, but guess what you get in the return mail? **If I deny this fact, I deny His real provision of forgiveness!**

Deny His cleansing and you deny the grace that makes all things new! Do you suppose God feels complimented when we get all worked up over a bill collector's claims when He paid the debt in full with His own blood? How do you feel when someone calls you a liar?

If I agree with the Almighty that my sins have been covered, destroyed, washed away, paid for, atoned, reconciled, justified and removed from me as far as the East is from the West, I will tap into the flow of His love and mercy!

Denying the "reality" of that which no longer exists except in a fuzzy, very subjective memory, allows me to affirm Yahweh's Word. Denying hell's hungry lawyers a right to petition my court reduces the legal congestion and provides some free time to enjoy life with the Living God!

FLASHBACKS

But what if I have flashbacks?

Question: Is this a stored memory or a present reality?

If I am presently living in sin, I must stop! "Help, Jesus!" is our best response. If I am harboring unforgiveness, bitterness, etc.,

then we're not talking about “old memories” that need to be denied; we're looking down the barrel of a loaded gun that's designed to destroy us, and that has every right to kill, steal and destroy.

When we walk in known sin, we're not only opening the door to the enemy, we're putting up flashing lights to every demon within a country mile to come and clean our clock!

Hebrews says that a root of bitterness can mess up our entire life! Present sin needs a present application of the blood of Jesus and heartfelt confession. **We can't deny our present sin – that response will kill us!** We must deal with it Scripturally, quickly, decisively.

Back to old, previously dealt with, but still nagging hurts. Do you enjoy reveling in the pain, embarrassment, and shame? Of course not! When Paul was pressured to play with stuff that repulsed him, he said it was sin – the old devil (compare Romans 7:20 with Genesis 4:7).

**IF YOU DON'T WANT IT...
IT'S NOT YOU BRINGING IT UP!**

Did you purpose to bring up the old, stored information or could our archiving foe have triggered it? Chances are a spirit suckered you into reopening old hurts in hopes of seeking reasons. His bait: “Why did they do that...How could they...What was I thinking...???”

Or, our enemy might suggest a fine point of the law that would acquit you... “Somewhere there is evidence that I was justified in doing...” He might have started with an associated memory that triggered hurts that led us deeper into reflection, then despair! Our memories are linked with smells, seasons, people, etc.

If our foe can poke a person's body to generate illness (see Acts 10:38), could he not stimulate your grey matter to trigger old

information? Thoughts and feelings do not necessarily have to be logical or valid to tempt us to deny God's completed work in us.

The real question is, does the flashback (trashback), contradict what God's Word says about the new you? Have I applied for and received forgiveness and spiritual healing? If so, then any evidence to the contrary is an attack on God's integrity and must be destroyed with the sword of truth!

**Even if the past were a present reality,
would you go with it and deny the
Lord's present presence?**

Is the past like layers of geological deposits, as seen in the Grand Canyon? Maybe. I feel, however, that the past is like fish in the sea, where the smaller ones get eaten up by the bigger ones. The past gets used up by the present. Yesterday is gone. The only things that exist are the consequences of yesterday's decisions, and our subjective memories of what took place.

We may never know the full truth about what really took place in past events until Judgment Day. Listen to the average court case – everybody has a different picture of what happened! We know what we felt; do we know what others felt?

We can't change the past, but eyes of faith can see Jesus, the Master Sculpturer, carving good out of the bad! What others meant for evil, we can see Him turning into good! Yes, by God's grace, we can do something **today** about the consequences of yesterday!

MERCY EYES

Everybody's motives for what they did may be hidden until all secrets are revealed by Christ. We may never get the "confession" or the apology or the reason why others hurt us. We'll find out plenty when Jesus sits down on His great white throne (see Revelation 20). But one thing is sure, we can appropriate His mercy and grace for ourselves and for those who hurt us – right now!

When the devil hurls an old hurt at us, we can reach for some **fresh** grace and mercy! And, of course, promptly incarcerate the evil delivery boy! I've dealt with this topic of sending harassing demons to the Abyss in *Winning the Inner War*. If you have trouble with obsessive thoughts, consider reading this book.

The next time the past tries to haunt you, submit the episode to Jesus, resist the devil, then proclaim what the Word of God says. See if the whole situation doesn't change immediately. But, don't wait until the enemy has you pinned down under a ton of grief and woe. Do it at the first sign of a flashback. Tell him to take his trash back!

HIT THE LIGHTS

Our prayers for a child awakened by night terrors might calm their concerns some, but nothing helps like turning on the light and looking in the closet and under the bed! The child's terror is real enough, but it is based on unreality. God won't chase away what doesn't exist, but we can and must deny it! Refocus on reality! Turn the light on!

What is going on when temptation flexes its strong power, pressure and feelings? It's merely the work of that scary, powerful magician. I say powerful, because the devil is still deceiving the world (2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelations 12:9).

Funny, though the world makes light of the devil, they sure pay big bucks to calm down their emotional response after one of his performances! He's quite the master of denial, tricks and illusions! He peddles his unrealities with the gusto of a zealous salesman and his clients pay the bill! The question is, will we deny this demonic magician?

How will we know when to deny him and when what we're experiencing is valid? It will be tricky sometimes, just like the professional prestidigitator, but it becomes more than obvious as we turn on the spotlight of the Word and listen with our trained

ear to the Holy Spirit! This is what spiritual growth is all about. We learn from our past mistakes, extracting the precious from the worthless. Growth is when we eventually learn from our mistakes; death is when we stop trying.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever felt like God allowed you to be tempted beyond what you could bear? If so, what were you overlooking?
2. I'm sure you've heard someone say, "You never know what God's going to do." Do you believe it? Before you answer, ponder First Corinthians 2:9-16.
3. What is your reaction when someone tells you that they tried faith and it didn't work for them? I don't want you to be rude or unkind, but what does such a person need to understand if they are going to grow in faith?
4. Remember the example of how they filmed Apollo 7? Have you ever had a pain in your body that appeared to be a particular sickness but wasn't? You went to the doctor, he said he couldn't find anything, but you sure felt something. What was going on?
5. There is real sickness and real depression, and there are false imitations. How can you tell if you really need to go to the doctor or psychologist? Is there ever a time to seek a professional counselor's help?
6. The matter of dealing with repressed memories is presently the subject of much debate. What would you tell someone who told you they just uncovered a bunch of weird memories?

7. Have you dealt with obsessive thoughts as though they were torments from evil spirits? Would you rather think that you were going nuts or that a spirit was trying to drive you nuts?
8. If demons can bombard our minds with negative thoughts, how can we handle the thoughts? What can we do with the demons?
9. In order for past failure to disqualify us from present success, what will it have to make us deny?
10. How does the devil pay us to fall for his allusions? Do demons have to earn their right to harass us?
11. Have you ever confessed a sin a bunch of times without feeling forgiven? What could the real problem be?
12. Do you agree or disagree with my statement that the past is not like geological layers but rather like fish in the sea that get eaten up by bigger fish? Are you your “past” or what you choose to be today?

Chapter 6

FORSAKEN

Let the wicked forsake his way... Isaiah 55:7

The old farmhouse, peeking out from behind mangy bushes, was overgrown with weeds, neglected and forsaken. We can tell from a distance when something has been “let go.” Life has an ugly way of dealing with things when left to her own devices. There is an unseen power that steps in to drag status quo toward deterioration —entropy!

Weeds and decay may argue the point with us, but for we mortals, unless we invest time and energy, nothing good seems to come from neglect. The word “neglect” is typically used in a negative sense, but why can't we use it to deny sin an active place in our life? If we ignore lust and fail to give it the attention it clamors for, why won't it languor and decay? Won't worry wither if spurned? If we fail to feed resentment will it not retreat, feeling forsaken?

The Holy Spirit seems to think that we can master our foe with something as simple as neglect. *Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11)*. We might paraphrase this verse... *Even so, forsake sin as though it was dead, neglect it, let it die for lack of attention. Why not?*

When we put off needed repairs, don't we make excuses? One of the most powerful tools of neglect is procrastination! The subtle power of deferral is that we don't have to come right out and make a final severance with a project. Saying an unequivocal “no” is so stressful that we sometimes opt for the chicken way out...put it off! Forsake it. Neglect it.

Have you said your goodbys to someone before dropping them off curbside at the airport? Everybody gets lost in processing the luggage and tipping the skycap, and the pressure and pain of saying goodbye gets neglected. Men prefer this smoother departure ritual.

The most successful way to employ neglect is by being busy with something higher on your priority list. Golf is definitely a higher priority than pulling weeds. When we neglect the lesser for the greater, we have performed a noble work. Will this work with sin? Can we tap into this well mastered skill to triumph over double-mindedness? Perhaps we could include "ignoring" in the list of ways we handle critical thoughts of others!

SQUEAKS AND OIL

Watch out for the powerful axiom: "The wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the oil." Irritation has a way of commandeering our focus! We may try to deny an irritating person so we can be spiritual (kind, loving, patient); but, like an ambush, irritation slaps us in the face and demands that we invest anger. So much for our power of denial. We were going to stay in control and not let old "What's-his-name" get to us!

Squeaky wheels and irritating people trick us into giving up our objectivity. They hide the fact that paying attention to them will cause us to quench the Holy Spirit, and they tout their cause as worthy of our full attention. If we can make a quick analysis of the situation by talking the irritation over with our Coach, we will feel more noble about denying the squeak.

The Spirit may suggest we offer Mr. Squeaker the "Give thanks in all things" remedy. Or He may suggest we neglect the noise by busying ourselves with higher thoughts – denial's secret weapon! This may be where singing in the Spirit comes in handy – we build a melody around the squeak as though it were a pitch pipe! The Hounds of Heaven may join in and turn our duet into a real hillbilly symphony – something to laugh at, not take seriously!

We can glibly tell an irritating person who is always whining about something, that God will work even their hard times together for their good, but, we'd better be practicing this attitude before we try to preach it. Folks have a way of stuffing those words back down our throat when they detect hypocrisy.

It's dangerous to offer advice like this for at least two reasons. First, we are then duty bound to be careful of our own complaining; and, secondly, giving advice can pull us into focusing on the squeaking wheel. The Spirit can help us decide if neglect is the proper response. Maybe they need new wheel bearings, not just a lube job! Conversion, not just criticism! Some will require deliverance rather than censure! Who knows for sure? The Spirit knows!

POWERFUL LUBRICATION

My example can get a bit crazy at this point. What I hear the Lord suggesting is that the oil can He offers has the ability to stop the squeaking in our head, even when the actual noise is coming from another person! Now that's powerful lubrication! We will need the oil can of the Holy Spirit ready, poised and aimed in the direction of irritations. When "noise" tries to grab our focus, we vigorously squirt it with praise...

"Jesus, I thank You that You have this situation in control! You are filling me with the wisdom as to how to best respond to this situation. In fact, Lord Jesus, I want to praise You for making everything that touches my life work together for my good! You are truly the awesome, All-powerful, Almighty, Living God!"

Now, doesn't that make you feel better than getting angry? Plus, it earns you faith points!

Dismissed – ignored – neglected – left for dead. This is what we must do with every invitation from sin to “Come out and play.” “No thanks, I gave at the office!” We can inform joy-stealing temptations that we did our time, we've pampered our flesh enough, we've been stupid long enough. Now, it's God's time!

This is the impression I get from Peter's almost casual dismissal of sin... *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul* (1 Peter 2:11). Sin cries: “Feed me, feed me!” The preoccupied saint responds with neglectful intent, “No thanks!” Not necessarily meaning to be rude, but more like it would just take too much energy!

ALTERNATIVE WARFARE

Yes, Virginia, there is a time for violent warfare. There is the occasion where every muscle is as taut as steel and our resolve is likewise marshaled in vehement conflict with the powers of darkness. These are great times and the adrenaline rush is exhilarating. The problem with this mode of operation is that we soon tire. Then what? The Holy Spirit is offering us a backup system of defense for those times when we are too exhausted to pick up our sword!

What is the compassionate medical missionary to do when he is too exhausted to properly care for another patient? Teeming masses are pressing at his door, but if he goes past his human limitations too frequently, too far, the masses will be left with no hope! Either he stop, ignore the cries and get his needed rest, or the miserable crowd soon has no resource!

Who do you suppose pushes the lie of **imbalance** in an effort to wear down the faithful, sensitive saint? If the conscience won't allow the rightfully weary time to recuperate, then something else is involved! Harassment!

The exploiting demon of imbalance needs to be reminded that Father God programmed the need for rest within humans and that to honor His design is both needful as well as righteous. Then the

focus can shift to the Lamb upon the throne. Allow the heavenly choir's anthems of praise to drown out the sniveling of the devil's distractions.

TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

A soldier pushed too far; a doctor drained of his reserves; a saint too weary for warfare – these are times that call for discernment. There may come the time when we must either deny refreshment or deny the urgent. Tomorrow's opportunities hang in the balance! Yes, there's a proper time to push past sluggishness; but to push ourselves past our health "red line" will likely mean time in sickbay tomorrow! Ignore the Father's offer of "rest" (grace) and you may pile stuff in front of the "exit" He's promised.

Who said, "Know thyself"? May I tag on to their saying to get my plug in for eyes of faith? Know your upper and lower limits. When do I need to scold myself into action and when do I need to run off the harassing slave driver? I think we can train our eyes to see Jesus as our coach, prodding us to action, or our shepherd encouraging us to lie down and take some rest.

Simply put, if we don't know when to put our sword down and see with eyes of faith, two dangers are inevitable:

1. Getting weary in well doing;
2. Having no time for our Lord.

My concern is that we can tire of the conflict and be overcome by evil. We will deny the biblical truths that declare that we are a new creature in Christ with unlimited resources. If drained enough we will agree with the voice of hopelessness and surrender to the downward pull. Entropy will choke us out with its weeds! Weariness will make us cowards!

The second danger, and a far greater evil, is that we will neglect intimacy with our Heavenly Father. We frequently hear stories of a super successful businessman who neglects quality time with his loved ones – all in the name of providing for his family. This can ruin relationships. How much more are our most important of all relationships?

We can be pushed by inner voices to clean up the kitchen first (like Martha) and miss the all important moment at the feet of the Master (Mary's response).

Taking the gospel to the lost is very important, but if we don't balance it with drawing strength from our Lord with praise, worship and teaching, we will soon wear out! We're in this for the long haul, and this will require the balance that comes from time with our Coach!

When we can do something – do it! When our system emits a warning signal – stop and refresh! When a good fight with the devil is called for and you're up to it, slug it out! When your Celestial Prince woos you to His chambers, drop what you're doing and run to Him! Regardless of your responses, you will always be denying someone or something! If your eyes of faith are locked on to Jesus the deceiver will be denied. If your focus is distracted by the enemy, the Master's provisions will be denied. Abundant life is in the balance.

HOLINESS

The Apostle Paul exposed the deficiency of rules and regulations to provide true holiness. Every sincere believer wants to be holy. But, if we're not careful, we can get fooled into thinking that "religion" will work!

If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to

perish with the using) – in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence. Colossians 2:20-23

There is a better way to gain mastery over the flesh – keep reading...

If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. Colossians 3:1,5

Have you ever decided to get real serious about spending time with the Lord. Maybe it was after making a decision at a revival meeting or camp. Didn't it seem like everything tried to prevent you from following through with your resolution? You were distracted by everything! Your attention was drawn to a bunch of things that needed to be done.

What if we could turn this around? What if we let the Holy Spirit distract us from problems, chores (at the proper time), worry, fear thoughts? What if He was allowed to pull our focus off of how others ignored or mistreated us, right on to a mental picture of Him standing in front of us with the keys to the door of abundance?

Remember the old movies of the Roman games? The Gladiator, with his sword poised at the loser's heart, looked to Caesar for a thumbs up or a thumbs down! What if we did this with "religion"? Some ideas of religion are good, others are a distraction and breed condemnation or pride. What if each tug to act religiously, we just looked to Jesus – whispered a quick prayer?

Forsaken! Wouldn't it be better for the old habits to be whining that we have neglected them, rather than our Lord? Paul's simple way to live a holy life (Colossians 3) is to so neglect the old responses that they die! He said, "Consider or reckon yourself dead to the old negative, fleshly responses!"

Such denial enrages the devil and his staff as they hysterically attempt to snag our focus back on to his soul bait. Jesus told us that we can only serve one master, so, simply put, make your focus your heavenly Master – better Him than the prince of darkness!

True holiness is as simple as forsaking the devil's crummy commercials! Ignore his advertisements and merely change the channel! Have you noticed how channel surfing can instantly shift your interest to what's before you? Quick, switch to the Savior's Station!

When exhaustion dogs my heels,
When in frustration my soul reels,
When the thought of one more fight,
One more tossing, sleepless night,
Makes my spirit and my mind,
Recoil and seek a place to hide,
Then it may become more clear,
That it's time to simply draw near,
Play dumb and turn a deaf ear,
Reach out for the nail-scarred hand,
Of the One standing near.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How easy is it for you to neglect problems?
2. Is it easier for you to neglect problems or temptations?
3. Think about the axiom: “The wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the oil.” To what extent has the devil used this to run you around and distract you from more important things?
4. What are the most common “squeaky wheels” you get distracted by? What steps can you take to gain more mastery in these areas?
5. How big of a problem is it for you to rest and relax when there is still work to be done? Has your health ever suffered because you pushed yourself too far? Ever catch it in time?
6. Are you tempted to get upset with God for allowing you to be caught in such “Catch-22” demanding situations? What important truth could the Lord be desiring us to learn?
7. My casual reference to Mary and Martha was used to balance out the strong call of altruism – service beyond the point of sanity. This might be the devil’s hardest test to master. Do you agree or disagree? Why? What in humans makes this so difficult?
8. What are the two dangers that I mentioned, that are inevitable if we don’t know when to put our sword down? Do you agree or disagree? Why? Which is the greater danger?

9. Are you more a fighter or a lover? What steps do you need to take to get more of a spiritual balance?
10. Can you picture Jesus, watching as you examine time demands and “religious” traditions to see if He gives a thumbs up or a thumbs down?
11. There may be a time to flee rather than fight. If you agree, what would be some of the indications that the time has arrived? Do any Scripture references come to mind?

Chapter 7

VIRTUAL DENIAL

In his book, *God's Inspirational Promise Book*, Max Lucado uses an example of a competition figure skater. Suppose you were in the lead, heading into the last round of competition, and you found out that there was no way you could lose, how would it affect your routine?

If we could enter into a competition, knowing beyond a shadow of a doubt that we could not fail, how would we respond? Not all the pressure would be off, but definitely much of the stress would melt away! Knowing we were number one would put pressure on us to make sure everyone had no reason to doubt why we're in first place. We might even be competing against ourselves, trying to better our own personal best. But, one thing for sure, the fear of failure would be lessened!

Are we truly who Jesus says we are? Was Paul exaggerating in Second Corinthians when he said that Jesus always leads us in triumph? Are we standing on solid ground when we hold on to the promise of Romans that in all these things we are more than conquerors? If we are complete in Christ right now, even before we enter into today's competition, should that truth not reduce some of the pressure to succeed?

If words mean anything, then the only way we can fail is to not believe that we can't fail!

If I am victorious in Christ, any and all input that even hints to the contrary must be a lie. Any voice that says I lack something that

God has already given me, that seeks to prod me into fleshly responses, must be denied as a bold-faced lie! This is faith's greatest challenge! The eyes of faith must see better than our flesh hears!

The eternal truth is that our spirit person not only is holy because of Jesus, but also, neither does our spirit person want anything that would make us unholy!

Satan's lures that tug on the flesh are virtual reality that only have power if we focus on them and place confidence and trust in them.

As with a virtual reality video game, when we remove the high tech equipment, we re-enter the real world. When we set aside fleshly feelings, calling them what they are – mere temptation feelings – our agreement with that which is eternally real is allowed to manifest its power!

The psalmist says it this way...

*But my eyes are upon You, O God the Lord; in You I take refuge... Psalm 141:8
nkj*

What does he mean? Is the writer actually seeing a vision of God? Or, is he telling us that when the pressures of life amass around him, he shifts his focus off of the stressors, on to the Savior? Is he not suggesting to us that there is a refuge in the time of storm, a place where the foe can't destroy us?

What our eyes of faith see – the ever present Savior – becomes our living refuge!

This hide-out is ours for a shift in our focus! Our vision must be lifted from temporary frustrations to the eternal halls of glory.

This is done by an act of our will. We can't pray and expect God to make us refocus. We are silly to think that God will give us faith to escape temptation when we have more faith in the temptation than we have in Him!

Faith is directly tied into our focus as it is with virtual reality. We could say that the first step in building up our faith is what we allow ourselves to focus on. We must preach to ourselves! Spiritual muscles can be built by saying something like...

"I know this feeling of depression is from the pit of hell because I am more than a conqueror!"

The will is choosing to side with Father God's promises and deny the virtual reality of feelings. After all, we know feelings are fickle. They will change many times during the day, depending on what we focus.

Wouldn't it be embarrassing if we were caught implying that God was fibbing because we put too much confidence in fickle feelings? At the Judgment Seat, I think the most humiliating thing would be to see life's events replayed with the spirit world visible.

Can you imagine what it would be like to watch yourself feeling depressed because nobody cared that you hurt so badly. With eternity's vision, you would see the enemy of your soul pumping feelings of depression into your mind, all the while angels were awaiting your faith commands!

Jesus would be in the room, unseen by your mortal self. His patient stance would increase your implication. Who or what did we put more confidence in? Feelings? Or the promised, ever-present presence of the Lord Jesus?

Our moment-by-moment responses will either deny the spiritual reality that Jesus is present and that He is working all things together for our good, or they will deny the evil one's designs!

In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy's destiny changed dramatically when her puppy exposed the phoney magician. The great and powerful Oz was a fraud! He held the Emerald City in bondage because everyone believed his noisy fits of rage could hurt them. We could say that their faith in the wizard empowered him to dominate them. The Bible clearly says that all power belongs to Jesus, so who is this one declaring that we're going to fail because we put our trust in Jesus? Listen to your "eye" of faith!

Try an experiment. The next time a thought such as "I might have cancer," or "maybe I'll have an accident," pops into your mind, call the devil's bluff. If he could have killed us, he would have done it a long time ago. No, he has to tap our faith. We have to give him our faith to destroy ourselves!

Say something back to the one putting the negative thought into your head, such as...

"Go ahead, Bozo, give it your best shot! You have no power or authority unless I give you some of mine, and you're outta' luck! Beside, I don't fear death, I fear the Living God and He protects me and provides for every one of my needs!"

We don't want to get into pride, so we hide behind Father God; however, never give into fear.

The Proverb says, *The fear of man brings a snare*. The devil has to use this truth to snare us. If he can trick us into fearing sickness, disease, poverty, failure, etc., he then has the right to put some of it on us.

Colossians 2:15 states that Jesus spoiled our foe – took away his ammunition and authority! For the devil to put anything on us, he has to get it first. He needs to use our faith credit card. Don't give him your account number!

Don't fear anybody or anything but God Almighty! Make sure our foe knows this.

- _ He's kind of hard of hearing so you may need to say it loudly.
- _ He also has a short memory, so you need to tell him often!
- _ He's very persistent, so don't stop!

A stupid movie just came to my remembrance. It was a western spoof about some bad guys who were going to overtake a town so the railroad could run through it. The townspeople, acting on an idea by Gene Wilder, made a fake town a ways away. Their "virtual reality" town was a decoy. Just about as crazy as that slapstick movie is how the devil runs God's kids around and around, wasting time, money and precious energy, chasing virtual realities.

Occasionally I get muscle twitches. I have found that almost every time I bind and kick out a fallen spirit, the twitches stop immediately! Shooting pains in my body, when treated as harassment "fiery missiles" from the enemy, cease as suddenly as they start. Sometimes I feel a strange phenomena in my physical body, accompanied with the thought, "Maybe you have appendicitis...maybe a kidney stone..." When I treat it as a virtual reality and chase off the trouble-maker operating behind the scene, the pain almost always stops immediately.

You might say, "What if the pain persists and is actually a real physical problem?" Good question. If the pain persists, I'll do something about it. But my point is that it usually doesn't! Meaning that the physical manifestation was unreal! What would have happened if I had nursed the pain and accepted the lies that something was really wrong? I probably would have assisted in my own problem!

Telephone solicitors make many calls seeking one person who will go along with their pitch. They try numerous times before catching a fish. Who do they get? The person who doesn't deny them! The one who hangs up when they realize it's a salesman, isn't

trapped into buying something. It's the one who stays on the line that gets taken to the cleaners (assuming the salesman is pushing a product that you don't need).

When you realize the devil is on the line, hang up!
If you don't, his virtual reality will become another
problem for grace to fix!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever played a virtual reality game. Can you describe what it is like?
2. If the pressure were off for you to win at a game (you were assured of winning) could you relax and enjoy the game? If so, relate this to winning when fighting the devil.
3. What is your favorite Bible promises and how do you or could you use it to insure a "relaxed" victory?
4. I said, "We can't pray and expect God to make us refocus." Do you agree or disagree? If you agree, have you learned any "tricks" that help you refocus?
5. Have you been surprised at how fickle your feelings are? Have you been crying one minute and laughing the next? Can you give an example when this ability of the mind surprised you?
6. Do you agree or disagree with my example of being embarrassed on Judgment Day if we are shown how close the Lord and His provisions were during our darkest moments? Explain.

7. Have you chased away any phoney symptoms of pain and had them abruptly leave? If so, please explain. What was going on?
8. Have you ever called the bluff of a spirit trying to put the fear of dying on you? If so, give the details.
9. How frequently do you give the devil your faith credit card number? Did my reference to this make sense? What do you think I was trying to say?
10. What would be a good rule of thumb for when it's time to stop resisting physical pain in your body and go to the doctor?
11. I'm sure you've seen "*The Wizard of Oz.*" Which character's response best describes your common response to the devil's tirades toward you?
12. Is it rude to hang up on obnoxious, persistent telephone solicitors? How easy is it for you to hang up on pesky sales-people? What about persistent devils?

Chapter 8

CROSS EYED

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."

Matthew 16:24

The greatest area for confusion for humans is in the matter of personal survival. Jesus asked His followers to surrender their rights, their destiny, their opinions, their hearts – their lives! He said this to reveal God's guaranteed way to total success. We were created with the inner itching for success, but all of life seems to go crosswise with the Lord's cross. He says "die to self," and the world system says "blow your own horn, fight, grab, take what is yours." But notice how both the world's system and the Lord Jesus have the same final goal:

For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. Matthew 16:25

Both roads claim to have the same destination – to find life. Jesus promised an abundant life to those who would trust that joy was hidden behind surrender to His lordship. The world coaxes us to deny every sidetracking voice and focus on getting what we feel we need. Both call for denial, both deny that which hinders reaching the goal! The big two questions are "Which path pleases the Master?" And, "Which way works?"

Can you see how the world's "road to success" is fraught with failure and frustration? Every supposed hindrance to achieving

their goal is covered with irritation – because there is no one in control of every aspect of the life lived apart from Christ! In fact, the person bent on reaching their own goals at all costs has no over-all protection – it’s them against the world!

For example: If we have to drive across town for a very important meeting and we are behind schedule, every traffic light, every poky motorist contributes to our frustration. They’re not just irritations; they’re blockages hindering us from reaching our goal! Every delay represents a threat to our happiness! The poky motorist might just as well be alligators in a mote surrounding the castle we’re trying to get into! This is partially why road rage is such a growing problem – “Get out of my way; I’m a man on a mission!”

Contrast that scenario with driving across town toward the same meeting, but this time Jesus is physically in the car with you. His presence impresses you that how you drive is more important than getting to the meeting on time. Every interruption is now seen as an opportunity to show Jesus how patient you are, how congenial you are toward inconsiderate motorists. The difference is in who you are trying to impress.

What if the observer in your car was a ruthless, “win-at-any-price” motivational speaker, on his way to a hungry mob that paid big bucks to get stirred up? You would be tempted to set aside your finer, more refined driving skills and throw kindness out the window. The values of our passenger, our audience, encourage corresponding behavior. The world system, designed and empowered by the deceiver, has “survival of the fittest” as its slogan, while Jesus says, “The way to up is down.”

Jesus wants us to find life, that's why He told us how to find it. It’s hidden behind a cross! We know this is a figurative cross, for if every believer literally died, no one would be left to share the Gospel with the lost!

Picture in your mind a football field. We’re standing on our 10 yard line. Scatter down the field, between us and the goal, is the

meanest team we've ever seen. Huge giants, waiting to tear us to pieces. We're handed a football and told to get it down the field and score a touchdown.

Each opponent represents a threat to our success. These are the frustrations of life. How can we score with so many obstacles in our path? This is why we get so angry or depressed when our plans get all messed up. The slow driver, the cancelled concert, the car breaking down, mean people – a lot of things stand between us and the goal of enjoying life! Some opponents, obviously, are bigger than others.

How can we enjoy the game of life if all we see is a field of opposition? If every day is filled with mountains to climb and burdens to carry and problems to solve? Are we having fun yet? If we relax for a minute, let our guard down for a second, the enemy will powder our cookies. But then life is about suffering, isn't it? Is it?

Isn't the cross about considering ourselves dead to the world? Dead to the hassles and huge opponents? Dead to the need for winning because Jesus has already won? Yes, the crucified life is a denial of having to win! It's a living denial of having to fix everybody's problems so they will like us. The cross means that our reputation is already a thing of the past! Jesus has already won!

The eyes of faith (back on the football field) see the mean faces of the opposition, see the ball handed to me, and then prompt me to turn to Jesus and say, "Lord you already won this game, didn't you?" Whereupon Jesus walks the length of the field as suddenly terrified opponents back up making a pathway for me to run unobstructed down the field and score.

Okay, so that's a crazy example. What I'm trying to say is that when we take up Jesus' cross, we're reaching for what has already scored! When hard times come, the cross-eyed response is that Jesus has already taken care of this problem. So, the wise recourse is to turn to Him (as He used to turn to His Father), and ask Him what His plan is. This is not a copout, its cross training.

When we grab the ball and feel the need to hit every opponent as hard as possible, we will find the game more than we care to play! Crucified people don't fix problems – they are totally dependent on the Risen Lord who has already made the way – solved the problems – provided the fix! The cross is the symbol of victory!

The Lord's point in the verse at the beginning of this chapter is that when I surrender my rights – to succeed, to be appreciated, to be respected, to do my own thing, to go where I want , when I want – I will get precisely what I wanted in the first place!

Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me." Matthew 16:24

How does this work? There is a very important principle that God operates by. When we get our wires crossed, we trigger the negative aspect of this principle. The principle is in the verse that follows our text for this chapter:

For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. Matthew 16:25

When we put the "Master's will" first place, He personally takes over supervision of every detail in our life. Talk about faith. We have to believe that He really is concerned with our best, and that He will move heaven and earth to accomplish whatever is needed for our best to be manifested.

Another way to say this is in 1 Peter 5:5b,6:

*...God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.
Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand,
that he may lift you up in due time.*

When we refuse to take up our cross and be His disciple, then Jesus has to refuse to be concerned about our needs. Sometimes we're like a small child that doesn't want any help because they have more faith in themselves than sense! If our pride causes us to need to solve the world's problems (at least all the ones in our path), then God honors our desire – He steps back and lets us see how really tough we are! Been there – done that! What a drain!

Humility (compliance with the Master's wishes), is what triggers the Master's involvement with our needs. He gets directly involved with lifting us up – exactly what we all want! The eyes of faith see how God works! The eyes of faith trust that letting go will get us what we really wanted in the first place! Letting go and letting God!

Consider the negative aspect of this principle. God resists or opposes the proud (the independent). What sane person would consciously want to have God as an opponent? Let's go ask old Pharaoh if it's cool to have God mad at you? No thanks, those plagues were nasty!

It's as though most humans feel there is a neutral place, a kind of king's X, where if we leave God alone, He'll leave us alone. Nope! Jesus said it so clearly... we're either on His team or He's our opponent. No middle ground.

With this truth stinging our pride, consider also that if we try to do our own thing, we're a bad team player. The cross we hide behind is that we're not the captain. We're not the MVP. We can't fix the world even if we cared that much. We're a team member. Our faith, confessions, and good works run defense, while Jesus scores (to change the metaphor a bit). Where is my glory? It's in my cross – my team wins! Because I'm on His team, I've already won!

GET SERIOUS

I'm not saying we're not to take the problems and tests of life seriously. Just the opposite. We're to seriously and quickly submit every situation to Jesus. Because we're cross-eyed, we nail everything to His cross. Someone you can never please? Nail the need to please them to the cross. Someone that always argues with you? Why do you argue back? Nail that "need" to the cross. Can't see how you're ever going to get everything done today? Nail the whole bunch of things to the cross and make a scratch pad out of them – a sort of job ticket holder. When Jesus impresses you to take one down, pull it off and go for it!

Can you see the cross mentality? It's like the ***"cease striving and know that I am God"*** phrase from the Psalms. This isn't laziness, it's reliance on Him and full cooperation and gusto for what we feel Him directing us into.

Life is all about us choosing Him – all the time – in every situation! He will not allow us to remain neutral. If we deny this truth, our pride will mandate God becoming our adversary! If we deny ourselves, the Master will exalt us at the right time! Cross or loss?

Eyes of faith see success and blessings behind every command of God. When Yahweh told Joshua to meditate on the Word and obey His commandments, the goal was... *for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success (Joshua 1:8 nas)*. The flesh thinks that God is trying to cramp our style and limit our freedoms.

God wants everything you do to be successful and prosper! Read the Abrahamic Covenant – read the Moasic Covenant – read the New Covenant! The Bible, cover to cover is about discovering and enjoying the abundant life! The greatest hindrance to this goal is when self gets in the way and decides it knows more than God – motivated by fleshly sight. The cross mortifies this foolish pride – that's why we need to reckon ourselves dead daily. Dead to pride.

Deny this truth and you will have a very hard time truly enjoying life. See God's commands as the doorway to life with the eyes of faith, and life suddenly becomes easier!

If we were not to be exalted, why would Jesus share the guaranteed path to being lifted up? The way to up is cross-eyed!

WHAT DO YOU SEE?

What do you see when you look at the cross? Humility, shame, pain? Yes, they are all there. The first step toward salvation is when we see more in the cross – redemption! Jesus paid an extreme price to provide an extravagant salvation! Every drop of His precious blood speaks salvation, healing, new life, eternal life!

But what about your cross? What do you see when you look at the cross Jesus asks you to carry? The flesh fears the cross holds: depravation, destitution and depression. What do the eyes of faith see when it hears Jesus say *Take up your cross and follow Me?* Redemption! The cross is about the power to make new! When Jesus says *Take up your cross*, the person of faith knows that healing is on the way! Freedom is coming to someone! The ears of faith can hear the chains falling to the floor!

Jesus wasn't asking His disciples to end it all – He asked them to take up their cross **daily!** How can the cross mean the end of everything if tomorrow holds another cross? The cross is the doorway to the abundant life. The eyes of faith see this and more, namely...

A daily cross requires a daily resurrection!

Resurrection power! A fresh start! Yesterday's failures have been nailed to the cross! The daily pushing of the reset button – resurrection! Being born again every day! When the foe tries to

arrest you for last weeks failures, you plead the cross – Jesus’ and yours! You die daily – tell the enemy! He may not be aware of it!

We can’t die daily to self and not be resurrected. How did we ever get to sit with Jesus?

...even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus... Ephesians 2:5,6

Our first resurrection was when we were saved. Our daily resurrections are after we take up our cross. Seated with Jesus in heavenly places is our tremendous reward! The eyes of faith see this incredible opportunity and thus counts no cost too great! What do you see when you look at the cross?

CROSS TRAINING

So how do we take up our cross? By seeing Jesus as the main point in everything! He's beside us in every trial, every supposed interruption. He's bigger than every blockage that stands in the way of us gaining our goal. He's always present as the Glorious Distraction – it's easy to deny sin's solicitations when we focus on "The Way, the Truth, the Life"! This is eyes of faith in action!

**HE'S THE DIAMOND;
EVERYTHING ELSE IS CUT GLASS.**

Say something simple, such as, "Jesus, You are more important to Me than winning this argument, getting to this appointment on time, having a car that works properly, or even being completely healed." This denies the distraction and realigns our sight. When we don't put our hope in this world, it forces our eyes to see with faith into the heavenly realm!

CELEBRATION

I wonder how many times God desires us to enter into celebration with Him and we glibly deny the occasion! The eyes of faith are looking for the great parade of 2 Corinthians 2:14!

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

Following Christ's resurrection there was a fantastic blow out celebration in heaven – His home coming! Can you imagine the noise and laughter. Mercy. Angels flying all over the place and the saints from the ages hootin' and hollarin'! Behind every cross there awaits a similar celebration. Resurrection parties. Oh yes!

Have you been around someone who is always saying "Praise the Lord"? It may be a bit irritating if you think they are insincere, but for sure, such a response is seeing God in every situation! Isn't that the way eyes of faith respond to every test, every trial? Praise the Lord – my Jesus is in control!

A crucified person is putting all their eggs in the one basket – wagering their soul on the fact that God is in total control? "If Christ wasn't resurrected," says Paul, "we are of all men most foolish" – and we add – and if we're not resurrected daily with Him, then everything is chaos

When we take up our cross, we are paying today so that tomorrow's needs will have to be satisfied by the Lord. We're saying, "Jesus, You are so important to me that I want to obligate myself in advance to serve You." If the temptation comes to waste my life on wild living, I've already spent my budget!

The person buying the pearl of great price risks all on the future. The cross calls for total trust. "Father, I have no back up plan – You are my source – my only source!" The flesh has all sorts of tricks up

its sleeve, and none of them are guaranteed to work! None of them will work; they only breed more frustration!

NEAR DEATH

A friend once told me of a near death experience he had and how it transformed his life. Suddenly, as he emerged from “somewhere else,” everything took on a new perspective. Material things were counted as worthless – after all, he almost left them all behind. His experience led to his seeking the Lord and finding salvation.

What a picture of the cross-minded, cross-eyed believer. Paul uses the term, “consider yourselves dead to sin.” Someone who has picked up their cross sees things totally different. Money and possessions are mere tools. Yes, we can enjoy life, but the stark realization is that everything will be left behind when our appointment with the Master comes. Everything!

The “near death” experience teaches us to say, when goal and gadgets fail... “Oh well, I couldn’t take it with me anyway!” I’ve heard so many say after they’ve recovered from a very serious ailment, how important family and relationships are and how trivial so many of their previous worries were! The key to using the eyes of faith that this chapter is after, is seeing life and relationships in this light – now – before some crisis “wakes us up!”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What do you think Jesus meant when He said “Take up your cross”?
2. Do you agree or disagree that the worldly path has the same goal as the Lord’s path? Why?

3. What was the point of my example of driving across town through traffic with different passengers?
4. What kinds of things irritate you the most? Why do you think they irritate you? How could taking up your cross help gain victory over these situations?
5. What could be a cross confession to use when you first sense frustration or anger starting to build?
6. Did the football field example make any sense? What was the point you think I was trying to make?
7. Have you considered before that taking up your cross daily would require daily resurrections?
8. What appeals to you most about having daily resurrections?
9. What do you think about my asking you to say, “Jesus, You’re more important than even my being completely healed”? What was the context of the remark?
10. When everything is a big deal to someone, what does it say in relation to the verse we started this chapter with?
11. Do you know of anyone who has had a near death experience? How did it change their life?
12. How are we to balance enjoying the bounty of the Lord while living a crucified life?

Chapter 9

NO FAULT INSURANCE

He who covers a transgression seeks love, but he who repeats a matter separates friends. Proverbs 17:9

What is going on within a friendship? Are close friends in denial? Is it wrong to overlook another person's faults? Or, as the writer of Proverbs says, is it a sign of love to cover over and deny a person's mistakes? The New Living Bible renders the first part of Proverbs 17:9... *Disregarding another person's faults preserves love...* Close friends enjoy a privilege that judges and detectives are disallowed – they can choose to ignore the sins of their companion! A casual reflection on novels about friendships reminds us that loyal friends hide and harbor fugitive comrades, even at great personal risk. The bond of love will cause an innocent person to throw caution to the wind and put themselves in great danger, all to help the one they love – even if they are dead wrong!

This is not an effort to eulogize sin, but rather a reminder that it is not the duty of a close friend to focus on the flaws of another, push for correction and put “standards” above love. It may not seem “right” to a legalist, but Jesus does this all the time with us, and true love is a master of this brand of denial. And actually, this is faith in the real person, the one Jesus remade!

If couples in divorce court could be talked into practicing love's power of denial, lawyers would soon have to spend more time chasing ambulances! A return to the days of infatuation would have both parties bending over backwards to overlook mistakes. But, someone will probably interrupt with, “Is that right?” I ask you to

go back to when you fell in love. Was it right to deny the flaws that threatened to extinguish your budding obsession?

A cynic would respond, "If I had paid more attention to details I wouldn't be sitting here in divorce court." To which I reply, if you would have continued to cover your mate's flaws with love, denying faults the right to destroy your marriage, you would still be soaring with the eagles of love rather than groveling with the snakes of survival!

Who has as great a skill at denial as lovebirds who choose to ignore glaring glitches and major personality flaws? Is this trait wrong? Maybe better pre-marriage counseling would match up "perfect" couples, but I suspect that as love wanes, even the ideal twosome would find flaws that were previously overlooked by love's intoxication! And, oh mercy, what would life be like if couples were matched up not on the basis of falling in love, but because of similar test scores for compatibility sake? Help us! And is life about perfection or discovering how to live in grace and mercy? Who told us to set aside love's rose colored glasses and take up the detective's magnifying glass?

When Jesus said that the one without sin could cast the first stone, was He downplaying sin? Of course not. His goal was healing. He wanted to do something with the pride and judgment that keeps us from experiencing God's salvation by grace! More than just saving half of the "sin- team," the woman taken in adultery (by the way, where was the other half of the sin-team?), Jesus was wanting the entire audience to see what they were denying.

Is life about personal perfection derived by denying my flaws, or about perfecting the covering-power of mercy? Is denial of another person's flaws gross injustice or is it an affirmation and application of the awesome price that the greatest love paid for every frail human?

There is a time to confront sin and demand repentance, and there is a time for the broken sinner to not only seek mercy to cover

their sins, but to allow the same luxury for others. The story of the woman taken in adultery is about the latter, not the former.

Maybe said another way, what is to be the major focus of the believer? Sin or redemption? Is a Christian supposed to have more confidence in man's ability to sin or in Christ's blood to cleanse? Is not the "good news" the realization that there is a solution to sin pollution?

Applying the cure to the disease of sin denies the consequences of sin and affirms the miracle of mercy! This does not cheapen grace, but rather exalts it to the unique place of being mankind's only hope!

Mercy makes us Jesus minded, not "How much can I get away with" minded!

Focusing on a friend's flaws causes the observer to slip into the judge's robe. The ego loves the pomp and circumstance of a courtroom of "little people" rising as his majesty the judge enters. Seated high above and disenfranchised by the weighty bench and empowered by the mighty gavel, the judge presides over his court! Estrangement is a quick and natural byproduct of judging the failures of another person. Judging is easier from a distance, while it also produces more distance between judge and defendant!

Hey fans, let's rush to scale the bleachers and remove our selves from the sweat of the playing field. And there in the "safety" of the ideal observation point, we all-knowing fans can make major decisions as to the value of each player. Coaches who stumble can be quickly discarded with smug comments about the overall goal of winning. The only thing better is the "objectivity" television supplies as cameras select and commentators dissect. I hope you catch my irony. The critical judge loses something very valuable – involvement! Life! Relationships!

Is the goal of life to win at any cost or is it about the expense of winning through loving? Rather than being easy, to cover the sins

of another person will be one of the hardest things we will probably ever have to master in life! Believer-priests, standing in Messiah's role, distributing His grace to an unworthy world, is the most difficult employment ever. Denying the sins of a friend is love's toughest job! It drives our inborn sense of justice wild!

The flesh cries: "Fix first, love later!" The Spirit responds: "You can't fix what you can't love!"

When you catch a brother in a sin, who is it the easiest to talk to about it, his closest friend or someone removed, aloof and maybe even a little disgruntled with him? The answer is obvious, but is it as obvious that aligning with a person's adversaries throws us into the role of an adversary? This title is the literal interpretation of the word "devil." To not deny a person's sins is to come close to working for the devil. I say "come close" because there are times when the Lord Himself will direct us to confront, correct and seek reconciliation. But the directive to "straighten out" a wayward brother is also accompanied with warnings:

*Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted.
Galatians 6:1*

Even the rare encounters of correction are to have as their goal restoration as soon as possible. Love seeks healing. Grace desires repair. Mercy's motivation is the best for all concerned with God's will. Godly correction denies the possibilities of failed reproof as it reaches for reconciliation!

Maybe a good rule of thumb for flaw covering is:

Cover first – deny another's imperfections until or unless God otherwise obviously directs you, with accompanying peace, mercy and wisdom!

The Holy Spirit leads us with peace (Colossians 3:15). Mercy will protect us from the fatal boomerang effect of judging. And, wisdom will show us how to at least provide possibilities for reconciliation and restoration!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you been on both sides of another person's sins? By that I mean, have you once blamed a person and then gotten close to them and covered their sin (or the opposite)? Explain.
2. Do you feel it is wrong to cover another person's shortcomings? If so, where does common sense draw the line?
3. Do you think mercy makes a person want to see how much more they can get away with or get their act together? Why?
4. Have you had to balance loyalty and love against honest justice? Explain.
5. Do you think Jesus was making light of sin when He said that one without sin should cast the first stone at the woman taken in adultery? Didn't He know she would "get away" with her sin?
6. Why do you think that there was no mention of the man who was the sin partner of the woman taken in adultery? Is this imbalance still seen today? Explain.

7. Do you agree or disagree with my comment about couples in divorce court learning to deny their mate's faults? Have you been through a divorce or been close to someone who has? If so, how much of a difference would denying a mate's flaws make in the marriage?
8. There are issues other than covering a mate's flaws that relate to divorce (see question 7). What are some and can the main point of this chapter help solve those problems?
9. Do you think that pre-marriage counseling should match up couples that are perfect for each other? Why?
10. Is life about obtaining perfection or learning to master mercy or both? Why?
11. Do you agree that there is a time to overlook and a time to confront? If so, how does one know the difference?
12. How do you feel about people making negative comments concerning the job you're doing if they are only a spectator, pompously sitting in the grandstands of life? What advice would you like to give them?

Chapter 10

LOOKING PAST MOCKING

And after He had fasted forty days and forty nights, He then became hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command that these stones become bread." But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.'" Matthew 4:2-4

The tempter no doubt heard Jesus' very empty stomach growling, signaling the final stages of starvation and eminent death. Not being one to pass up an opportunity to mock, the devil comes off with these taunting words, "If You are the Son of God..." Jesus had not proclaimed His divine sonship; however, Father God had spoken from heaven at His baptism, declaring, "This is My Son!" The devil's taunt was actually mocking Yahweh's pronouncement.

Satan had once witnessed Jesus (then called the Word of God, John 1:1-3) creating everything in the physical world. The rock he was pointing to was once created by the words of this one now trapped in a weak, human frame. The early stages of jealousy were then at work in the twisted mind of the one who thought he could overthrow the Living God by imitating His use of the spoken word. "I will" was the devil's feeble mock effort used to attempt usurping God's throne (Isaiah 14:13,14). But it didn't work and instead he was cast down to become the tempter, the evil accuser of the brethren.

This adversary of all that is good, was humiliating and mocking Jesus, Who because of so great of love, humbled Himself by setting

aside His glory to become a servant, even unto death (Philippians 2:5-8). During this temporary season of extreme weakness and vulnerability, the evil one pokes mockingly at Jesus. “Is there a flaw in the Son of God? Is the mighty Creator helplessly falling prey to starvation? Can not His Excellence produce even a loaf of bread? What's the matter Messiah, forget the recipe for manna? You fed three million Jews every day for forty years. Where's all Your power now when You really need it?”

How did Jesus respond to the devil's mocking? How do you respond when someone attacks your character or abilities? If you're at all like I am, the old ego puffs up for a fight! Bristling and angry, adrenalin begins to numb the wisdom part of my brain! Soon my mouth is off on its own mission of protecting my castle, spitting out stupid words. Mocking taunts are indeed a soft spot to many of us, but not so for Jesus. He almost ignores the devil, turning the focus rather onto the unlimited provision of Yahweh! “I can live on Abba's words!”

Why does mocking get to us? Why do taunting words stick to our soul like ticks on a hound dog?

Because the power of mocking is its ability to trick us into focusing on splinters rather than logs.

The sliver of truth was that Jesus was vulnerable, but the bigger reality was that there was no way Father God would allow His only begotten Son to be destroyed! Mocking magnifies small evidence in an effort to trick the unsuspecting into denying the greater reality!

The savage cross-examining lawyer demands, “Just answer my question, ‘yes or no.’ Was this thought found in your mind?” The fact that he put the thought there is not allowed in the discussion – “Yes or no? Was it there?”

Such an offensive tactic is a mockery of justice. It's not the friend of the blindfolded lady with the scale. It's the underhanded

method of the accuser of the brethren that he has used so effectively on God's kids for millenniums! The wise believer in such situations quickly turns to the judge and says, "Your Honor, I plead the blood!"

A higher law is needed when attacked by lower forms! The smaller, the lower, the base is denied by refocusing on the higher!

Mocking seeks to tap into power – our power! When we ponder a taunt, we empower it! Our focus is diverted from life to death; from enjoying life to defending ourselves.

Mocking takes us out of the park on a delicious summer day, and drags us into a cold, dank courtroom, stiff and foreboding. "Defend yourself," it demands! When tricked into justifying ourselves rather than enjoying God's grace, we deny what's already been done for us and reopen a closed case. Satan's tactic is a mockery of justice – God's justice!

Did not the Judge of the Universe proclaim over us that it was "Just-as-if-I-never-sinned"? If we can be tricked into considering that God's provision was inadequate, we have denied Him and thus there is no grace, no peace, not a legal leg to stand on! Such a deceived person will feel abandoned, and they are indeed abandoned, but by their faithless response!

For Jesus, it was "If You are the Son of God." For us it may be: "If you really have been forgiven and cleansed by Jesus, what are these spots?" Why do we fall for the taunts of mockery? **Because we care what people think!** The devil's implications, typically riding on the spoken words of fellow humans, find fertile soil because we care what people think of us. Shouldn't we rather care what Father God thinks? Yes, but sometimes people we can touch and see appear more real than the One who made them! This is so easy to agree with, but rather hard to stand against when the mockery hits us!

The mocker hooks our ego. Most people like a good fight now and then (e.g. the success of sports), so a taunt can be the clanging of the bell, signaling that the contest is on! Okay, let's duke it out! A good fight is a fight we win, and watching Jesus handle the devil in the desert lets us in on a most advantageous sparring trick – speak the Word of God!

Don't let a mocking challenge go unmet. Fill the air with the truth of Scripture!

As David countered Goliath's vain boasting and mocking of Israel with the promises of Yahweh, so we must speak our faith! Don't ignore the taunts, deny their right to grab your focus by aligning your aim on God's promises! Deny mocking's legitimacy by proclaiming truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the Word of God!

Here is a very important key in tapping into the power of denial (and the eyes of faith): *When we ignore mocking, either from a human or placed in our head by the accuser, if we do nothing, our attention will quickly be drawn back to the noise.*

It is extremely difficult to focus on “nothing.” Our mental focus will know no vacuum! Therefore, our only recourse is to deny the derision by affirming Abba's Word! Ponder promises rather than muse over mocking! Our eyes will find something to focus on – make it the all powerful promises of God!

As a kid, I read something about how to relax. The author had me draw a dot on a clean sheet of white paper. He said if I would focus on the dot for a while, then later, when stressed out, I could turn my mental focus to the memory of the dot. Maybe that's where the classic line from first grade came, “See Spot run.” Maybe not. But why focus on a dot of ink on a page, when we can do what David did...

*I have set Yahweh continually before me; because
He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.*

Psalm 16:8

David had eyes of faith! He took up his mental paintbrush and handed it to the Holy Spirit! Giants or angry kings will either prompt us into the Holy Presence or kill us!

WHY DOES MOCKING HURT?

The implication behind a taunt is “inferior!” Mocking strikes at our self-worth, or self-image! These are modern terms, not to be found in the Bible; however, the Holy Spirit spent considerable time pointing us to a new point of reference. Consider...

*But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who
became to us wisdom from God, and
righteousness and sanctification, and redemp-
tion...*

1 Corinthians 1:30

He cleaned us up, thus eliminating the major source of inferiority and a main object of mockery. He paid a price for us, which gives us self-worth. And, He put us into a vital relationship with divinity: righteousness is His image in us, making us right with Him! Jesus destroyed the records that incriminated us! Every legal document that implicated us and linked us to the frail human race was eradicated from heaven’s archives.

Old embarrassments are washed away beneath the crimson flood, but the accuser wants us to rescue old hurts, lest they be forgotten and he has to work harder! He'll flash a person's picture on to the screen of our remembrance. Feelings of alone-ness or “naughty child” are thrown into the mind to distract the believer, and far more! The adversary wants us to join him in mocking the

finished work of Christ on the cross! He wants us to mock the blood of Jesus and the results of the resurrection!

When he opens old wounds, the devil is really calling for volunteers to join him in taunting the Trinity! Mocking the Master. Ridiculing the resurrection. When we give the time of day to the heinous harasser, we do the traitor's thing and switch teams.

Don't deride Judas if you've ever wallowed in self-pity over things that have long been confessed and forsaken. Don't ridicule the wayward wanderers in the wilderness if you've ever joined Korah's rebellion by implying that Calvary was insufficient.

We have to put some value on a person's opinion for their mocking to hurt very much. Jesus didn't care what the devil thought, so it was easy for Him to deny the "If You are the Son of God" comment. We don't care a whole lot what the Iranians think of us, so their flag burning and "Great Satan" jeers don't hinder our sleeping at night.

On the contrary, Paul the Apostle cared very much what his people thought. He said in his letter to the Romans that he would gladly die for his fellow Jews. This is why he lost his temper so easily when the high priest publicly humiliated him in the story in Acts chapter twenty-three. He was hooked by the mocking and lashed back with "*you whitewashed wall!*" When we care what people think, their taunts and mockings hurt – real bad!

So, do we just not care any more? Not necessarily. But, if we momentarily deny our concerns over their feelings and rather affirm what our Heavenly Father thinks, the shift in focus will allow our inner control to return. Father's feelings first! Everybody else, "GET IN LINE" (pretend that I just yelled that!). Any other response can trick us into putting what people think above what God thinks.

Mocking can also hurt because it makes us feel we're in a "no-win" situation. Jesus one day reflected on how the fickle, hard-to-please crowd mocked John the Baptist, saying he was demon possessed because of his stoic lifestyle. The same crowd called Jesus a glutton with a drinking problem. What's a person to do to

win the approval of mankind? Can we ever please people? To paraphrase our Lord's words, "If I can't, what makes you think you can?"

The pain of frustration from not being able to do the impossible will diminish when we switch from trying to please the unpleaseable and direct our energies toward the One who gave His all to make our eternity pleasant! He is easily pleased when He is allowed to be Lord in our minds in small things! When our eyes deny the mocker's countenance, and are lifted instead heavenward (Colossians 3:1-3), Abba smiles! He is pleased when we agree with Him and deny lesser claims. Such vision gives Him joy!

Can you sense the energy, the action and reaction that mocking stirs up? The adversary invests his energy in hopes of getting a disqualifying response out of us. What an otherwise peace-loving person would not ordinarily do, they can be tricked into doing when they are hooked by mocking. Mocking pushes us to strike back!

The basic, primitive, instinct of self-preservation, **self-defense**, can unleash the power of the law of sowing and reaping.

It really doesn't matter why one sows
bad seed, the end result is still a crop of
weeds!

If our enemy can get us to fling weed-seed into the air, even in self-defense, come Spring, we'll wonder where all the strange plants came from! As throwing rice at a wedding can be rough on the birds, and throwing wild bird seed can be hard on the church lawn, so retaliation can result in a crop of negative stuff that the sower never intended.

This is not a matter of "fair." It just is! This is why Jesus warned us to not return evil for evil, but rather give a blessing. We know from other things that the Master said that if a person is unworthy, the blessing will not stick, but will return to the giver. Not bad.

Consider this scenario: The family smart aleck takes a cheap shot at you during a gathering. You seethe inside, but before you open your mouth you remember these simple words. Instead of following through on the raging inner impulse, you smile and say calmly, "Bless you brother." The blessing hits him, but bounces off because he has just sown bad seed and therefore can't receive the good seed. The boomerang effect hits you with genuine blessing. You are no longer angry. You sense that you just won this one! Yes! What he then does is his business; your benefit is that the Holy Spirit is in control of your life and you feel great!

A lifestyle of this kind of reacting to mocking can impel us deeper into the presence of Christ; whereas the reaction of retaliation can make us a bitter person. "But," you might say, "don't I ever get to even up the score?" There is, after all, a sense of justice programmed into our genes (part of God's image in us).

As we gain blessings because of our choice to sow good seed, we also have an energy build up inside that must be released in worship and warfare. This is why we are commanded to give thanks in all things and to engage in spiritual fighting. Why settle for an even score, when our praise can cause us to overwhelmingly win!

Our warfare is in a realm where fighting will earn eternal benefit rather than smother us with the law of sowing and reaping:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Why bog down with the middle man when dealing with mockers? Go for the perpetrators, the evil spirits seeking to divide and conquer! Be as loving and kind toward the human mocker as

possible, but relentless and decisive toward the forces driving the person. Our adversary desperately wants us to see the person as our problem so we'll be confused, get flooded with adrenaline and lose control!

Another goal of the mocker is to get us
to quit trying

“I don't need this!”

Volunteer organizations seem to always need more help. Where are the workers? Could it be that someone like Sanballat and Tobiah worked them over?

Do not forgive their iniquity and let not their sin be blotted out before Thee, for they have demoralized the builders.

Nehemiah 4:5

These two characters were upset because the Jews were repairing the walls of Jerusalem. Verse one says *...Now it came about that when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became furious and very angry and mocked the Jews.* How would you feel if you were trying your best to do a job you were not necessarily trained at and some guy said, *“Even what they are building – if a fox should jump on it, he would break their stone wall down!”* (verse 3).

Nehemiah used the word “demoralized.” Mocking is designed to get weak people to wimp out!

Satan wants us to talk bad about God and His promises. He mocks the Lord to us in our minds, saying things we would never say, and are disgusted that they even entered our minds. His diabolical input can make us feel mentally raped. If you are unaware of the source (see Romans 7:20), you will spend considerable time beating on yourself for such gross thoughts.

Heaven help us if we buy into the mocker's lies about Abba. The Jews in the desert wanderings glibly spoke out their mouths the slurs the devil pumped into their hearts. The result was things went from bad to worse.

Mocking can also make us quite depressed. Mighty man of God Elijah was able to call down fire from heaven to consume a water-drenched altar and sacrifice. He called forth rain to soak a drought-stricken land. He slew 800 false prophets. Not a bad day's work! But, because Jezebel the wicked queen mocked his reform efforts, he sulked and fell into a deep depression. He became suicidal! He was physically worn out and thus very vulnerable to Jezebel's jeers!

Lying spirits attempt to imitate (one of the definitions of mocking) the voice of God. When we act on their misleading, the result is usually so embarrassing that we are tempted to quit trying to hear God! My personal belief is that we're far better off occasionally missing God than refusing to seek divine direction.

Jesus' parable about the man who buried his talent for safety purposes reveals how furious God gets with those who pull back from interaction with Him! The righteous may fall seven times, but they keep getting up and getting back into the game! Timex Christians: they take a lickin' but keep on tickin'!

WHAT IS THE SOLUTION TO MOCKING?

There is no substitute for good old-fashioned warfare! But remember, it must be directed toward the source:

*For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against persons without bodies—the evil rulers of the unseen world, those mighty satanic beings and great evil princes of darkness who rule this world; and against huge numbers of wicked spirits in the spirit world.
Ephesians 6:12 tlb*

The book of Proverbs says... *Drive out the mocker, and out goes strife; quarrels and insults are ended* (22:10 niv). We must sandwich our warfare in between submitting everything to God and drawing near to Him through praise! (see James 4:7,8). The eyes of faith are glued on the Throne of God (see Colossians 3:1,2).

The second response to mocking is seen with what Jesus did when the devil tempted Him. He filled the air with the Word of God. He denied the taunts by speaking truth.

If we simply ignore mocking, we will likely seethe internally. Bitterness can develop and we will be drawn into switching our focus off of life onto death. So, deny the mocker's claims by changing your focus back on to our awesome God! Fill the air with truth! Release power by speaking the living Word of God! Ephesians and Colossians are full of excellent faith confessions.

When mocking hurts the most, it's a sign our time
in the secret place of the Most High needs to be
increased!

When we feel accepted by the most important One in the universe, demon jeers hold little power. Let this be an inner gauge as to your intimacy level. When we feel like trying our hand at scoffing, it's a sign that we better get into the throne room of grace!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Can you think of a time when you were a kid when you were mocked? How did this event change your life?
2. Have you ever been mocked by the devil (through people) similar to how he mocked Jesus — “If you really are a Christian, then....”? Explain.

3. How did Jesus respond to the devil's mocking? Have you tried this method of warfare?
4. Do you agree or disagree with my statement, "When we ponder a taunt, we empower it!" Why?
5. Have you tried to ignore mocking without focusing on something else? How do you "tune out" or deny jeering?
6. How have you employed spiritual warfare to stop mocking noise in your head? If so, please explain.
7. How many reasons did you pick up in this chapter of why mocking hurts? List them.
8. Are there any of my reasons that you disagree with? Why? Any reason that you thought of that I missed?
9. Why does mocking hurt you the most? What plan of attack can you have up your sleeve for dealing with it?
10. Which spiritual law is the devil trying to trick us into activating by responding to mocking, in an effort to destroy us? How can we use this same law to use the taunts of life to our advantage?
11. Have you ever lost the freedom to do something (i.e., sing a solo, etc.) because you mocked someone else who did a poor job, and were then afraid that someone would make fun of you? Explain. If not, have you noticed this scenario in anyone else?
12. Do you agree with my statement: "When mocking hurts the most, it's a sign our time in the secret place of the Most High needs to be increased!"? If so, what does this "time" in God's presence do?

Chapter 11

WHAT'S THAT, CAPTAIN KIRK?

I was reminded the other day of an early Star Trek full-length movie. The details are very sketchy in my mind, but one example of denial stands out clearly. The Starship Enterprise was meandering through deep space, keeping peace as intergalactic policemen, discovering new worlds. Suddenly, an observant navigator noticed a blank space on their screen. Something was blocking their view of the stars directly in front of them.

Astutely they traced the outline of a spaceship directly opposite their position. The craft was invisible to their scanners, but was definitely not transparent. The light of the stars was blocked, providing a giveaway silhouette.

Captain Kirk quickly engaged the deflection shields around the Enterprise – just in time! A blast from an enemy Klingon ship bounced harmlessly off the deflector shields! Saved by keen observation!

What on earth does this example have to do with the power of denial and the eyes of faith? The giveaway that danger was present was the denial of light from the stars. It's what their eyes saw that they didn't see! The denial fit a pattern! The pattern was recognized and appropriate steps were taken. I believe the Holy Spirit brought this scene to my remembrance to teach us something. He wants us to think, observe, and employ our safety shields when appropriate!

Because the presence of the Word of God gives light, and in Yahweh's presence is fullness of joy, whenever these enjoyable, renewing benefits of our faith stop, we can assume that something

is trying to come between us and The Light! The sensitive soul will observe a pattern of denied light, and by quick action can either hide behind God's praise-shield of protection, or deploy offensive laser weapons of faith to destroy the intruders! The eyes of faith notice when positive encouragement is missing!

The assumption is that only the enemy, with evil intentions, will confront us with light-denying manifestations! Jesus said He gave us His peace to be a continual blessing. Colossians 3:15 says the peace of God is to continually rule in our hearts. It's the thief that comes to steal, kill and destroy. Blocked peace is a red flag, a warning light!

Have you ever had your mate or a close friend say, "What's wrong?" when nobody else noticed you were having a bad day? The positive relationship provided the point of reference necessary to detect the problem. In a similar way, strangers to peace will not be able to use this tool to much advantage. Therefore, step one will require that we develop a close relationship with the Prince of Peace. If you're not sure of your standing with the Lord, please read through the appendix at the end of this book.

The blessing of this use of denial is that quick action can prevent unnecessary injury! Jesus said that if we watch and pray, we will not enter into temptation. He also stated that if the owner of the house were watching, his house would not be broken into. The key is watching. This is not a paranoia or fear-focus. Rather than being taken up with the darkness, which would have missed the clues, we must be taken up with the light! At the first sign of denied light, we take action.

But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. Matthew 24:43

Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.

Matthew 26:41

From these verses it is clear that Father God will make sure that there is some warning of impending danger. He will not allow us to be caught off guard when we sincerely obey Him. Ponder these words from 1 Corinthians 10:13:

No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

The words “with the temptation” mean that every attack will have accompanying signs. As the Enterprise endured the Klingon attack, so we will be able to deflect potentially deadly attacks.

Another way of saying this is: *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh* (Galatians 5:16). The Spirit's peaceful presence will flicker momentarily, signaling it's time to man our battle stations! It goes without saying that we must then immediately deploy our spiritual weapons.

The way of escape means we must apply the Word of God defensively. We lift the flashlight that has been enlightening our path and it turns into a laser guided ground-to-air missile. The Word of God, as it flows from our lips, is a smart weapon, meaning that it knows its target! Aim in the general direction of the peace thief and shoot! Once launched, we can return to being “led by peace” (Isaiah 55:12). “Thank You, Lord Jesus, for going before us and making the way safe!”

Why did God give us feelings? According to some stoic soldiers, feelings are bad and need to be denied, especially if they make you feel good! “We can't be led by our feelings!” It would appear to me

that those who say this the loudest are the most harassed by their feelings. Instead of their emotions being a valuable tool, one of many, they are seen as the enemy's weapon. When feelings arise, they fear losing control so they promptly deny the feelings by changing their focus. Instead of talking to the Holy Spirit about the valuable input, they shortchange themselves!

Feelings are to be used for navigation similar to how we use the gauges on our car's dashboard. We don't focus on them, we focus on the road. An occasional glance quickly tells us if we're going too fast, if our oil pressure is dropping, if our engine is overheating, etc. Serious problems can be prevented if we occasionally glance at the gauges. Deadly problems can occur if we focus on the dashboard and fail to steer our speeding auto safely in our lane. Feelings are gauges.

When a blustery old husband ignores his emotions (the closest thing to his wife's "intuition"), he soon will despise his wife's emotions. Ignoring both his and her emotions, he then becomes detached from the relationship. The next thing is usually an appointment at the marriage counselor's office or divorce court!

The typical, emotion-denying husband's response is, "I had no idea there was a problem!" That's right sir, you had no clue; however, you were far more tuned into your car's engine, your sport's team, the weather channel, or your in-laws lack of enthusiasm for your valuable help last week. God gave us emotions to maximize our lives, not steal from us – to prevent problems, not cause them.

The lights in our homes pulsate at 60 cycles per second, and we can notice when one flicker is missed. Many times we'll look up at the light as though the problem was with the bulb. No, the power was interrupted for a split second. If this occurs very often, the wise computer operator will do a save on their work and proceed with caution.

Our observation of just one lightning fast cycle of light being denied can tip us off of an impending problem. Similarly, even brief

breaks in the glorious presence of Abba can signal an inbound missile from the dark side. A slight interruption to our peace should signal us to raise our faith-guns. Focus our eyes of faith. Fill our mouth with praise!

The beauty of using the warning of denied peace is that at such moments, our outlay of time and energy necessary to deflect an attack is minimal.

Whereas massive time is drained off when we've been naive or too busy to watch, and are hit with a severe attack from hell. Just a flicker of blocked light merely requires a flicker of torpedoes. The Holy Spirit will be our radar-warning device and assist us in accurately targeting the intruder. This isn't negative thinking or fear focus. Eyes of faith desire to quickly return to uninterrupted focus on our loving Father!

Like a burglar looking for a prospective client, the house offering the least resistance is the first choice. No intruder in his right mind would walk onto the property of a highly secured facility when next door they leave the doors open! This sensitivity can be developed so that we barely miss a lick. More time for enjoying our awesome God – less time required for actual warfare.

Have you noticed any patterns when the enemy is using his cloaking devices and is coming in for the kill? Certain times of the month? Special seasons or times of the year? After you meet particular individuals? After you try to pay the bills?

Doppler Radar can give a few minutes warning before a tornado strikes. Rattlers will usually give a warning before it's too late. God promises that you will have evidence staring you in the face before you're attacked. How successful have you been in recognizing it?

If your life is a "zoo," it will be very hard to tell when your inner peace is interrupted. But hey, even zookeepers need a coffee break! When life's pace resembles the Grand Prix, take an

occasional pit stop and check out your safety system! Check in with the Lord of Peace. Spend some time quieting down your inner person so your peace-o-meter can properly register!

If we feel that the Lord allowed us to be broadsided, resentment can cloud our vision. If we agree with the enemy that we were helpless and overpowered, our success rate will plummet. The smart medical tech looks for symptoms that could possibly point to problems. Should we be less astute with eternally important spiritual matters?

When we miss the evidence and are hit, it behooves us to reflect over the mental video surveillance tape to see what the signs were. Yesterday's failures can be part of today's warning system! If you're not very perceptive, reflect with a friend to see if they can spot any patterns or blind spots.

There's an old saying, "Get me once, shame on you; get me twice, shame on me!" Many lessons from failures have been missed because the noise from consequential pity parties drowned out wisdom's small voice. Dwelling on past failures is a no-no, but gathering tips for future failure prevention is wisdom!

In every crash there is evidence that can help the serious saint build a database for future successful surveillance! I pass by the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University campus on occasion. They have a field they are filling with wrecked planes so that classes can examine "yesterday's" failures with the view to prevent tomorrow's catastrophes. Can we do any less for ourselves?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Reflect on the example I opened this chapter with. Can you think of a similar situation where blocked light or blocked

emotions, or lack of a certain sound alerted you to a problem? Explain.

2. For the material in this chapter to work, what “point of reference” is necessary?
3. What is the safety built into the truth that we must be taken up with the light for this use of denial to work for us?
4. Have you or someone you know, been prone to deny their feelings and thus deny early warning detection signals? Explain.
5. Can you share a story of when you were led by peace?
6. What is your biggest problem with being led by peace?
7. Are there such things as bad feelings? Or just improperly used feelings? Explain.
8. What are some of the dangers of being too sensitive to our feelings? Can you give some examples?
9. What advice could you give a child about using their feelings to their best advantage?
10. What do you think about someone saying, “You shouldn’t feel that way.” What would you like to share with such a person?
11. Do you think that some people are “psychic” or gifted, or that they are just more sensitive and observant? Explain.
12. Are there certain times or seasons when you have to be more careful concerning your feelings? What would be a good strategy to avoid problems during such times?

Chapter 12

DENYING THE HEALING THIEF

When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. Matthew 13:19

The verse above reminds us that we have an aggressive enemy. He knows that new habits are easy to break. He moves quickly against the unsuspecting. Because the main battle is won by faith, the foe must pump us full of words of doubt and unbelief. To make a temptation complete, he must be able to provide feelings along with words. When he throws the old feelings of pain back at the recipient of healing, and whispers, "Guess I didn't get healed," he is hoping the person will let the words linger in their mind and then release negative-faith as they speak them from their heart. A person's tongue can license the enemy to put sickness and disease back on them, following a healing. We must be prepared for our enemy's assaults.

Many believers have personally told me how they almost lost a healing, but because they were instructed concerning the devil's backlash, they simply denied the false symptoms. We are saved by faith and we are to walk by faith. This walk will include denying so-called evidence that the devil flaunts before our six senses... denial, that is the other side of fabulous eyes of faith-focus on God's incredible promises!

When we expect to be stolen from, we watch! Like the old farmer guarding his watermelon patch with his shotgun, we're ready for the liar to put the first symptom back on us. We're loaded with shot, and itching to powder his cookies!

Even a twinge of the old sickness or disease is met with a volley of Scripture shots:

- ✓ *by His stripes I am healed;*
- ✓ *Himself carried away my diseases;*
- ✓ *I have whatsoever I say;*
- ✓ *He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly above all I ask or think...*

Whamo! We deny the thief a right to steal our healing! We deny the symptoms and reaffirm God's promises! "Flashback" symptoms are an effort to re-direct our focus and turn our energy from healing to sickness and disease. Eyes of faith actually draw healing from the source of life! Like the woman who's faith pulled healing from touching Jesus' garment, our faith focus pulls from the fountain flowing with life!

Someone might ask, "But what if you didn't get healed? Wouldn't such a denial be dangerous?" Yes. I'm not asking anyone to deny what Jesus hasn't done or given a clear word about. If you pray for healing and nothing happens, don't assume you have your healing and just need to confess it as finished. No, that's presumption.

Don't assume you are healed if there is no evidence to stand on. The Word of God says a matter is confirmed by two or three witnesses (2 Corinthians 13:1; Deuteronomy 19:15). If you merely stand on the Word, you may get in trouble with no one to blame but yourself. That's only one witness, and we can count better than

that, can't we? However, if Jesus speaks a word of faith to you, that's all you need! Then stand.

Sometimes the devil gets blamed for stealing what we never received.

To deny something's existence without a clear word from God or some physical/natural evidence is both foolish as well as a trick of the devil to discredit us before the world. Without a positive confirmation (second or third witness), you can almost bet you didn't get what you were seeking! If we're not careful, our pride can get hooked and then we make up stuff and say things that God can't back! This is not faith. It may be wishful thinking or just a nice idea, but to deny physical reality without God's approved faith-method of two or three witnesses is not the power of denial this book is trying to describe!

Another witness besides the Scripture could be some manifestation of the Holy Spirit. If nothing happens after someone prays for your miracle, ask the Lord if you need to keep seeking, knocking, asking (Matthew 7:7,8), or if the miracle is yours and you just need to confess by faith that it's done (Mark 11:23,24)! If you're not sure Abba is speaking to you, ask Him to substantiate the matter some way or another. This keeps us Father God-minded, avoids the pitfall of presumption, and pleases God because we're yielding to Him. When in doubt, keep seeking.

If the Lord were to ask you, "Child, did you get your healing?" What would you say? If you reply, "Father, Your Word says I was healed, therefore I declare that 'By Jesus' stripes I am healed.'" What if He came back with, "Why then are you still hobbling along?"

There is a spiritual healing done on the spirit body and a physical healing accomplished on the physical body. To be totally healed, we must have both! We were spiritually healed 2,000 years

at Calvary; and, our physical body will bear witness when it is healed. Anything less is only a partial healing.

We can deny the physical body's lack of manifestation and affirm the spiritual body's actual healing, but if we want to stop crippling along faster, we can go for total faith – pressing in for the complete physical manifestation. Faith is great, but faith has to “do some work” to be called living faith.

Remember how James said that if we speak a blessing to someone without helping them when we can, it's dead faith. Spiritual faith without physical-manifestation-faith is dead faith if we leave it there! No, we should not stop until we have the complete manifestation. The Word of God says we are complete in Jesus, but then it turns right around and goads us deeper into Jesus.

Yes, we are to speak our faith first, then we persist in faith until we have what we say! We deny distractions until we have the total manifestation. Jesus' kingdom is within us, it's also coming, and He's not resting until it's complete!

Let me illustrate this persistence factor. Let's say that a person is retiring and they do the proper paperwork to get their Social Security checks started. Time goes by and no monthly check! What do they do? Start confessing that they have their check? Perhaps. If the Lord tells you to do this, go for it!

What will probably happen is that the person who does nothing will get nothing. The average person will get on the phone, wade through an afternoon of transfers to various departments, and finally get a hold of a flesh and blood person who can settle the matter. They might even make a personal appearance at the local office. Although the money is theirs, for some reason it's being blocked. Persistence wades through the red tape, and confusion to obtain! If we'd do this for a Social Security check because we know it's ours, why not with healing – we know it's ours!

Just a side-bar for the person who has been conditioned with “It might not be God's will for us to be healed.” I doubt that anyone believes that it's not God's will for us to be healed. First thing such

a double-minded person does when physical problems manifest is to hightail it down to the doctor's office! Why? To go against God's will? Naw! Don't be silly. Deep down in their heart everyone knows God made these bodies to be healthy, pain-free, disease free! That's what your doctor believes!

What if we go up for prayer at a healing service, get zapped, and have the full confidence that we received our miracle from Yahweh, but we are under a doctor's care and we have medicine we're supposed to be taking? Should we stop taking the medicine before we see our doctor again? No, absolutely not! Here's why. Jesus gave us a principle for dealing with issues that call for trans-world decisions – spirit world and physical world. He said, render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. Your initial trip to the doctor obligates you to check back with him or her, especially if you agreed to revisit the office.

When Jesus healed one fellow, He told him to go show himself to the priest and perform the Levitical ceremony of healing. The priest would quickly confirm if the young man was healed! If a doctor or priest looked at our condition and broke out in laughter when we said we were healed, then we might be wise to double check with the Lord before we made loud proclamations of our healing. Wisdom majors on the eyes of faith until the manifestation leaves no room for ridicule! To continue drawing from the Lord our Healer until such a manifestation occurs is not a lack of faith, but is true faith! Faith is not pretending!

Two things could prevent one from going back to the doctor: unbelief that you really were healed or fear of witnessing to the doctor. There is the matter of being too busy or it costing too much, but that's another issue.

What a witness to go back to the doctor and have them take you off of the medication because they have to agree that you are healed. You can give God the glory and celebrate! And when the devil tries to put the symptoms back on you because you testified about your healing, you have your faith gun loaded and you're

waiting for him! You do realize that if you go back to the doctor to substantiate your healing that your foe will try to humiliate you, don't you? Don't let fear prevent a witness.

This course of action I've just described is different from faithing a miracle. For example, let's suppose Fred is suffering from high blood pressure. He receives teaching on healing and faith and decides to faith-in his miracle without asking anyone to pray for him. This is both commendable as well as where we need to be heading as we develop in faith-maturity. Here's my suggestion to Fred. Start with the old **S-R-D** response from James 4:7-8:

Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

To jump in confessing you are healed when there may be serious blockages is not wise. Take some time to submit everything you have and are to the Living God. Yield up activities and relationships. If the Lord puts His finger on anything and asks you to give it up, change it, etc., gladly submit to Him – He has your best in mind.

Always resist the devil! As long as we are this side of heaven, our foe will be a thorn in our flesh. Jesus had to resist the devil. Peter had to wrestle with him. Every believer that's lived has struggled daily with this archenemy, and so will we. He's behind every problem, every trial, every sickness, every trouble. I know the following two verses are very familiar, but we need to have our minds stirred up by way of remembrance:

You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about

doing good, and healing all who were oppressed by the devil; for God was with Him. Acts 10:38

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:12

I would tell Fred:

“Submit your high blood pressure to Jesus. Resist the devil from your body, then draw near to God with praise and worship. Fred, let your mouth be filled with the promises of Yahweh. Meditate on healing Scriptures and other blessed promises.”

The way to completely obey James 4:8 is to destroy a double-mind by having strong faith pictures. Part of Bible meditation is to ponder promises until we get an “inner” picture. I believe the Holy Spirit honors our biblical meditation by giving us a faith picture in our mind. Written words paint pictures. We must destroy the devil’s destructive word pictures that are designed to tap into our faith and get us to produce a mess. Truth must destroy lies. But the Holy Spirit prefers to use His inspired Word to paint the pictures, which means we have to spend time **IN His Word!**

Every time Fred focuses on God’s faith pictures, he is strengthening his eyes of faith to produce his healing!

Fred needs to focus on positive, healing pictures until his subconscious mind gets the picture! The subconscious mind runs the physical body!

Faith must push double-minded thoughts out of the temple of the Holy Spirit! Faith needs to **pull** God's glory into His temple – your body! Fred's worthiness/unworthiness must give way to God's truth!

When Fred's mind is renewed by the Word, the high blood pressure that was sent by the enemy as a distraction will be destroyed by health!

Along the path of S-R-D, Fred will be submitting everything to Yahweh! I believe that the Lord, when He has Fred's ear, will change his diet and exercise patterns! Oops! Before you get hyper-religious, remember that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and if we want God's power to manifest in us, it will require submission to His design for our best!

Fred will find opportunities to not only deny the devil, but laziness, judgmental feelings, and sloppy eating habits! Denial, properly used, will have us focusing on life and letting go of death. The eyes of faith will purposely find:

"... whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, [it will] dwell on these things (Philippians 4:8).

Things designed to kill, steal, and destroy will be dropped without the least bit of sensation of being deprived! Why? Not because of harsh treatment of the body (Colossians 2:20-23), but because of positive focus on God's powerful Words of Life!

THE POWER OF PERSISTENCE

Persistence is a part of faith that some people seem to be born with. You've noticed, haven't you, that some personalities bug you because their tenacity borders on irritation! We call these folks

“bulldogs” because they don’t let go until they get what they’re after! Jesus epitomized this kind of faith when telling the story of a man who had unexpected company come late at night. The host used persistence to obtain enough bread for his guest from his reluctant neighbor. We could say the star of this faith-parable denied the neighbor’s complaints and reasons for not helping him, and persisted until he got what he was after.

Another story of persistence was the widow woman who pestered a secular judge until she wore him down. Never underestimate the power of persistence. When Jesus gave this story, it was prefaced with *“He taught a parable to show that men ought always to pray and not faint.”*

To be persistent in pursuit of a solution or miracle, you will have to deny some things! The woman pressing through the crowd to touch Jesus’ garment had to deny a bunch of things – social protocol not being the least! Have you ever drawn back from persisting toward your miracle because you could not deny some loud distraction?

A problem with persistence is what it can do to those around you that are not enamored with your zeal. Pushy people (the negative aspect of persistence) have few close friends! Also, if one does not check in with the Almighty, the crusade of faith can actually be a stubborn streak that ends up with the person getting their desire, but like the obstinate wanderers in the wilderness, they can also get a leanness in their soul!

All projects or crusades need to be properly cleared through our Master to avoid serious side-effects!

My hope is that you develop godly inner persistence. I have a hard time putting up with pushy people that I suspicion have not spent enough time seeking God’s okay before they try to reorder my life. On the other hand, the happiest people I know are those

who persist in having a continual internal festival in their temple with the Master! When we live the S-R-D lifestyle, our mind becomes a rich garden where the springs of health and healing flow! This garden is a denial of the desert that exists out there in the desolate kingdom of the flesh! God never said we had to leave His presence and go wander around with the snakes and scorpions, poverty and lack! His invitation is to come boldly, and stay totally!

Thou wilt make known to me the path of life; in Thy presence is fulness of joy; in Thy right hand there are pleasures forever. Psalm 16:11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever experienced what I discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter, receiving a healing and then having the devil put symptoms back on you to try to steal your healing? If so, please explain.
2. Have you had the experience of dealing with someone who was “confessing” they were healed but obviously was not healed? If so, what frustrations did you have to work through? How did it end up?
3. How dangerous is it for a person to confess that they are healed without two or three clear witnesses?
4. Explain S-R-D as I share it in this chapter.
5. Have you employed S-R-D successfully? Can you share a story of how it worked for you? If so, please share.

6. Explain the difference between faith and presumption, especially as it relates to healing.
7. How does God speak to you? Has He ever given you a “second witness” that you stood on to receive a miracle? Explain.
8. What do you think of my comment, “When in doubt, keep seeking”? How easy is it for you to quit trying to hear from God before you have the confidence one way or the other concerning His will?
9. What advice do you have for someone who doesn’t try to determine God’s will before confessing they are healed or run off to the doctor for healing or do nothing saying it may not be God’s will to heal them?
10. What is your response to my comment: “There is a spiritual healing done on the spirit body and a physical healing accomplished on the physical body. To be totally healed, we must have both!”?
11. What do you think I was trying to get at with my comment: “Spiritual faith without physical-manifestation-faith is dead faith if we leave it there!” do you agree or disagree? Why?
12. How persistent are you? What steps can you take to gain more godly persistence and eliminate fleshly stubbornness?

APPENDIX

HOW TO BECOME A CHRISTIAN

The Bible tells us how we can enjoy a rich, fulfilling life. The Awesome Creator designed us with a capacity for love and a desire to be successful. This abundant life was formulated around mankind living in close fellowship with the Lord. Listen to the words of Jesus:

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

God's design includes provisions for us even when we're drained:

Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Matthew 11:28

Yes, our loving Father God has our best in mind:

...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. John 10:10b

I have told you this so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. John 15:11

Why is it that most people are not experiencing this abundance? Mankind has stepped out of God's plan and has tried to do

their own thing. The Bible calls this sin. This rebellion blocks God's blessings from us. None of us is excluded from this problem of sin:

*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
Romans 3:23*

Some people feel that sin is an old-fashioned concept, but the Bible tells us that our sin separates us from God's blessings.

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear. Isaiah 59:1,2

Our good works and noble intentions are not sufficient to reinstate us to a standing where the holy God can bless us:

*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away.
Isaiah 64:6*

God's plan of salvation is the provision of His love for a race of fallen, stubborn beings. Because the Almighty is holy, His standards are essential and can't be ignored. But, because "God is love," He designed a way to reinstate those individuals who, out of sincere love for Him, would obey His instructions.

GOD'S SOLUTION

God's Spirit overshadowed a virgin named Mary, and the child that was conceived was therefore both God and man. God entered our world in human form as the son of Mary and the Son of God – Jesus, the Christ (or "Anointed One").

Jesus led a sinless life by complete obedience to Father God. Then, as our substitute, He took our place and our punishment. Whereas the punishment for sin was death, and because He was just, God couldn't ignore sin, but He revealed in the Old Testament that He would receive a substitute payment for man's sins.

Animal sacrifices pointed to the day when God, in human form, would come to earth and be our substitute sacrifice – the Lamb of God! What God's holiness demanded, God's love provided!

For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16

Because Jesus was a perfect man, He could pay for our sins; because He was Eternal God, His blood paid for **all** who would come to Him. Jesus willingly went to the cross and died as our sin substitute. He arose from the dead to demonstrate that God's holiness was satisfied. By rising from the dead, Jesus broke sin's power over us.

...He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption...How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, Who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God! Hebrews 9:12b,14

This salvation is all of God. Going to church, doing good works, etc., will not save us. It is very hard for independent individuals to accept that they can do nothing to merit salvation.

*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—
and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not
by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8,9*

OUR RESPONSE

A free gift cannot be earned, but it must be accepted! An essential aspect of God's plan of salvation is that it separates between those who could care less about God's will and those who, when they see the error of their ways, will repent (turn) from doing their own thing.

...unless you repent, you too will all perish. Luke 13:3

*I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must
turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord
Jesus. Acts 20:21*

We receive Jesus' payment for our sin by submitting to His Lordship over our life. Submission and obedience puts us back on the original path God designed for us!

*That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord,"
and believe in your heart God raised Him from the
dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9*

Do you want to receive God's gift of salvation right now?
Do you believe that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sins?
That He arose from the grave on the third day?
Will you turn from being the boss of your life and surrender
to Jesus, and ask Him to be your Lord?

Here is a sample prayer. Ponder it, then put it in your own words and say it to God, if you truly mean it.

Dear Heavenly Father, I come to You admitting that I have sinned and have not done Your will. I believe that, out of love, you sent Jesus, Your Son, to die for my sin. I believe that He rose from the dead and has destroyed sin's power over my life. I turn from my sin and receive Jesus as my Savior and my Lord!

The exact wording is not as important as the heart response. Did you turn from being the lord of your own life and, in receiving Jesus, are you making Him your Lord? This may seem like a simple prayer, yet it is a legal transaction, a covenant. If you were sincere, God will honor His Word and will save you and send His Holy Spirit to live inside you.

GROWING AS A CHRISTIAN

Read the Bible every day. Get an easy to understand translation, such as The New International Version (the version used in the appendix), The New Living Bible, or The New American Standard Bible (this is the version used in this book).

Start reading at least a chapter a day. Begin with Matthew's gospel and read through the New Testament first; then begin reading in the Old Testament. Make notes as you read, and write down any questions you may have to ask a Bible teacher later. Begin each Bible study with prayer for God's guidance. Look up these verses on the importance of Bible study: 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Psalm 119:11; Psalm 1:1-3. Check the index of your Bible for the location of the books of the Bible.

Talk to God your Father in prayer, every day. Begin your prayer time like Jesus' example, with praise (Matthew 6:9). Confess any sin. 1 John 1:9 tells us the Lord will forgive us. Look up these verses

to see what happens when we don't confess our sin: Psalm 66:18; Psalm 32:1-7.

Pray for others (Ephesians 6:18, 19; Colossians 4:2-4). Instead of worrying, pray (Philippians 4:6-7). Give thanks in your prayers (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Bring your requests to the Father in Jesus' name (John 16:23,24).

Beware of a new pull. Our enemy, Satan, wants to pull you down, discourage you and make you give up. Jesus said the first thing that would happen to us after we receive the Word would be that Satan would come to try to steal the seed ("I didn't feel anything; nothing happened"). Also, persecution, worry, cares of this world, and the love of sin will attempt to choke the word (Mark 4:3-20).

Resist the devil in the name of Jesus the very instant you recognize his temptation traps of sin and doubt: 1 Peter 5:6-9; James 4:6-8; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5. Think of "resisting" as chasing away a stray dog who's getting into your garbage..."Get outta' here, you pest!"

When temptations or pressures increase, get together with another believer. The Lord wants us to strengthen each other (Galatians 6:1,2). We're to help others! **Learn all you can; share all you learn!**

Meet regularly with other Christians (Hebrews 10:24,25). Find a good church home where the Bible is taught, God is praised, Jesus is served, and the Holy Spirit is honored. If you have difficulty locating a church that teaches the whole Bible, including the Baptism of the Holy Spirit and spiritual warfare, write Spear Ministries at the address in the front of this book, and we'll seek to help you find one.

Look into being baptized in water (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47,48).

Begin seeking the baptism of the Holy Spirit. This is when Jesus pours out the power of the Holy Spirit on us. Study these verses: Luke 11:9-13; John 7:37-39; Acts 1:4-8; Acts 2:1-4; Acts 10:44-46.

Begin sharing the story of God's love and salvation with others. You may be the only “preacher” some people will listen to (Romans 10:9-15).

*For whoever will call upon the name of
the Lord will be saved. Romans 10:13*

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