

John Henry Alan

WAIT, be still, be speechless, be TAUGHT

We all have some deeply affectionate relationships. Our deepest one is for our most significant other. These daily messages can provide valuable inspirations and insights to both the theist and the atheist. Whether you are trying to establish a relationship with God or any other person these concepts apply. God invites us to have Him as number one in our lives. But *how* to elevate Him to that place remains a mystery. These inspirational thoughts were written to help you do just that, experience your highest love for God. So be patient, quiet, listening and be receptive to changes in how you perceive God. He **IS** love!

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Volumes 1, 2 and 3 (3 months) of a 12 volume (1 year) collection of daily inspirational readings. John Henry describes how we can be the happiest and most satisfied by intimate relationship through awareness, acceptance and affirmation.

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All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the Holy Bible, King James Version, KJV

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DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

In Loving Memory:

of my cousins, **Don & Sharon Holt**, my favorite travel mates, who traveled with me for over two decades, exploring the enormous grace of God and the depths of close relationships. We believed, “God does not want you to show up perfect. He just wants you to be with Him.” — Donald Holt, Jr. .

DEDICATED:

To **Beth Moore** for inviting me into Buddy Walter’s legacy of passionately intimate relationship with God (the presence of the living Christ was so full in her when we embraced in the reception line after The Patriarchs teaching in Baltimore, that I begged God to give me what she had) and for praying a blessing over our home on video tape for its dedication to God’s ministry.

To **Fawaz Fanek** who mentored me in the ways of the “Authority of Christ,” led a Bible Study in our home, led in the dedication of our home for ministry, engaged me in missions, and pushed me out of the nest when it was time.

To **Gary & Karolyn Chapman** for decades of friendship, encouragement and pastoring my family, always there to support us in our most trying times, always greeting with a joyous smile and pleasant word, and for leading in the dedication of our home to God’s ministries.

To **my double siblings, my older bother and sister** for their introduction to some of the authors listed as additional resources, whose works transformed my heart by renewing my mind with correct understandings of God.

To **my spouse of 20+ years** for her patience with me and steadfast commitment to our marriage, understanding my commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and enduring many cancellations of our personal plans in order to be readily available to God at all times, and for reading this manuscript several times with nods and shakes of her head until it was finished.

To **Jay Helvey, Jim Lane, James Anderson** and all of the **Brothers of New Canaan Society (NCS)** for constant acceptance, understanding, encouragement, grace and friendship in Jesus.

To my brothers **Steve, Steve and my other brother Steve** for participating in a “*deep dive*” into the great writings of men and women of God who not only experienced deep intimacy with God, but also knew how to *pass it on*.

To **myriad significant others from the far corners of the earth** for their contributions (wittingly or not) to my life, and ultimately to this treatise, for their inspirations, affirmations and critiques which helped me remain focused and centered on my own personal journey toward intimacy with God.

To **God Himself** for bringing me out of my personal wilderness through a burning bush, and on into the most amazingly fruitful life in God!

Thank you all ! or if you live in the South, “**Thank Y’all**”

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

This inspirational book by John Henry Alan has been inspired by others in hot pursuit of personal intimacy with God. Among these are Graham Cooke, John Lynch, Wayne Jacobsen, Brennan Manning, A. W. Tozer, Frank Laubach, Oswald Chambers, Jeanne Guyon, Francois Fenelon, and Brother Lawrence.

These daily messages can provide valuable inspirations and insights to both the theist and the atheist. Whether you are trying to establish a relationship with God or any other person these concepts apply. The same things that hinder us from developing a deeply affectionate relationship with God come between us and deeply affectionate feelings for others. Although few realize it, we are our own greatest obstacle to good relationships with other people. Since every relationship is a two person choice, I dramatically improve my chances of enlarging my circle of friends by always choosing affection for the other person even if we disagree on many points of fact or opinion. "The greater the measure of affection which I offer to others, the greater the measure of affection I will receive." -- J H Alan

So whether you are religious or not, you are relational. I encourage you to look for the nuggets of relationship gold which will improve your sensations in life and experience of life as you ponder these words. As your emotions reach new heights of pleasure and you experience less anxiety, worry and fear it will become easier and more intuitive for you to embrace those in your life who are the most difficult to accept. The best news is this. Your measure of personal peace and happiness can improve even if your circumstances and experiences do not. The key to all of this is choice, your choice. And it is less about the choices of your activities than it is the choices about what you believe. Let yourself believe different things and it will change how you feel.

As you read, look at everything you have believed with fresh eyes. Regardless of the source of your current beliefs, personal improvement cannot happen without change, both in knowledge and opinion.

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

These volumes **intentionally** leave you with the responsibility to find **your** confirming scriptures and aligning experiences. As was expressed in Simon & Garfunkel's song decades ago, "A man hears what he wants to hear and disregards the rest," applies to all of us.

The purpose of these messages is to bring course corrections which will help you experience the words of Jesus. **"You will know the truth and the truth will set you free."** For me, it was the truth about myself, that set me free. I had to face the reality of who I am as opposed to living in a fantasy of who I wanted to be. Jesus also said, **"Come unto me (get up close and personal with me) and I will give you rest."** If you have not yet come to the measure of peace that eliminates all anxiety, animosity and fear, it is likely that these messages will help you move in that direction. Jesus words were and are truth! Your feelings toward yourself, others and God are the absolute and irrefutable evidence of your level of intimacy in relationship!

My confirming scriptures may seem to you to be taken out of context or be irrelevant to you for any number of reasons. If you want to learn from these messages, you must be willing to search the scriptures to prove them to be true or false. For new truth of any kind to become yours, you must be willing to consider it and then prove it. Know this as well. God cannot reveal new truth to a closed mind nor can He encourage a closed heart.

These volumes are only for those who desire to know more about God and to be more intimate with Him. They are not for those who prefer to simply reinforce what they already believe to be true. The greatest teacher is personal experience. **My** aligning experiences may not help you at all. Intimacy in relationship is most affected by experiences of life. Irrefutable truth is that which is confirmed by experience. However, experience which is interpreted apart from the context of God's purposes will lead you to wrong conclusions and false paradigms and relational confusion.

Jesus' disciples endured great hardship because they had personally experienced the life, death and resurrection of Jesus! The greatest transformations occurred in them through suffering and adversity. Unfortunately, many of us **push or pray away adversity instead of seeking the purposes of God in it.** Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you both confirming scriptures and aligning experiences. In this manner, these messages will help morph your current understandings into greater alignment with God's intentions.

We tend to forget most of what we discover logically. We tend to remember most things which affect our feelings. "Your feelings are the handles that open the drawers of your filed memories." - J H Alan

FORWARD

FORWARD

Keep these things in mind as you read.

Be honest with yourself and authentic with others.

Cast yourself into every scenario in order to make the teaching practical and memorable. Imagine yourself setting each thing in this book in the context of a holiday meal with your family.

Leave Your Comfort Zone

Don't skip over messages just because they make you feel uncomfortable or upset. Every catalyst for change disturbs the current moment. No one ever broadens their horizons of life without leaving their personal comfort zone.

Don't Rush Through It

This is a book of spiritual understanding, not fiction or fantasy. You cannot come to this book as you would come to another type of literature. Too many people in their rush to finish the reading, miss out on the quiet of **experiencing the presence of the Spirit** while reading it. This book is sure to challenge many things you have believed.

The first thing to keep in mind when reading on, is read with a **strong desire to learn**. Come with a strong desire to know how to develop deeper relationships. Be open to **receive something new** and helpful for your life journey. **Shake off all distractions and noise.**

Meditation and Concentration

Meditate long and hard on each and every daily writing. This book will serve you best if you spend time contemplating what you have read. Continue to **study it, meditate on it, marked it up, and read again and again** as long as it continues to reveal new insights for you.

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Your Perception Is Your Reality

My wife used to say to me quite often, “Your perception is your reality.” I argued against this opinion for a long time. Finally, I had amassed enough data to confirm that what she said was true. I had always believed that what is real is real and fantasy is not real. As I pondered many of my beliefs which contradicted others’, I could see that my perceptions are my reality. And so was theirs. So my quest to discover true reality began. I soon realized that my opinions and beliefs had been formed by others’ opinions and beliefs. I had mostly adopted the things passed on to me by my family, friends, and respected leaders. What I had not realized before was that most of my reality came from the perceptions passed on to me by others. I also realized then that peace only comes through the reality of God’s perceptions. When I began to exchange my ‘relative’ truth for ‘absolute’ truth, I was able to discover the truth about myself which defied the fantasies I had been believing about me. It actually set me free.



Instead of letting your culture (that which was given to you by your family, friends and other people) and desire (that which satisfies the way you want to live) determine your truth, let God’s truth (truth about yourself, others and God) change your desires such that your culture will be transformed by your expressions of love and acceptance to others!

VOLUME ONE

Day 1: Relationship Not Religion

The same dynamics of good relationship apply to both the theist and the atheist. The same things that hinder us from developing a deeply affectionate relationship with God come between us and deeply affectionate feelings for others. Although few realize it, we are our own greatest obstacle to good relationships with other people. Since every relationship is a two person choice, I dramatically improve my chances of enlarging my circle of friends by always choosing affection for the other person even if we disagree on many points of fact or opinion. “The greater the measure of affection which I offer to others, the greater the measure of affection I will receive.” -- J H Alan

So whether you are religious or not, I encourage you to look for the nuggets of relationship gold which will improve your sensations in life and experience of life. Relationship gold will produce enough improvement in your understanding and acceptance of others to make the time spent worthwhile. And if you have given up on God, hopefully you will give him a second chance, as an intimate relationship with Him could enormously improve your experience of life.

As your emotions reach new heights of pleasure and you experience less anxiety, guilt, shame and fear it will become easier and more intuitive for you to embrace those in your life who are the most difficult to accept. The best news is this. Your measure of personal peace and happiness can improve even if your circumstances and experiences do not. The key to all of this is choice, your choice. And it is less about the choices of your activities than it is the choices about what you believe. Let yourself believe different things and it will change how you feel.

Find scriptures to confirm the truth.

Consider how your experiences align with these words.

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 2: Living in Your History or Your Future

Have you explored recently the possibilities in your relationship with God? Is there a chance that there is more for you to love about God? For many Christians the world around, there is a far **less intimate relationship** between themselves and God than what God has offered them. Although, any human being can live a life quite successfully without being religious or even a theist, there is a much better way contained within the Holy Bible.

The Bible is the history of God's universe (HIS story). It is an articulation of God's paradigm for relationship with Him that, when fully understood, staggers the imagination. The history of the God who calls Himself "I AM", is rife with opportunity to live happy and fully contented lives within the confines of relationship.

The story is laced with unconditional love for His created beings which is demonstrated by His unfailing grace toward them. God's grace, which is His *undeserved* favor heaped upon us, is the very proof that His love is perfect toward us. His love never ceases to flow to us. And His love, can and will transform us, if we will simply receive it and love Him in return. If you don't receive His love, you won't experience His grace. Even *you* offer grace to those you love.

If you grace someone with any ulterior motive, such as 'hoping for behavior changes,' it is not grace. It is rather manipulation. If you develop true affection for them, grace is the evidence. Divine Love generates a Divine Grace. You might say that the essence of grace is inexhaustible 'second chances.'

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 3: Love Produces Grace

The God of the Bible is the epitome of relationship in every possible relational experience. That is, God is the best Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Friend and Mate anyone could ever have. Jesus proclaimed in His preaching, that even though we look out for the best interests of our children, God is far better at parenting than we could ever be. He actually knows the motives of every human expression. And like the “best Dad ever”, His love never falters toward His children. His desire for them is that they become the best adults possible and reach their greatest potential. And His grace (**underserved favor**) toward His children never puts a limit on second chances. He will patiently pour everything He can into them.

The best definition of *grace* includes the fact that *grace* is a by-product of *love that will never cease to flow toward the object of that love*, that is favor for the undeserving. When love is present, it will always offer to help one up who is down. So, like a mother who sits in the courtroom with her erring child, even if her child deserved to be punished, pleads for the shortest possible sentence. So, God as both Father and Mother has every intention of both helping the children become their best possible selves and of minimizing the emotional pain they must endure in life. The introduction of God Himself into the physical realm of man in the person of His Only Begotten Son, is the strongest evidence of God’s desire for an up close and personal relationship with mankind.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 4: Forgiveness in Every Story

God's written history, every story in the Bible, includes every kind of good and bad scenario possible in human experience. The whole story has been told, so that we can see that relationship is the most important thing to both God and His highest creation, mankind. When you look closely at each story, the unfailing love of God can be seen and with it the enormity of grace both in size and frequency which God expresses to us, His children. If there is any meaning at all, in the story of Jesus, His birth, His life, His death, His resurrection and His return to the Father, it is this. "Greater love has no one than this, that a man lay down his life for his friend."

The whole object of the Cross being the final event in Jesus' life, when He deserved the best end, was that God even made provision in Himself, to provide an innocent man who offered to take the penalty of another man's criminality, (that is yours and mine), so that justice was served on behalf of the victims of our crimes while we ourselves were released from that punishment. [The ultimate irony of all time was that a violent offender, Barabbas, was set free at the same time and in the same pronouncement of judgment when a completely innocent man, Jesus of Nazareth, was condemned to death.] What enormous love God must have for us in order to watch His Son suffer the most inhumane of all punishments devised by human kind to pay the penalty we deserved.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 5: Ultimate Freedom

If you are a *Christian who lives in constant guilt and shame, you can surrender even those feelings to the God of the Cross*. After all, Jesus died, not only for the crimes themselves, but also for the guilt and shame associated with them. And in God's eyes, Jesus suffered enough of our shame so that we did not have to suffer either guilt or shame again. When we succumb to the temptation of Satan to wallow in either our guilt or shame, he silences us and robs us of the very love, joy and peace God offered to us through this most kind of all acts on our behalf.

You can be free from both guilt and shame. You can know what it means to “live fully loved” by God and “enjoy His favor always.” Let the Holy Spirit reveal the misrepresentations and misinterpretations of key passages of scripture which have come between you and a joyous laughter, not only at yourself, but also those around you. God is the author of love, joy, peace and all other positive emotions and has created a way for every man, woman, and child to experience them in abundance. When you see God's forgiveness and grace in each Bible story, instead of His wrath, you will find His unconditional love toward you.

There is FREEDOM just around the corner, unless you will not allow yourself to “rethink” truth. You do not need to leave your community of faith. You can experience a much more joyful and peaceful life than before and a much closer relationship to God and nearly every one around you. Look for the love of God in every verse.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 6: Find Yourself in Every Story

Ponder how each story in the Bible may have *you* in it. Cast yourself into every part in each story to discover what God might want you to know about yourself. Your life will likely never be changed significantly by seeing others in the parables. But, if you use the stories as mirrors of your own tendencies and motives, you may make huge leaps in the direction of a better experience of life and love.

It is very important to realize how much we order our lives by relative truth rather than God's truth. After a long flight and deep interrogation by a seat-mate, the conversation ended with this question to me, "It seems to me that you believe that there is such a thing as absolute truth and that you have found it." I had very little time to respond, but the Holy Spirit's inspiration led to the following dialog.

"Well, James, I do believe in absolute truth and that I have found it." So, James, if you believe that all truth is relative, answer this question. "If you could embrace a body of *relative* truth that leaves you twisted, frustrated, angry and generally miserable, or you could choose *relative* truth that makes you happy, pleasant, peaceful and generous to everyone, which would you choose?" There was no time for an answer, nor was one needed. James' smile spoke volumes.

A few weeks later, I was awakened by the Spirit to these words from Him, "James was right." "About what?" I asked. To which He replied, "All people have and embrace relative truth because most of what you believe came to you from your relatives and their inner circle of influence." As I have pondered this ever since, I realize time and again that whenever I abandoned a relative truth in favor of God's truth on that particular issue, my heart changed in a very positive way.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 7: Love IS a Feeling

Don't be fooled into thinking that love is action itself. Myriad atrocities against man have been committed in strong, but misguided, faith. Also know that Jesus Christ would not have suffered the Cross out of duty or obligation. Jesus died because His love for me, His love for you, was so immense that He "... died for His friends." This love in action presents a quality of life that is far above anything that is natural. To know God or anyone else intimately, our spirits must touch and our hearts must touch. Then we will experience intimacy with them.

Why would we think

that God is so awesome, majestic, powerful, intelligent, all-knowing, superlative and pure that He is untouchable? Why would we think that the most creative being in the universe would create human beings, in His image, just to treat them like mere animals and strike them whenever they behaved badly? Why would we think that a *good* Father would abuse us just because we might wander into the wrong places or simply balk at His commands?

"Love always produces good works. However, good works do not produce love."

Would we have children to treat them in that way? God gave us each a personal example of who He is, how He thinks and how much He loves, by the very act of procreation. As we multiply we establish families to nurture loving relationships with one another. Then we gather into communities to extend those loving relationships to a larger circle.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 8: Divine Quest

The quest to know God and to be in a wholesome relationship with Him has been around since the beginning of the human race. Some abandon this quest and become atheists. Others search with many doubts that He exists and call themselves agnostics. Still others decide to follow another supernatural being, Lucifer, and actually sacrifice their own children to this “god” whom they serve in exchange for riches and power. Then there are others who manufacture their own god or idols and are very religious, hoping to reach God by moral integrity or worship of these idols. And there are some who respond to the Gospel of Jesus, commit their lives to Him and become Christians.

The question posed to everyone, especially Christians, is this, “How can we develop a deeply passionate and intimate relationship, like husband and wife, with God?” Or to put it in other terms, *Can we live in commitment to God and His desires in the same manner as true lovers treat their most significant others on earth?* I think that many Christians, possibly even the majority of them, *want* to relate to God more as lovers than slaves to a master or subjects to their sovereign king. So, what is the problem? I suggest that there is something wrong with our system of beliefs. There must be misperceptions about who God is, what He expects of us, and what He wants from us. These misperceptions stand between us and intimacy with God. And He desperately wants these obstacles to be removed.

“To most people God is an inference, not a reality. He is a deduction from the evidence which they consider adequate; but He remains personally unknown to the individual.” — A. W. Tozer

My Confirming Scripture:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 9: Examination, Courage and Confirmation

“Let us examine our current beliefs. Let us discover which of them may be keeping us from this intimate love for God which we strongly desire. And let’s have the courage to change what we believe. To do this we must reject some beliefs which we adopted from very trusted sources in our lives. This is not a rejection of those people, it is simply a course correction of faith which God desires for us to pursue. God wants us to be in a passionate love affair with Him.” — A. W. Tozer

Don’t put this book down if it happens to make you feel uncomfortable. No one ever broadens their horizons in life if they do not leave their personal comfort zone. Don’t be afraid that these insights will lead you astray. You know scripture too well for that to happen. Better yet, if the Holy Spirit Who inspired the writers of scripture lives in you, He will not let you be misled.

Be like the Bereans, mentioned in Acts 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that *they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*” What Paul was teaching was radically different from everyone’s former understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures. The Bereans tried to confirm these *new* truths Paul was expressing to them, not to disprove them.

Make an extensive list of your current beliefs and compare them to the words and heart of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. Let His treatment of people be the context of your every understanding.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 10: Every Belief Is a Matter of Choice

Most of us fail to realize that the majority of what we believe has been fed to us by others. However, we also fail to consider why we have accepted what was spoon fed to us from our infancy and continuing until this very day. We have believed some things in order not to disappoint some person whom we love or respect. Other things have been adopted into our belief system out of a sense that there is safety in numbers. Still other beliefs have arisen from the lack of due diligence regarding particular issues. And our beliefs have become concrete in our souls by way of repetition or natural curing over time. The good news is that since we get to choose what we believe, we can change it at will for any reason. Here's how we derive every belief we hold.

WHAT I BELIEVE IS BASED ON 3 THINGS		
C	Parents	Relative truth which I got from my relatives
U	Family	
L	Peers	or Absolute truth which is common to all mankind
T	Employers	
U	Clergy	What I Want To; If I respect the person who is teaching, I will accept it otherwise I will not!
R	Teachers	
E	Enforcers	
	NEWS	

Instead of letting your culture (that which was given to you by your family, friends and other people) and desire (that which satisfies the way you want to live) determine your truth, let God's truth (truth about yourself,

others and God) change your desires such that your culture will be transformed by your expressions of love and acceptance of others!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 11: Destination: Intimate Relationships

A message from the writings of A. W. Tozer:

An old Chinese proverb says "The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step." If that first step is not taken, nothing else really matters. If you are not on the journey, talking about it does not matter. Many Christians talk about living in intimate relationship with God, but nothing in their lives indicates they have even begun the journey. There's much joy that they have been saved, but no anticipation of continuing on the journey towards spiritual perfection. They are so happy that they are not what they used to be, that they cannot see what God wants them to be. Christianity has a glorious and victorious side, that few Christians experience.

My recommendation to the church of Christ and all others in the world is "*Live abandoned to intimacy with God.*" Our tragic loss is that very few are going on to know Christ in enriched intimacy and familiarity. Worse yet, we're not even talking about it. We rarely hear about it. And it does not find its way into our literature or media ministries. And it is not found in our churches. What I'm talking about is this yearning, this longing to know God in increasing measure.

A loving Personality dominates the Bible, walking among the trees of the garden and breathing fragrance over every scene. Always a living Person is present, speaking, pleading, loving, working, and manifesting Himself whenever and wherever His people have the receptivity necessary to receive the manifestation.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 12: Information OR Transformation

The vast majority of teaching is based on the *informational philosophy*. Jesus' teaching was based on the *transformational philosophy*. Even the methods of delivery of the messages of Jesus were intended to promote *life change*, not information accumulation. Jesus' entire focus was on relationship. And for very good reason. Humans were created for relationships. Relationship can only be established between humans. Relationships are at the core of our engineering *in the image of God*. Everything external to relationship, the human expression of personality, simply provides an environment in which relationship can be expressed.

It is no mystery that the informational philosophy is so predominant. We have all heard the saying, *knowledge is power*. Since one of the three basic desires of humans is to obtain *power*, we are driven to become powerful. Yet, most of the carnage in human history is evidence of this axiom, *power corrupts*. The *power* pursuit of man binds people in relationship to one another. At the same time, this same pursuit can be the greatest hindrance or destroyer of relationship. In other words, relationship's greatest strength is also its greatest weakness. Another expression of *power* is *worship*. *Power* seeking people are in effect garnering the *worship* of others.

I have spent incredible amounts of time and energy trying to convince, coerce or manipulate others to *worship* me. I did this mostly unconsciously. And so have you. This actually drives many away from us. But, when I truly fall in love with another, my *worship* of them is evidence that I love them. I *worship* that which I value.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 13: Wannabe: Self-Inflicted Loneliness

I Wannabe Rich

External things, such as the accumulation of resources (*prosperity*) may provide ways and means to express our feelings toward one another. For example, giving a lover flowers expresses affection for them. At the same time, an obsession with the increase of *prosperity* can be the very thing that destroys relationship. This obsession can distract us from meeting the emotional needs of the ones we love.

I Wannabe Famous

Another pursuit of all people is *popularity*. This can be a hurdle over which two people must leap in order to be in relationship with each other. Since we all want to be applauded or recognized for the good things we do, our pursuit of such shifts our attention from the one we love to ourselves. The extreme of this is narcissism.

I Wannabe Boss

Another significant pursuit of all people is power. We all want to be in control of things and people. We want to be large-and-in-charge. We want to have the last word or the final answer. At the same time we do not want others to control us.

Self Inflicted Loneliness

So, the very things that are the greatest impetus for our every expression (word or deed), can also be the demise of any particular relationship. Those who are the loneliest are those whose focus is most introverted and selfish (wannabe). Obsession with self and a desperate need to be prosperous, popular or powerful leads to depression, despair and possibly even personal termination (suicide) when they are not attained. Therefore, healthy relationships which satisfy our desire to be loved and secure are the solution to addictive behaviors of all kinds. The world would be a much better place if all of us were more other-caring and less self-indulgent.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 14: What Is Worship?

Believe it or not, worship is not a religious activity. Worship is the natural activity of the human soul. It is the basis for all relationships. It is the impetus for individuality, partnership and relational bonding. Every person on earth today is a great worshipper. We all worship many things or people. Unfortunately, worship of objects which cannot return worship in kind, are all too common in every generation. It is equally unfortunate that most objects of worship which have the capacity to return our worship, do not do so. I have worshipped many people who never even knew my name. However, the highest object of worship, and the only one who is guaranteed to return my worship, is the Creator who gave me life and breath in the first place.

The bottom line for all of us is not to become better worshippers. We are all exceptionally good at it. The best option is to improve the objects of our worship. In this case, I suggest that God would be the ultimate object of worship. And who better to be in marital union with than God Himself. Like it or not, we are all in the same boat. And we must all face the fact that the only assured love of our life is the one who created us in the first place. You might liken it to Father and Mother love. Good parents have children in order to have loving relationships with them. And God is the ultimate, good parent!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 15: Carefulness Hurts Like Infidelity

Jesus words in Matthew 6:25, “Take no thought for your life, what you will eat, or what you will drink; nor yet for your body what you will wear,” make it clear that faith is absolute trust in God. Jesus’ implication is that a disciple living by common-sense and human intelligence and wisdom hurts the heart of God like infidelity hurts us. {Imagine the pain another’s infidelity creates for you.}

If we have received the Spirit of God, it is essential that we listen for His guidance alone. A heart tuned to the Spirit of God will hear Him asking, “Now where does God come to bear in this relationship, in this vacation, in these new books or movies, in the choice you are about to make?” He continues to reminds us of His Presence, until we learn to make Him our first consideration. Whenever we put other things first, there is confusion of priorities and emotions.

“Take no thought ... “ about the possible consequences of obedience to the Spirit of God. Leave them to Him. Don't create your own stress by focusing on your future. **It is not only wrong to worry, it is equivalent to infidelity**, because worrying means that we do not think that God can handle the practical details of our lives, and it is never any thing else that worries us. Have you ever noticed what Jesus said would choke out what He teaches us? It is not the devil! It is ever, only and always our own concerns about the issues of everyday life.

When I fail to trust God where I cannot see the end result, that is where infidelity begins. The only cure for infidelity is obedience to the Spirit in absolute trust. The most significant word of Jesus to His disciples is abandon. If we do not abandon ourselves to God, it is because we do not trust Him fully.

My Confirming Scripture:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 16: Value-Add Teaching

There are two different philosophies of teaching, informational and transformational. When the focus is on accumulation of information, it can be learned by rote and measured by testing. The more information you possess the greater your power and influence. This is the predominant philosophy of public education. It is popular because it helps to build personal wealth and power.

The transformational philosophy focuses on the development of character and emotional harmony. Unfortunately, you can't just purpose to have character. It is developed in and through relationship. It is curious that what we want most (happy relationships) is seldom attained, due to a selfish pursuit of health, wealth and influence. These things are more readily achieved by amassing personal knowledge.

Jesus' teachings are purely *relational* and thereby *transformational*. His message ran contrary to all religious teaching in His day. He and His message were rejected summarily by any and all who were more interested in themselves (their own prosperity, popularity and power) than in wholesome, mutually other-caring relationships. All religions, including the Christian religion, place more value on the selfish pursuits of the *worshippers*, attempting to appease their gods, than in developing genuine, affectionate relationships with others.

Christianity,
when properly
practiced,
is relationship
not religion.

Christianity, when properly practiced, is relationship and not religion. Most relationships, then and now, were (and are) mutual accommodation of self-need. That explains the phenomena of falling **in** love and then falling **out** of love.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 17: Taught or Caught

Running parallel to the two philosophies of teaching discussed in yesterday's message is this statement, "Some things are taught and some things are caught!" The significance of this particular parallel is that Intelligence Quotient (IQ) is largely determined by the ability of one to store knowledge and then retrieve it at will in high measure of accuracy. Until recent times the measure of Emotional Intelligence or Emotion Quotient (EQ) was largely unknown or little understood. And it is essentially both IQ and EQ which distinguish the human race from all other species.

While boasting of high IQs and impressive accomplishments, most have failed to reach their emotional potential (EQ). The underlying force, that is, the success engine of personal achievement is one which runs well only on a race track of speed and fanfare. The success engine of human happiness is one which is fueled by affection and runs on any track where it can share its fuel with others in need.

We are careful to teach each other to be more rational than emotional and for seemingly good reasons. Crimes of passion often produce the most gruesome of crime scenes. Yet, the truth be told, we are primarily emotional beings and driven mostly by emotion.

Regardless of how much we pack information into our heads about good character and good behaviors, it is our emotions which cause us to fall short with respect to both. Hopefully this one thought may help you. "The deeper my affection for another person, the greater my kindness will be toward them." — J H Alan. When I fall in love, I catch a passion which transforms me. Information may help me see what needs to be changed in me, but only a change of feeling will change how I can make others feel.

"It is not what I do or say for which I will be remembered. I will be remembered for how I made them feel."

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 18: Morality or Motive

Jesus did not teach morality. Jesus did not teach justice and equity. Jesus did not teach responsible living. Jesus did not teach behavior management. Jesus did not teach social activism. All expressions of any of these are at best futile attempts to be *self-righteous*, or a *good person*. Even the Old Testament was grossly misunderstood as a behavioral approach to *rightness*. A more accurate understanding is that all of the rules and regulations of the Commandments of God were simply the revelation of the symptoms of the disease of selfishness (the antithesis of love). Anyone can see the natural consequences, that is relational carnage, that violation of the rules would produce. Your true morality quotient is determined by your motives.

Check out the story of the woman brought to Jesus who had been caught in the very act of adultery. Notice what Jesus said to her. “Neither do I condemn you, go and stop pursuing this lifestyle.” At the same time ponder the desire of the most religious men of Jesus’ day with respect to the woman. “Now Moses in the law commanded us, that such should be stoned to death!” Consider then what these religious leaders did to Jesus shortly after this encounter. (crucifixion) Why would Jesus ignore the Law and show mercy to the woman?

Who would you act like, Jesus or the religious leaders? Sometimes we get so caught up in compliance with the rules, that we refuse to consider exercising mercy, forgiveness and grace. Yet, we always cry out for these when we are the offender!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 19: Feeling IS Relationship

We must first feel God's love for us in order to respond to it. If we have misperceptions as to the measure of God's love for us or misgivings about it, we cannot respond to it. You cannot respond to a love you do not feel. It is usually the case, that when we do not believe that God actually does love us, just the way we are, we have been misinformed by well-meaning but misguided informants. These informants are parents, pastors, peers, politicians, professors, and professionals of all kinds. However, the good news of the Gospel is this. The Holy Spirit of God Himself will come to us and convince us that God desires to be in close relationship with us.

But, if we do not say "yes" to His overtures of love, we remain apart from Him. The good news is that God will express His affectionate intentions toward every man and woman many times in his or her life. He wants every one to be up close and personal with Him. But that could not be possible if ever God forced anyone in that regard. This is the very essence of faith in God. **Faith is essentially my affectionate response to God's love for me.** It is in the moment when my heart is pierced by His love, that I have the opportunity to establish a personal relationship with Him. It cannot and will not happen at any other time. So when the Spirit of God whispers His invitation into relationship with Him, I strongly suggest that you just say *yes!*

My Confirming Scriptures: John 3:16-17.

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 20: Joy *and* Happiness Are Yours

Jesus said, “No one can take away your joy.” You can give it up. But don’t give it up! You need to take hold of it and have the joy of your salvation restored to you. You need to take it up. You need to live in it. You have a right to be happy because Jesus purchased that right. You have a right to live with a smile on your face. You have a right to know that you are incredibly loved and to be amazingly happy about it. You need to abide in the happiness of God. You need to live there; camp there. It’s important to the Father that you’re happy. It’s so important that we are the happiest people on earth.

Even on our worst days we have God with us. He is with us. He is for us. Even when He’s praying to the Father, Jesus prayed this in John 17, “But now I come to you and these things I speak out in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.” So when you are in Christ you are a partaker of *His* righteousness. You’re a partaker of *His* obedience. You’re a partaker of how *He* is wonderfully loved. And you are a partaker of *His* happiness and *His* joy.

Everything that He is belongs to you. That’s why the Father put you into Him, so that everything in Christ belongs to you. Every word that God speaks to you is designed to lead you into an experience where joy is one of the outcomes. What Jesus speaks in prayer to the Father He also speaks to us. John 15:11 “These things I’ve spoken to you, so that My joy may be in you and that your joy may be made full.” It’s time to get filled with the joy of the Lord.

If you are feeling badly right now, is it because of your vision of God or the vision of your circumstances?

Do you know how to acquire joy in the experience of difficulty?

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 21: Defined by Love

Once having been overwhelmed by God's love and responding to His invitation of a deeply personal relationship with Him, my expressions about Him will reflect my affection for Him. My identity is not defined by my abilities, talents, intelligence, vocation or my personal successes. My identity is a matter of relationship. I am defined by my heritage, my relationship and my personality. Identity is a matter of *being* not *doing*. Unfortunately the predominant answer to the question, "Who are you?" is a recitation of accomplishments and abilities. Relationship, which is the ultimate in human experience is based rather on pure emotional and spiritual connection with another being. My identity then, is in my identification with another in relationship. Birth and marriage are two primary examples of this.

In Christ, that is in having responded to God's invitation to be joined to Him in a deeply personal way, my identity takes on a much higher value than with any other relationship. As a Christ-In, I am identified with God as a member of His family, by marriage, with all of its inherent benefits and pleasures. Thus the term "Christian" in its purest meaning is in this marital union with God in all three of His manifestations, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Living in relational unity and harmony with God, enables me to demonstrate the selfless, other-caring Spirit of God to all those around me. And in that Spirit, I will have genuine affection for all others around me. From this place of identity **everything I do will be motivated by who I am.**

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 22: Traveling with God

"If you then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For you are dead. And your life is hid with Christ in God," Colossians 3:1-3. You cannot take the journey to intimacy with God unless you have been raised to new life in Jesus. Once committed to this relationship with God, personal resolve to step into the journey to intimacy with Him is essential. It is the first step in the most delightful journey you will ever take. And the good news is that there need not be any particular destination. This journey is about **how** you journey **not where**. The best part is that your travel mate is God!

Travel is more enjoyable when you have someone to share the journey with you. Like any other journey there will be bumps in the road and obstacles to work around. We can complain about them, but that obviously won't fix them. Alternatively, when viewed as a challenge, each obstacle adds interest and uniqueness to the trip. Some of them may even create opportunities to share the love of God with other travelers.

Falling in love is only the first step in the journey to intimacy with any other. The journey is the very bonding which occurs when two persons grow toward unity.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 23: Engaging God in Love

Learn how to engage with God. Learn to live in love. “Go love others like you have been loved,” Jesus said to His disciples. Our relationship with Jesus is all about loving others. But we have been conditioned to maximize our own pleasure and minimize our own misery, that is, loving ourself. Jesus calls us into a reality of feeling so fully loved, that it is not only easy to love others, it is also as natural for us as breathing.

“Since Jesus went through everything you have gone through and more, learn to think like Him. Think of your sufferings as a weaning from that old sinful habit of always expecting to get your own way. Then you’ll be able to live out your days free to pursue what God wants instead of being tyrannized by what you want.”

— 1 Peter 4:1-2 The Message

Become free to enjoy what God loves. Be loved where you are right now. Know God’s desire to show His passion for you in the circumstances you face right now. Rather than being agitated by the inconvenience of others’ needs, jump in to help them. The more you know you’re loved, the more you will love well in the presence of those around you.

Living in God’s love is not having to do things for other people to gain their love for you. As you learn to “live loved,” you are actually **engaging with God rather than being dutifully obedient** to Him.

Live Loved!!!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 24: Cultivating Our Garden of Emotions

Becoming intimate with God for the Christian is far from being automatic. The soul, the seat of our emotions, must be cultivated like a garden. And the will, the seat of our sovereign choices, must be congruent, that is equal in every way, with the Will of God. This would be living as the committed members of God's great family. When our commitment is to family, our desires and motives must be consistent with Father's desires. When we have reached that end, it will be demonstrated by our peace in the middle of carnage and devastation as we rely on Dad to handle the situation with our cooperation.

Joseph and Job are the best examples of trust in the Bible. Their lives were filled with adversity and calamity. Yet, they faced their circumstances with an assurance that God still had a noble purpose in their trouble. We must also look for the purpose of God in everything instead of trying to logically deduce the meaning of things as they apply only to ourselves. Since God sees the whole picture and everyone affected, only He can make fully informed decisions which affect the many.

Far too many are disillusioned with God. They think that He may not always give them the results they desire, and never press on to deeper faith. In order to press on to greater intimacy with God, we must trust Him completely to be doing what is best. What is the secret to pressing on? Where is the strength to be found to endure the race until the very end? Only unwavering trust in the perfection of God in all things can enable us to trust His heart and relax in His security.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 25: Incredibly Loved by God

“You know what the good news is? The good news is that I am incredibly loved by God. You know what the love of God does for me? It makes me amazingly confident about life. I know that God loves me so completely and powerfully that everything in my life will have a purpose!

I’m a Christian, because it’s amazing. It’s incredible news. I love God! I love being with God. Wouldn’t it give you great pleasure if everyone around you was thinking, “Wow I’d like to know God! Is God interested in me?” Well for vast numbers of people there is consideration about that.

Christ keeps the covenant on our behalf. So the good news just got even better. He is there keeping your covenant for you so that the Father can give you favor. And so let us learn how to live in Christ in that context.

We enter the covenant as participators of His grace. We are the joyful recipients of His favor. And no matter where we go or what we do, God will remain faithful to love us. And He will cultivate the land of our life and the garden of our heart. He will weed out sin. He will plant things in us that will grow. Jesus is the vine and there is no sin in Him.

So walking with God intimately means that sin ceases to have dominion over us. Your habit patterns are formed by your own carnality. Your habit patterns get to be formed by peace and by **holiness (everything being in right relationship)**.

When you are in right relationship (intimacy) with God, you will also be in right relationship with yourself and all others.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 26: Nurturing the Fruitless Branch

“There are only two reasons for a branch of a good vine not to bear fruit. Firstly because it is not actually attached. It’s not a part of the vine. It has no spiritual connection. It has no sap connection. This is speaking metaphorically of a religious person who claims to know God, He thinks something like this, “I’m a believer because I go to church.” Yet he has never had a salvation experience. If you’re not connected to God in life, you’re not connected in the after life and there is absolutely no fruit of the Presence of God in you.

The second reason for a branch not bearing fruit is because it’s hanging down. Sap naturally rises to the highest point. If a branch is hanging down, its fruit is diminished. So you may have a part of your life that is not fruitful, because actually it needs to be lifted up. So what part of your life right now is not fruitful? It just needs to be lifted up. That’s what encouragement is about.

The church should be the best organization on earth for encouragement. When you see someone’s life not being fruitful, you’ve just got to help them lift that piece up. It is not a time for criticism or judgment. Jesus paid for all that and took all guilt, shame and punishment upon Himself. It is time to help the unfruitful plug into more of the love of God. Only that (sap) can restore.

So that branch that is not receiving the life giving sap needs to be lifted up and trained at a higher level. The distinguishing difference between Christianity and all other religions is that its only ingredient is love (the unconditional love of God which by-product is grace, favoring the underserving). How opposite! But.... How magnificent!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 27: Be A Dispenser of Grace

Sometimes I think in certain places, church can be the most discouraging of places, because you're okay until you have a problem. Or you're okay until you sin. And then you're not okay.

Well the church (body of Christ) needs to be encouraging at all times. You know! When you've sinned, that's when you need grace. Somebody in the church needs to be supplying the grace that you need so you can change. So if a part of your life is unfruitful right now the Holy Spirit wants to take that part and lift it into a higher place of relationship.

Maybe your current experience of life has gone beyond your present experience of God. You need to be lifted up. Your current situation has gone beyond your present experience of who God is for you. So you need to be lifted up. You need to be encouraged into a higher place of relationship. Maybe you need to be encouraged into a higher place of trust; a higher place of peace; a higher place of grace.

This is what we are for each other. This is what we do. This is what we should be famous for in the world. No one should be safe from a blessing! No matter where you go, no matter who they are.....no one's safe from the blessing of grace.

Grace, by definition means to show favor that is undeserved. If one must do anything in order to get your grace, (like changing their behavior) you are talking about a reward, and not grace. "Where sin abounds, grace much more abounds." This was not intended to encourage us to sin more in order to get more grace. It was written so that we can be certain that we cannot commit any sin which is too horrible for God to grant us grace.

The more you love, the more grace you will give.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 28: Adversity and Calamity Can Be Your Dearest Friends

Most of our upgrades in the Spirit come in the context of a crisis or confrontation. That's why we should never be upset by adversity. Adversity and crisis are a short cut into a better way of life. God gives you an amazing opportunity to grow up really quickly. Every crisis I have is a short cut into a better understanding of myself, others and God Himself. This is brilliant!

When you see crises for what they are, you can really enjoy them, because God is going to speed something up. He is going to quicken something to you and it's powerful. Yeah, the enemy will contest it. But you get to laugh in his face on the way through. Enjoy the 'scary' ride knowing you are safe all the way.

Every crisis is a potential shortcut into something marvelous for you. Reflect on Romans 8:28. By this you know that every experience you have has a God purpose. Watch for the purpose. Then pursue it. God will change you in amazing ways if you stay with Him in the purpose for the current situation that you're going through. When you keep your eyes on His purpose for you, God always gives you peace and comfort in the situation you are in.

"I know the plans I have for you..." Jeremiah 29:11 ... "for your welfare and not for your calamity; to give you a future and a hope: to give you a future and divine expectation!" That's how *hope* is best translated! You can truly welcome your trials as friends, actually look forward to them coming, when you know that they are the faithful wounds of your Best Friend, God!

Dig the gold out of every difficult situation or personal encounter you experience. This is how we grow in grace!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 29: Every Experience in Your Life Is Beneficial

Everything in your life is useful to God! He allows in His wisdom what He could easily prevent by His power. Every single thing in your life is for your development. Everything is about you being morphed into the likeness of Jesus. It's about your faith increasing. It's about the presence of God increasing. It's about your peace increasing. It's about your rest and your joy. It's about your power increasing. It's about your relationship growing deeper. It's about a deeper understanding of God. It's about increasing wisdom coming into your heart and life and making a difference. Every single thing in your life right now is useful to God! He doesn't waste a thing!

So if you want to abide, you have to abide in that revelation, that everything is useful. Everything is **for** you. So when you don't abide, you actually think everything is **against** you. Everything is **for** you. Even the worst of things can be for you! In the difficult things we learn how to fight. We learn how to wait. We learn how to be with God. We learn how to worship. We learn how to increase our thanksgiving in every situation.

Everything is useful. The most devastating things are usually the most useful. Everything is about you becoming more of who you want to be and who God knows you are. God always knows what's coming. God is always Present-Future in how He sees you. You have two relationships with God; one in the present and one in the future that's coming towards you. So God always relates to you in two places. There is always a better version of you coming! That is why you can trust Him

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 30: Abiding in God Improves Our Prayers

The more intimate I am in a relationship the more confident I am in my security. The more I know that I am loved, the foremost object of my lover's affection, the more relaxed I am. Even though life has its struggles and altercations, knowing that love will never be withheld or withdrawn enables me to endure hardship. I am not alone!

All too often, my prayers were asking God to bless me in some way. My prayers were little more than selfish requests that God do something for me or mine. Many times I asked God to rescue us from medical malady, financial distress, and tragedy. These kinds of prayers began to dissipate as I embraced the love of God more by becoming more intimate with Him.

We have experienced moments when we could finish our lover's sentences or thoughts. We have made a suggestion to do something at the exact moment when the other is thinking the same thing. Some of our pleasures have been moments in which we have brought a gift to our lover which delighted them.

So it is with with our prayers with God. We do not need to ask Him for protection. He will always do that. We actually don't need to ask Him for anything or to do anything. He always has our best interest at heart. He simply wants us to talk to Him to share what is happening in our life. And we can trust Him to help us through calamity and distress of any sort.

So rather than asking God to take away the very trials that will draw you closer to Him and deepen your peace, simply ask God to reveal His purpose in them for you. Agree with God's plan for you and embrace an improved quality of life!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME ONE

Day 31: Simple, Spontaneous Prayers *(Brother Lawrence)*

"... Spend the remainder of your life only in worshiping God. He requires no great matters of us; a little remembrance of Him from time to time, and a little adoration. Sometimes to pray for His grace, sometimes just offer Him your sufferings and sometimes to return Him thanks for the favors He has given you, and still gives you in the midst of your troubles, Console yourself with Him the oftenest you can. Lift up your heart to Him at your meals. And when you are in company, the least little remembrance will always be pleasing to Him."

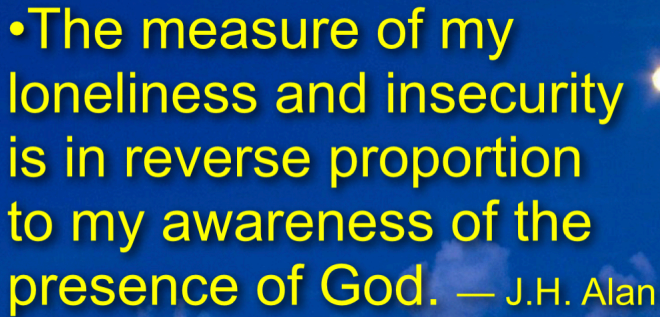
"... I consider myself as the most wretched of men. I am full of faults, flaws, and weaknesses, and have committed all sorts of crimes against my King. In deep regret, I confess all my wickedness to Him. I ask His forgiveness. I abandoned myself in His hands that He may do what He pleases with me. My King is full of mercy and goodness. Far from chastising me, He embraces me with love. He makes me eat at His table. He serves me with His own hands and gives me the key to His treasures. He converses and delights Himself with me incessantly in a thousand and a thousand ways. And He treats me in all respects as His favorite. In this way, I consider myself continually in His Holy presence." ... end of Brother Lawrence's prayers ...

Now please join me in this prayer for us!

Father, I ask that You take all of these things which You have gathered together into this volume and use them in the life of each reader as You did in my life. May we all, pursue a constant awareness of Your presence within us. May we become so madly in love with You that all who observe us will be awestruck by our obvious love for each other. May our constant awareness of Your presence, energize our every thought and action, such that those near us feel Your love for them flowing mightily in their direction. And may it become "***on earth as it is in heaven***" in every place we walk, from now until we meet You *face to face!* AMEN

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:



•The measure of my loneliness and insecurity is in reverse proportion to my awareness of the presence of God. — J.H. Alan

Jot down some significant quote of your own:

VOLUME TWO

Day 1: The Only Important Questions

What questions matter in the grand scheme of things? We all have more of them than we can count. Yet, objectively, we could, if we so chose, eliminate most of them as irrelevant. Either they have already been answered and we are not satisfied with the answer, or they are irrelevant because any answer will suffice since their answer does not provide any added value to our experience of life.

So whether you have questions about religion, faith, spirituality and so forth, it would be advisable to eliminate any of the questions that produce nothing of value. This would apply to non spiritual questions as well. Why waste time pondering essentially useless curiosities? To that end, let us try to boil down spiritual questions to the most effective and useful ones.

Asking which religion is the best one, provides very little more than the realization that nearly all of them have the same ways and means to the same common end. For example, all religions of the world, including Christianity, promote teachings that aspire to a final connection and end in the presence of their particular *god*. The common teachings of all are somewhat moralistic and hold cultural morality as the highest order of importance. Again, even Christianity holds high this same banner. Interestingly, Jesus Christ is held by nearly every religion to be the greatest teacher or prophet of all time. So what questions could have any *value-add* associated with them?

As I see it, there are only two that are worth pondering for any length of time. These have both temporal and eternal consequences at stake. The first is, “Who is Jesus Christ, whose followers claim to be alive and well over two millennia after His crucifixion?” The second is, “How does my opinion of Jesus Christ affect my life?” The answers will determine the eternal destiny of every human life.

Find scriptures to confirm the truth.

Consider how your experiences align with these words.

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 2: Your Map or the Official Map

“There are as many ways to God as there are religions in the world,” you may insist. Well, I must admit, your argument seems logical at first glance. However, there are myriad stories of men and women who would have been vastly rich, had they known that their land possessed valuable minerals beneath its surface. Yet, just because they did not ask the question, “Is there anything of value under my yard that might make me rich?” they remained poor. Since they did not ask the first question, they had no reason to ask the second one. If they had asked the first question and the answer to it was *yes*, then the second question would logically be, “What do I need to do to benefit from it?”

Again you raise your hand and with permission to speak, you say, “That’s foolish! The chances are so slim that there would be a *gold mine* under anyone’s property, the world would go mad if everyone began digging in their yard!” This seems logical as well. However, there is a distinct difference between the questions about highly improbable wealth in the yard and the questions about Jesus Christ. Let me restate the questions. The first is, “Who is Jesus Christ?” The second is, “How does my opinion of Jesus Christ affect my life?”

One difference between the questions about land value and the questions of eternal consequence is that there is a treasure map that has been published more widely than any other in the history of man for the eternal treasure. The treasure is a personal relationship with God. The map is the Holy Bible. Further the author of the map has clearly stated that if you will **follow** the map, He will insure that you **will find** the treasure.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 3: The Treasure and the Map

Like it or not, believe it or not, there is a treasure and a map. The treasure is intimate relationship with God and the map is the Bible. My knowledge or lack thereof does not change the facts. My ignorance is assured unless I choose to pursue knowledge. We are all innocently ignorant until we have been informed. However, once informed, we are just plain stupid if we continue to shout in contradiction to irrefutable evidence, "I still don't believe it!"

And, to be sure, to ignore the evidence or not even seek such evidence is your option, always. However, with not only life but also eternity at stake, to simply ignore the evidence would border on insanity. Just pretending that something does not matter does not affect its significance

A significant difference between Christianity and all other world religions is this: the gods out there, that is all of the gods except the God of the Bible, require actions and attitudes consistent with recognition of the extreme superiority of the *god-being*. Only the God of the Bible offers human beings the opportunity to be in a genuinely affectionate, personal relationship with Himself! Herein is the rub. Herein is the truth as well. Every relationship is a *two person* choice. Both parties must accept the other's invitation to be together and to care for each other. God has already chosen you! Why not choose Him back?

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 4: What Have You Got to Lose

It befuddles me to notice the extremely high measure of resistance to God's offer to every person of an up-close-and-personal relationship with Himself. I see nothing to lose and everything to gain. Who, in their right mind, would not want God to be at least a BFF (best friend forever)?

But then this gives rise to the question that is foundational to every affectionate relationship. "Can my significant other be trusted?" And this seems to be the primary reason most humans do not engage God in a personal relationship. They have been convinced, wrongly I might add, that God wants perfect behaviors and attitudes. They have mostly believed that the treasure map will lead them to destruction in the hands of an angry *tyrant*, God. Unfortunately this is a very widely accepted view of God. Fortunately, there is an enormous amount of evidence to prove just the opposite.

Unless you are first willing to ask the two most important questions in human experience, you will be saying *no* to a proposition you never evaluated. That, my friend, is an irretrievable mistake. I would suggest that "It is better to be safe than sorry." One religious teacher said frequently, "If my faith in Jesus Christ proves to have been unnecessary on an eternal landscape, I have lost nothing. However, if what I believe about Jesus Christ is true, and you refuse to believe it yourself, you will suffer separation from God, forever!"

If you will not ponder the evidence, the question is already rendered irrelevant. But, if you consider all of the evidence revealing the facts about Jesus Christ, it is foolish to refuse to answer the second one. But, be advised, the second question is always answered and it is answered by every human being. No answer, is a "No!" answer.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 5: The Nature of Human Nature.

"Wherefore as by one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned." Romans 5:12

This verse does not imply that God punished the human race for one man's sin; but that the motivation to sin, that is, my claim to my right to myself, entered into the human race by one man. Then "another Man (Jesus Christ) took on Him the sin of the human race and put it away." (Hebrews 9:26)

The motivation to sin is not the acts themselves (immorality and crime) but the tendency toward self-indulgence, self-promotion and self worship - I am my own god. This motivation may work out in high morality or in low immorality, but it has the single basis, my claim to my right to myself, that is, **my rights**. When Our Lord faced men with all the forces of **evil in them**, He did not pay any attention to the moral degradation of the one or to the moral attainment of the other. He looked at something we do not see, that is, the motive.

In the Cross of Jesus Christ God redeemed the whole human race from the possibility of damnation by the heredity of personal evil (sin). God nowhere holds a man responsible for having the heredity of sin. The condemnation is not that I am born with a selfish nature. But when I realize Jesus Christ came to deliver me from its punishment, and I refuse to let Him do so, at that moment I seal my own damnation.

"And this is the judgment that the light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light." God does not condemn me, or anyone else to hell. We choose to bear our own penalty or agree with God to let Jesus be our substitute in condemnation.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

human nature is:
self-indulgent
self-promoting
self-Sovereign

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 6: Don't Take the Baton from God

It is natural for Christians to try to understand God and try to know His ways. It is also natural for Christians to take action in anticipation of what we believe He's going to say. But God's desire is rather that we develop such a deep love for Him that we *do know* His thoughts and might even be able to finish His sentences. When and only when our affection for God is strong enough that we operate in unity with His desires, are we where He intends for us to be.

Our life is to God like a grand orchestra. He wants to be the conductor. He, and only He, knows the full concert and how each piece must cooperate with the others in order to create a great musical performance. Every instrument (circumstance) and every line (experience) in our lives will either produce harmony or discord. Whenever we stop watching Him or following Him, noise rather than music results.

Whenever we try to determine **what** we will do for God or the **manner** in which we will do it, we are actually working at cross purposes to the music He has in mind. We can't think ahead of him. We do not know the end of the concert or even the next movement. So in order to affect the symphonic harmony God desires, we must do as the Psalmist wrote and see every stroke of the baton as imperative. David said in Psalm 27, "Your Word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path."

The truth is that God only needs to give us enough light to take one step. If we are not willing to take that one step, there's no need to provide any more light. You will not stumble if you are not moving. And you will not stumble if you keep your eye on the lighted path (or the conductor of the orchestra musically speaking).

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 7: The Essence of Christ Within

The essence of faith in Christ, the essence being a Christian (a ‘Christ-In’ as they were called at Antioch), the essence of becoming Christ-like is to be like Him in spirit and attitude. Jesus possessed from his very beginning an emptiness of self. There was a distinct absence of pride and a fullness of humility in Him. He was willing to introduce Himself at the lowest entry point into humanity. And He was willing to always be in a place of submission to those to whom He ministered. Even in His final moments, Jesus, the Master, the very Son of God would give His life to redeem us all.

The ultimate example of humility is written in Philippians 2:5-8 “Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn’t think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn’t claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death—and the worst kind of death at that—a crucifixion.” — Philippians 2:5-8 MSG. Jesus, who deserved all the praise and glory of every man, woman and child ever to exist, personified relationship at its finest!

At His final meal with His disciples, Jesus dropped down on His knees before each man and washed their feet. If the King of the universe can wash the feet of His disciples, we certainly should desire to wash the feet of our brothers and sisters in Christ. If you consider any task to be beneath your dignity, this pride will prevent a deeply intimate and personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Love is to be totally abandoned to the one you love. Will you abandon yourself to Him?

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 8: God's Greatest Glory Is in My Humiliation

We do tend to believe that being on the mountain top is the best place of service or the place from which we can be most effective. And yet the truth really comes down to this. Are we willing to be so committed to Jesus Christ, so much His servant, that we are willing to be completely and utterly humiliated for his sake? It is only in the extinguishing of my pride that I become humble. (Humiliation is actually proof that I have not yet conquered my own pride.) It is only in my total submission to God that I can really be of use to God. It was the submission of Jesus to God's purposes that accomplished redemption of us all.

Jesus Christ suffered myriad attempts of others to humiliate Him for the duration of His life on earth. Although His detractors tried time and again, they were unable to humiliate Him. Jesus true humility precluded the possibility of humiliation. His pride had long since been abandoned when He left heaven to born as a human being. The best relationships are assured to mutually humility.

The primary evidence of a loving relationship with anyone is our other-caring exceeding our self-caring. Our greatest pleasures in relationship are when we show mercy and grace to each other. Under-served favor is the height of relationship.

Redemption occurs when we sincerely and humbly come to Jesus, offering to do whatever brings Him pleasure, no matter how humiliating that may be for us. Why not give Jesus your trust and love?

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 9: Struggles in the Balance of Holiness

The significance of holiness is as it relates to a balance between parties in relationship. Holiness is a perfect balance between me and God, between humanness and divine, between human nature and the divine nature. Holiness in me is what brings the two of these into perfect balance. Expecting life, to be easy, trouble-free, financially sound and secure and without pain and suffering, just because I am a Christian, has no basis in fact nor any basis in reality.

Life is full of contradictions, difficulties and struggles. These struggles are a part of that perfect balance. They are intended to bring me to the point of exercising my will in the pursuit of God. So give yourself to the pursuit of God. No matter what your circumstance, realize that God actually allows, architects, and even purposes the troubles in your life. Stuff happens specifically to bring you to the point of exercising in a particular area so that you can grow beyond your current maturity in relationship. Look at every trial and tribulation from God as an opportunity to take a shortcut to a better place in your relationship with Him and in your relationship with everyone around you.

“Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don’t try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way.” — James 1:2-4 MSG

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 10: For Applause or Pleasure

Throughout our lives we seek recognition, affirmation, significance and many other things. What is it that we're looking for? We seek a sense of self-worth. And when we come to God, we want to serve Him along that line. Yet, we want to maintain some semblance of affirmation and some semblance of recognition in the course of serving our God. Unfortunately, it is the desire for the applause of others that spawns all sorts of hurt feelings. When we do something significant and do not hear, "Thank you," or worse yet someone else gets the credit for it, we are hurt and possibly even angry.

One who is truly living a Christ-like life never tries to draw attention to himself. Christ never did things in order to be affirmed or recognized. He often told those whom He healed to go quietly and not mention His name.

The very opposite seems to be true in human circles, even in Christian circles. Once we've received Christ, we are more than delighted to serve God, but we're still looking over our shoulder or out the corner of our eye to see who's watching. Yet, when one receives Jesus Christ, the opportunity is presented to develop a passionately, intimate relationship with Christ. Only such a relationship will cause us to desire nothing except to please Jesus. We desire that the one we love be indulged, affirmed and adored. We don't need affirmation from other people because know that we have pleased God!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 11: Right Ministry, Right Timing

In retrospect, I can see time and again in my life and time and again in the lives of many around me, the tendency to get a bit of vision from God, a glimpse of the ministry I feel He has in mind, but then taking the baton from His hand and charging ahead, full speed, frantically in a hurry to “get ‘er done”. When that happens, God just steps back and waves goodbye. As we proceed down that path toward ministry at our own pace and in our own way, God cannot be glorified in any way. God will never share His glory with others. He is God!

Unless we forsake the tendency to run ahead of God or to be in a hurry to make reality out of a vision He gives us, we will be disappointed and disillusioned. Time after time the vision dies an unnatural death. Interestingly enough, that unnatural death is caused by the infliction of a fatal wound from my own sword. So as the vision comes and the delight begins to rise, wait for God. Be aware that His timing is perfect. Only His timing is perfect.

Our method or *our* timing, every time, will thwart the plan and purpose of God in us. However, you can be certain that God’s purposes will be fulfilled. He will simply choose some other person to be His agent for change.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 12: Jesus + Nothing = Everything

The conscious experience of salvation in a person's life then is complete and utter willingness to receive Jesus as the only means of access to God for full redemption. Any other way is not acceptable. No other way will work as Acts 4 states, “By the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the One you killed on a cross, the One God raised from the dead, by means of His name this man stands before you healthy and whole. Jesus is ‘the stone you masons threw out, which is now the cornerstone.’ Salvation comes no other way; no other name has been or will be given to us by which we can be saved, only this one.” — Acts 4:10-12 MSG

Jesus took the punishment for our sin, separation from God, by death on the cross so that we could be set free. Every person on the globe faces the option of walking defiantly away from God and living apart from God in total independence. However, the other option is to choose to be in close relationship with God. The pinnacle of this is to live as if we were in the garden of Eden as in the beginning with God.

Since Jesus walked on the earth, was tempted just like we are, and did not succumb to the temptations, He became qualified, legally, to die on the cross to pay our punishment, which we all deserve. Don't look for any other way to heaven. Don't look for your good deeds to outweigh your bad deeds. Don't look for your righteousness, your church, your theology, your religion, or any acts of kindness to grant you access to God's presence forever.

Only personal faith in Jesus and acceptance of the substitutionary penalty of Jesus Christ on the cross sets one free from the penalty of their own wrong doing. He died to pay the penalty in order to restore us to God. Through Him and Him alone, we can be set free.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 13: My Heart, His Holy of Holies

Most theological teachings about our body being “the temple of the Holy Ghost,” focus on physicality. There is much commentary about not abusing our bodies because it is the temple of the Holy Ghost. The correct understanding of this truth is not about our bodies, the fleshly shell, in which we operate. Rather, it is a reference to our spiritual being, our spirit.

In that sense, “the temple of the Holy Ghost,” is a place of worship for God. Our body (flesh and blood) is inconsequential to Him. It is our own personal Holy of Holies where God chooses to dwell. “It’s who you are and the way you live that count before God. Your worship must engage your spirit in the pursuit of truth. That’s the kind of people the Father is out looking for: those who are simply and honestly themselves before Him in their worship. God is sheer being itself—Spirit. Those who worship him must do it out of their very being, their spirits, their true selves, in adoration.” — John 4:23-24 MSG God wants us to worship Him in spirit. The source of our worship of God is the Holy of Holies within us.

When we gather to have a prayer meeting, or even when we pray in private, we consciously form our prayers. We determine what we need to pray for those around us who have requested prayer or those that we believe need prayer. But “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man” is only that prayer which is uttered by the Holy Ghost from within us. The Holy Spirit always knows the purposes of God and will utter prayers to fulfill them. Let Him pray using your lips. The more you do this, the deeper your relationship with God will become.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 14: Giving Up My Right to Myself

Many things keep us from doing what God would have us do. These are the things which we deem to be the best things. Yet, the things which God would have us surrender to Him are those very “best” things according to our own definition. For example, we hang on to our Christian service, winning souls to Jesus, witnessing for Christ or whatever we hold dear as highly valued activities for God. We hang on to them with tenacity, as though they are our lifeline to God. We are sadly and sorely mistaken.

The Holy Spirit of God wants us to submit entirely to Him. He wants us to surrender all choices, beliefs, thoughts and expressions to Him. He will actually activate our faculties and direct our thoughts. The Holy Spirit desires to connect us to the immediate desire of God for us in the moment. Only God knows the ‘best’ choice in each decision point in our lives. What might be ‘best’ in a general way, may actually be bad in any particular moment. Context is critical to every decision.

Again, the enemy of the very best is the very good, not the overtly and obviously wicked or evil. It's easy to see, flee and shun obviously evil things. But it is not easy to avoid the temptation of receiving at least some little bits of recognition or affirmation for doing something ‘good’ for God. But God is not satisfied with that. He wants us to surrender our ‘right to make each choice’ to His Holy Spirit, just as Jesus did! Then and only then is God glorified.

“Our *very good* is the enemy of God’s *best*.”

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 15: Married or Living in Adultery

You may have been often told the facts of the cross, the facts of the life and death and resurrection of Jesus. The fact that your sin (relationship crimes) are the reason you need a savior. You may have been given a *sample* prayer that you prayed to receive Jesus as if it were a formula. All of this can be done in an intellectual way. It can be done in the mind without ever producing salvation. Salvation comes only through relationship, a marital commitment of the entire being to another. It is a capitulation of one's will to the will of another.

Just as in marriage, two people are joined to each other, to put each other's needs and desires ahead of their own. Such marriages thrive and flourish. Marriages which lapse into selfish pursuit and demanding from the other things that we want for ourselves, destroy the relationship and often bring separation and divorce. You have probably experienced separation or divorce in numerous relationships in your life. Salvation only occurs at the point in time when I am willing to abandon all I have and follow Jesus.

What Jesus asked the rich young ruler to do was exactly that. He was requiring this man or any man who would be a disciple of Jesus, to forsake all of his own agenda, all of his own possessions and all of his own dreams and aspirations and take up the dreams and aspirations of God. The prayer for Salvation is not groveling in guilt and shame. It is rather a surrender of one's entire being in a prayer like this, "Father, I will do what you want me to do. I will put my plans down and follow your plans. I give you the rest of my life." Salvation not only gives us a new eternal destination, but also the new birth gives us a whole new agenda for living life on earth.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 16: Imagine God in the Middle of Every Situation

The imagination that is *devoted to* and totally *focused on* God is imagination that in every event of my day includes God in the thought. Imagine how God is going to **live** this moment. I don't have to **live** it myself. Imagine how God is going to burst forth in this situation and show Himself glorious. Imagine God in every moment of your day. He is interested in even the mundane things.

Brother Lawrence's experience of God is revealed in the book, "The Practice of the Presence of God." He developed a deep intimacy with his God and with Jesus through focusing every thought on the Lord, Jesus Christ, "bringing into captivity, every thought to the obedience of Christ." And he included God in every single moment of his day. He felt no difference in praying over his pot sink in the kitchen or praying before the altar in the sanctuary.

If my affection for God is great and my imagination is focused on God, there will be no things in my day that will trouble me. I will know that God is in them and God will show Himself glorious in them. That is my desire. And that is His desire. So imagine God in every moment and let Him show Himself fully competent to handle every situation. He is not only capable, He is magnificent!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 17: Intimacy Invigorates the Mundane

My surrender to God is a purposeful, continual activity and attitude of the soul. For many years, as a Christian, I would seek God's will. I would ask for His guidance. I would want to get answers quickly. When they didn't come, I assumed that He either wasn't listening or He was saying, "No." I later discovered, that many times, He hadn't said, "No," when I thought He had. Rather, He was saying, "Yes, but in the **right time**." And, to be sure, most of the time, my time was not the same as God's time. His was always perfect!

My impatience was probably one of the biggest hindrances to a life of surrender. Once I began to practice the presence of God and think of Him being interested in each and every situation, I became more aware of His feelings and thoughts. I tried to think of Him on a moment by moment basis. It was no longer just a daily, weekly, or at certain quiet times, morning and evening pursuit. I began to practice pausing in each decision moment, several each day, to consider God's possible purpose in them.

I stopped making emotionally charged or purely logical choices. I began to decipher that absolute surrender of each decision was the key to personal peace. I also noticed that God wants to be included even in my most mundane activities. Anger, anxiety and fear subsided as even mundane things became meaningful. In this way the commonplace became uniquely interesting and invigorating. The simple truth is that intimacy in relationship makes every moment with the one I love pleasurable.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 18: Obedience to the Spirit, not to Religion

For most of my life I was devoted to my church because I strongly believed that my church believed in God and interpreted the Scriptures correctly. I later discovered that many things I had been taught as Biblical truth were only the doctrines and dogma of my particular religion. It was as though we lived by the letter of the law and believed that it was also the spirit of the law.

When confronted with Jesus' words to the Pharisees, "Why do you use your rules to play fast and loose with God's commands? God clearly says, 'Respect your father and mother,' and, 'Anyone denouncing father or mother should be killed.' But you weasel around that by saying, 'Whoever wants to, can say to father and mother, What I owed to you I've given to God.' That can hardly be called respecting a parent . . . Frauds! Isaiah's prophecy of you hit the bull's-eye: These people make a big show of saying the right thing, but their heart isn't in it. They act like they're worshipping Me, but they don't mean it. They just use Me as a cover for teaching whatever suits their fancy." — Matthew 15:3-9 MSG,

I was forced to rethink most of what I believed. I had heard and preached many sermons about the 10 Commandments as rules for good relationships. But, somehow that had not helped me to be better in relationship to others. I started paying attention to how my motives either helped or hindered relationship. **When I truly love another person, my actions will be in compliance with God's laws as well.**

Many Christians who have been extremely devoted to their convictions are relationally mean and destructive. God **is** Love. His love alone solves broken relationships. His love enables us to love even those who have treated us abusively.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 19: Love God More Than Your Most Significant Other

Most of us pursue God avidly in a very conscious and purposeful way. Unfortunately, in so doing, we are limiting God by our preconceived notions of what we believe Him to be and think He want us to be doing. This is truly immature. If you look at your relationship with your spouse or your most significant other, you will realize that a lot of your actions or attitudes toward that individual are way below the conscious level. You just do them as a matter of course, as a matter of affection, as a matter of kindness to them in ways that you don't even think about.

But with God, you may tend to put Him always in this conscious mode where you are doing this and that for Him. If you approached your most significant others with that same attitude and that same way of doing things, your relationships would deteriorate and end up broken. God wants a relationship with you wherein you are so fully in love with Him, energized by Him and delighted to be in His presence that you don't even think about the things that you're doing for Him. You simply do what you have come to know that He desires.

Your actions are a by-product of your feelings for others. “Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God is love—so you can’t know him if you don’t love. ... This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God.” — 1 John 4:8-10 MSG

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 20: Pray for What God Wants, Not Your Own Sympathy

Praying is most often different from praying in the will of God. Even when we end our prayers with “... if the Lord wills” does not make our prayers **in His will**. Most prayers are stimulated by our misery or our own desire to help others or to be somehow useful to God. Such prayers have associated with them, a personal sympathy. Even if I am praying for something good to happen in another’s life, that may not be God’s **perfect** will in the situation.

Most of the time, what God wants in the circumstance is not at all what we are praying for. The primary reason for this is that most people are not intimate enough with God to really know what God wants. Most prayers are selfish in that they satisfy **our human** sympathies. The key to praying **in the will of God** is to know for certain what that is.

If you desire to offer up effective prayers, you must become intimate with Him. When I am intimate with another (even God), I truly know what he or she desires and am consumed with pleasing them. If God’s purpose in bringing cancer into the middle of my morass is to draw someone to His love, then I will pray that the family and friends of the one inflicted, will come closer to God. If the martyrs of the faith had been **praying for humanly good outcomes, they would not have sacrificed themselves!**

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 21: Dutiful Work or Spontaneous Expression of Affection

My service for God is not service in the usual sense. It is not service based on an obligation or a duty or a payback. My service is simply the natural expression of my affection. When I pondered my relationships, my truest friends, my dearest relatives, I realized in retrospect that nearly everything I have done for them for their sake has been expressed out of love for them and a desire to bring them pleasure. Those are the things for which I will be remembered fondly and the things which have encouraged and enlightened them and made their lives more pleasant.

God created us specifically so that He might express Himself in myriad ways. God is so, so large and so in charge. He doesn't need us for service and He doesn't want to support **our projects or ministries**. He does not need us. He desires us. And when we fall in love with Him and allow His life to be expressed through our beings, then He receives great pleasure and great glory.

So when you're thinking about doing some service thing **for** God, or looking for some specific calling of ministry **for** God, stop right there, go no further. Instead, just look into the eyes of an adoring God. Simply love Him back. Just love on Him until you are more satisfied with His love than with any lover you've ever experienced physically. It is only passionate love for God that pleases him and brings Him glory.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 22: But I Want My Work for God to Be Noticed

For years, I sought to be significant for the kingdom of God. I looked to find a calling from God that I needed to pursue and do something magnificent for Him. I was generally looking for ways to serve God that were meaningful and fruitful and large. Rarely, if ever, did I seek to find anything to do for God that was completely insignificant or that no one would ever notice.

One day, I challenged one of my men when we left the breakfast table with these words, “Sir, if you worked diligently on a project for God and it had all sorts of fruitfulness and success and someone else took credit for all that you had done, would you be okay with that?” He quickly replied, “Absolutely not.” This would be what I would expect of most sincere Christians.

Yet Jesus’ way was not to draw attention to Himself at all. When we want to get credit or thanks or applause for anything we do for God, we are not really doing it **for** God. We are doing it for ourselves while claiming to be doing it for Him. We are selfishly promoting ourselves rather than Him and His kingdom. Unless and until our gifts of service are purely for the love we have for God, they do not possess the quality of those acts of Christ Himself. His were born out of intimacy with His Father.

A life of consistent love, joy and peace in the midst of even our worst and darkest circumstances simply cannot be attained without a selfless love for God’s people and enormous love for Him.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 23: Very Good Deeds Can Be the Enemy of the Soul

An enemy of the soul can be something which appears to be extremely good. According to our way to measure, we look at religious activities in our church, our mission work and so forth as things that would please God. We attempt religiously and fervently to please God by engaging in these activities. But in many cases that's not what God desires of us. Busyness **for** God often comes between us and true intimacy **with** God. Intimacy is a state of being wherein I know my lover so completely, that I no longer need for them to state what they desire.

Our lives should be completely and wholly devoted to developing an intimacy with God that is like a honeymoon or a deep affection for one extremely dear to us. Once we achieve intimacy and come to the place of total surrender to the desires of God, then, and only then, are our activities in the likeness of Jesus. Jesus was walk-about ministering to people on earth as He did for them what God desired.

An important thing to remember is even Jesus Christ Himself did not act of His own desire. He did not act out of His own sympathies. He did not act out of His own intelligence or comprehensions. Jesus did not do anything in order to draw attention to Himself or to be applauded. Jesus consistently and frequently conferred with His Father. We can only **do** the will of God, when we **know** what it is. As Jesus put it, "I have come to do the will of My Father."

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 24: Mercy Without Justice Would Make the Cross Abusive

It is pretty common for us to take forgiveness of sins lightly. This seems to run rampant in our society. A prevailing thought is that everyone will receive forgiveness from a loving God in the end. Yet if there is no real consequence for sin there is no impetus to behave in any civilized manner.

This notion couldn't be farther from the truth. God's character and nature is that He must provide justice for everyone. Even love demands justice. Justice for victims requires punishment for the predatory behavior of the villain.

Fortunately for us, God provided a means of payment for our sins, through which we could receive a full pardon while His justice is also satisfied. Jesus Christ was the manifestation of God in the flesh. He lived a life that was absolutely sinless and perfect. And God chose to let Jesus suffer our punishment. Jesus was condemned to death and slain by the religious leaders of God's own people. And to show how great the grace of God is, in his dying breath Jesus uttered these words regarding the people who murdered Him, "Father, forgive them because they do not know what they are doing."

So when you think of your forgiveness, remember that you are so cherished that God gave Himself fully to pay for your wrong doing. He did this by His death. It was extremely painful, bloody and humiliating. Naked, raised on a cross in shame, He suffocated to death.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 25: Humiliation Is Not Humility

Humility is elusive for two reasons. One is that we have not properly defined the term. And two is that we assume that when we are humiliated we have been made humble. Actually when we are humiliated, we are proven to be proud. For it is our pride which causes us to seek acceptance, respect and favor from others. We are humiliated because we have not received any of these three affirmations.

It is also noteworthy that we set ourselves up for humiliation any time we attempt to gain a good reputation with any other human beings. All the others are at the same time seeking the same thing from us. Yet, we are generally so busy trying to gain the favor of others that we fail to favor them. So, a pursuit of affirmation (acceptance, respect and favor) from God, and Him alone, would be the pursuit of humility. And, to be sure, no matter how great our accomplishment or good our intentions may be, many people will still hold us in contempt rather than favor.

When we define humility as having only the concern as to God's affirmation of us, then and only then can we attain it. When I become completely devoid of any interest in my reputation before men and satisfied in God's opinion alone, humility becomes my lot.

Examine your life. Consider your lifestyle. Look at your finest points of service for others in your daily experience. Ask yourself, "Am I looking for affirmation? Am I hoping someone notices the valuable contributions I made?" Or are you satisfied by having done something that pleases God and Him alone? When everything you do or say is only to please God, then and only then is your motive pure.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 26: Up Close and Personal with God

How can we become intimate with God? For that matter, how can we become intimate with anyone? All relationships hinge on this one thing, proximity. And not necessarily proximity in space. It is ever, only and always proximity in spirit that brings two persons into intimate relationship. This is not about agreement on any or all points of view. This is about an unconditional affection of one spirit for another.

It is no wonder that the Bible stated, “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” Yet for many of us, God is quite distant. But consider this. Since God gave you life and breath in the first place, it only makes sense that He wants to be near you, actually with you. We see this in our families as well. So, if there is any distance between you and God, it is because you have chosen to keep that distance. So, what’s the solution?

The only way for us to draw near to God is to spend time with him, to get to know him, to know his heart, to know his ways. You may choose to spend time with God in a reserved place at a specific time of day. However, if that is the only time you consider His presence with you, intimacy will not occur. Just as with your significant others on earth, your intimacy with God is directly related to the amount of spontaneous thought you have about Him through all the moments of your day.

Although our days are full of busy, we frequently think of our love for our significant others. Let God have this same consideration and your life will explode with affection and desire for more of Him.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 27: Pushing the Clouds Away

It is interesting that when we daydream (or night dream) about the ones we love, we seldom get distracted by other thoughts. Yet when we think about God, we are often plagued by distractions of all kinds. Our focus drifts or jerks from one place to another. Suddenly we realize that we have lost our focus on God and we pull ourselves back to thoughts of Him. In order for our focus on God to be as steady as that for our earthly loves, we may need to practice concentration.

It is essential that when you get into your place of quietness before God, you must **be still**, you must **listen**. You must **be teachable**. You must **wait** for the Holy spirit to speak. Most of the time. In our quiet time, we reach for the Bible, we read intently and ponder what God wants us to understand from that passage. Or we go to prayer and we're praying a list of prayers for a list of people in the list of circumstances, which becomes nothing more than a constant running of our own mouths before God or running our own minds before God. Mostly we beg Him to remove all discomfort and distress.

Next time you enter into your prayer closet, be still and wait and be still and wait, push the clouds of distraction away and be still and wait. Wait until the spirit of God reveals what He wants you to draw from what you just read or from your own heart and mind that you've memorized or know well from times before. As you practice this, you will discover that the wandering and wool gathering become less and less until they no longer exist!

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 28: The Good News and the Bad News

Most people consider evil to be a force beyond our control and which must be overcome by good. And to be sure it would be wonderful if evil could be eliminated entirely. Yet we cannot overcome any bad thing if we are operating in the wrong place. Consider this. Surgical removal of your healthy kidney would not keep my failing kidney from killing me. The guilty (failing) organ must be removed from the vessel in which it is contained.

The truth about evil is that it is not **out there** somewhere working against me. It is **inside me**. Evil is any conflict between two individuals or groups. The source of the conflict (evil) is forcing another against their will. Notice the E V I L is L I V E spelled backward. And in a sense, evil is living backward. The more we are willing to accept each other “as-is” without any changes the greater our peace. Additionally, since we are selfish by nature, it is impossible for us to achieve this peace without the help of the Spirit of God within us.

The good news is that God offers His love and relationship (Spirit) to everyone. The bad news is that most refuse to accept His offer of relationship and remain alone in the world and estranged from God. So when God comes courting, just say, “Yes.” You can rest assured that He will be the most faithful of anyone with whom you will ever share relationship! His love for you will be deeper and stronger than anyone else in the universe. He is and will always be the *perfect* Father, Mother, Sister, Brother, Friend and Mate for you.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

“Evil is not an external force. Evil is to live backward.”

{ E V I L - L I V E }

“Evil is conflict between any two relational beings which harms one or the other.” — J.H. Alan

VOLUME TWO

Day 29: What We Value Most

In an eighth grade public school classroom a short time ago a student asked me if I could tell him something about life that would be useful after he had finished his education. It seemed to be a question beyond his age. So I asked the entire class if they wanted to hear what I would say. A resounding ‘yes’ came from the 30 students in cacophony. I believe God must have inspired this profound answer with only five minutes left.

I asked the class, “What one thing in life do you want to have more than anything else. Give me a single word.” The clamorous response was unintelligible. So I asked each one individually. Twenty seven out of thirty responded with ‘love’, ‘family’, ‘friends’, ‘relationship’ and so forth. Only three responded with either fortune or fame. I suggested that those three wanted riches and fame so that they could buy friends. So what we all want most is to be accepted by others just as we are, with no changes.

I further explained that if we will give to others the **unconditional acceptance** which we ourselves desire, we will have fewer arguments and likely no wars. I later realized that this is the **key to the golden rule**, “Do unto others as you would have them do to you.”

Relationship treasurers, whether we admit it or not, are the most valuable of all treasures. As opposed to material things and heroes which do not respond to our affections, relationships always produce a return on investment. The more you love, the more you are loved. Another way to view this journey to intimacy is to *live loved and live loving*. “He who would have friends must show himself friendly.” And to be sure, he or she who would be loved, must be loving toward others. It is a simple matter planting and harvesting what we sew.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 30: The Reason to Believe

Most Christians suffer much guilt, shame and fear despite the fact that we have been saved by grace. It is all too common for Christians to believe that they are constantly sinning and needing to confess their sins in order to be **clean** before God. Unfortunately this is a gross contradiction to our claims to be saved by grace. Our **cleanness** is due only to our faith in the Son of God and His personal substitution of penalty on our behalf.

The first chapter of 1 John is a statement of how we can know that we are born again. The ninth verse is unfortunately often taught to mean that we must continually confess our most recent sins in order to be clean. That presupposes that we must help Jesus with our cleanness. What an affront to His excruciating and humiliating death naked on a cross! **Jesus either paid it all or He paid for nothing.** *Your* cleanness is not *yours*, ever! It is His cleanness given to you!

Christ's payment for our sin, (the separation from God—death) and His subsequent resurrection to a new life captivated the hearts of the first believers. This irrefutable evidence of **God's unconditional love and receiving it by faith provided complete release and freedom from guilt, shame and fear.** So compelling was this freedom, that thousands of Christians were willing to face martyrdom for their faith in Christ. The first Christians not only fell in love with God, but also persisted in the journey, abandoned to intimacy with God. They lived and died knowing that Christ had risen from the dead and they had risen with Him. "If ye then be risen with Christ." That word, *if*, is not an if of uncertainty. The intent of the word is "*since* you are then risen with Christ." Paul declared in Romans 6:4, Ephesians 2:6-7 and elsewhere that Christ's resurrection applied to every believer as well.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME TWO

Day 31: God Is Three and God Is One

Some people have difficulty with the concept of the Trinity. Another way to express this is a Tri-Unity. However, it is not essential at all to believe in what some theologians agree is God in a Trinity. The important thing is to realize the equality in spirit of the three (or maybe two) personas of God. God is referred to as the Father. God has also begotten, or formed out of Himself, what scripture refers to as the Son. Yet even though they are two separate beings, they have the same essence (Spirit).

Some theologians refer to the Holy Spirit as a third and separate being which also possesses every trait of Godness. Again, this is not a necessary belief in the essentials of salvation. What makes two persons one in Holy Matrimony is a unity of spirit and purpose. Likewise, the Spirit of the Father and the Son must be in unity of purpose and desire.

Although the partners in a human marriage have separate and distinct functions and roles within the relationship, unity of purpose is essential to a harmonious experience of relationship. So regardless of whether you believe the God of the Bible is a Trinity or three completely separate beings, they all have the same purpose and desire. The Holy Spirit definitely exists. It is the presence of the Holy Spirit within the Christ-In that enables Christ-likeness to become a reality in them. It is the Holy Spirit within us that maintains the relationship between us and God.

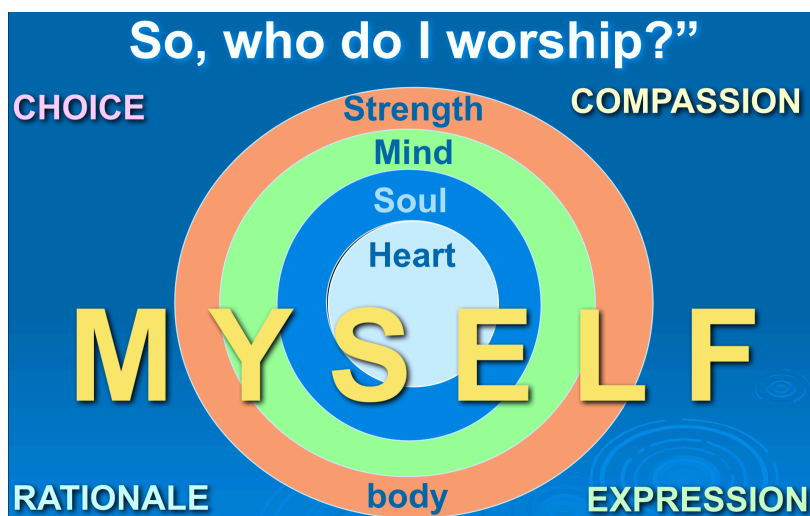
My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Why do it right,
when you can do it fast?
— the facade brothers

Do you have your daily devotions as hurriedly as the rest of your daily duties? Why not do it slow, relaxed and deep? **Think about it!**



The most natural thing for us to do is to worship ourselves. Yet, until we actually worship someone else, we cannot say that we have fallen in love with them. The same is true with God. We simply cannot say that we love Him while we continue to do everything to please ourselves. The most amazing thing is that when we love someone else more than ourself, we have a greater capacity to love ourself as well. Love is the one thing that, when we give it away to others, also grows larger within ourself.

VOLUME THREE

Day 1: How You Do Everything

It is likely that as you read the articles in this daily devotional book that you are judging both the content and the author. And if this is true for you, it is also very likely that you do this with everything else you read. It is quite simply the nature of human nature. How you do anything is how you do everything.

How you judge me is how you judge others. How you judge me is how you judge your parents, children, significant others and all others. How you do it is how you do it. There is no escape. And there is no need for escape. Unless, of course, you are not satisfied with how your judgmental nature makes you or others feel.

The good news is this. How you do any thing and every thing is determined by choice. It is your choices about each encounter you have with any other human beings. And since you chose the manner in which you operate now, you can change your choices as to how you will operate in the future.

Judgment comes in two varieties. One is criticism. The other is discernment. While I am obsessed with criticism, I am essentially rejecting the other person or their point of view. When I am discerning I leave myself open to the possibilities that I might learn something new and valuable from them.

Wisdom would dictate that the latter form of judgment will give me the best possible outcomes in every encounter in life. Therefore, if I would be my best self, it behooves me to change my choices to be discerning rather than critical. The more I can accept anyone else, the more I myself will be accepted. And acceptance is the key to life, love and the pursuit of happiness.

Find scriptures to confirm the truth.

Consider how your experiences align with these words.

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 2: Contemplation as Opposed to Judgment

It seems somewhat ludicrous to have to build a case for contemplation. We are made in an image that is the very essence of love (the highest emotion). Everything we do in life is for the purpose of developing relationships. Yet, we live in such shallow ones that we are often horribly disappointed in others whose actions do not meet our expectations. Yet, our expectations are fundamentally unsound as they are based on incomplete information. This is largely true in that we come to conclusions about the trustworthiness of others based solely upon intellectual analysis or referrals of others.

Contemplation is a key element required in knowing the heart (motives) of others. And it is the motives of others that determine their trustworthiness. Contemplation by its definition and practice actually enables one to feel the heart and soul of another. Without this practice, we leave ourselves open to making decisions (choices) which are based on insufficient information. This leads to all sorts of undesirable or possibly even awful ends.

When we approach the moment (encounter) with a preconceived disposition of rejection, we limit the possibilities. However, discernment is essential and only attainable through contemplation with an open mind. When Jesus said in Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge.” He was encouraging mutual acceptance as the leading strategy for relationship building and intimate knowledge of one another in order to determine the level of mutual trust which might be possible.

Just because you are right does not imply that the other person is wrong and vice versa. Leave room for other points of view while seeking a common motive of love and acceptance.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 3: 'Yes' as Opposed to 'No'

"I think, therefore I am." or "We are what we think." statements leave us with less than optimal experiences of life. To some degree, however, this is actually true because we have made it so. Yet, God refuses to be known by the intellect. God can only be known by the heart. He only allows Himself to be known in relationship.

This is also true of every human being. Relationship is not an intellectual pursuit. Relationship is a matter of the heart alone. The connection which makes mankind stand out as uniquely different from all other living beings is the ability to establish and maintain relationship with each other. And one solid proof of it is this. I can be as aware of and connected with a relative who is far away as I can with one who is standing in front of me.

Uses and abuses of one another come by way of thinking while not emoting. True relationship occurs when and only when genuine affection for another stimulates an other preferring desire for them. The more I allow myself to embrace another (any other) or to say 'Yes' to them in relationship, the more relationships I will have.

When you start with the 'No' of judgment and personal rejection it is very hard to get back to 'Yes.' And, frankly, you will never be a loving person. When you stop judging and start approaching the moments of encounter with acceptance of the other person, you have a chance of experiencing love for them. The mind is a judgment machine. The heart is the only organ with which we can love.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 4: Praying Without Words (Contemplative Prayer)

God's therapy for the emotional morass of the human soul is contemplation. Most of the things which trouble us are things that turn out to be unimportant in the final round. When we offer word prayers pleading for release from the turmoil, we often miss the point of praying altogether. Prayer is a time to face the truth about ourselves, the wild beasts of our lives as it were. Prayer is a time to face the humiliation of who we truly are as opposed to who we fantasize ourselves to be.

When we come to the Lord in a speechless manner and humble posture, He can then reveal both the problems with the distemper of our soul and the solution to those problems. Most of them are simply solved by an acquiescence to the purpose of God in them. In contemplation, we silently ponder the wonder and purpose of God in our current situation. We begin to feel His presence and know why He has put us through what is happening to us in the present moment. And our lack of silence is the only thing that has prevented us from experiencing His healing therapy before.

It is no wonder that we have resisted the silence and the humiliation. Whenever we have gotten close to honesty in the past, we have been shocked at the negative, rebelliousness within us. And we shut down so as to stop the clamor of the voices within us. Yet, if we will persist in silence, enduring the shame, we will find the revelation necessary to set us free from all guilt, shame and fear. We will experience the peace which comes from total surrender and absolute trust of our Father's love. Then we can embrace with anticipation every experience and circumstance in our lives. God uses all of the to bring us to maturity in relationship.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 5: Negative Emotion Triples

“For some reason we get a lot of emotional energy from negative emotions. When we can create a story line from someone’s offense toward us and weave it into a condemnation of them, the negative emotion **triples**. Mostly we see each other with clouded vision and colored glasses. Unless and until we develop different eyes to see each other, we will continue to trash each other emotionally.” — Richard Rohr

Cain murdered his brother because he was jealous of God’s approval of Abel’s sacrifice and rejection of his own. Confronted by God for his crime, Cain begged God to protect him from retribution of others who would take his life in return. Amazingly God placed a mark on Cain which was discernible in a completely illiterate society. The Mark of Cain revealed that anyone who hurt Cain would receive **seven times that hurt** from God Himself. Genesis 4:15. So, in essence, the **emotion actually is multiplied seven fold!**

You have likely experienced road rage or line rage (*anger when someone cuts in line ahead of you*). Your anger is definitely harmful to you, both emotionally or physically. Emotional distress causes all sorts of medical maladies. So, to be honest, even if you don’t express your anger, it is still harmful to you!

There is a terrific alternative. Instead of seething in anger, try to imagine a good reason for their behavior. Remember that you have committed similar crimes. Instead of attacking them, pray for their safety, healing or blessing. This will eliminate your anger and replace it with affection for them. Make every offense against you an opportunity to bring love, blessing and peace to those who offend you.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 6: Consider Your Valuables

There are many things in life that are valuable to you. **Make a list** of everything you consider valuable. Then **create a second list of eternal things** (those which can go with you when you die). **STOP!** Make the list **before** you read on!

You will likely notice that the primary difference between the lists is that the eternal valuables are relationships, things of the spirit. Everything else, health, wealth and physical pleasures will cease upon one's death. Notice also that only relationships cannot be stolen or corrupted by thieves and villains.

Think of it like your relatives and the affections you have for them even while they are hundreds or thousands of miles away. We may actually include people in our temporary list, but when they pass into eternity they then move to the eternal list. Notice also that most of the items in your temporal list are things we can physically handle. Notice that the eternal valuables can be on both lists!

The message of Jesus was all about including as many as possible in our list of valuable persons. The whole story of the Bible is relationship and how to attain it. Jesus said, "Store up treasures in heaven where they cannot be corrupted or stolen." Wholesome relationships are the only thing that can be stored for eternity. Yet, we often destroy the very thing we want most by being critical and negative toward those we hold dear.

The quest before us is to develop an even greater affection for God than for our most significant other on earth. It is only, ever the love of God in us that can be other-caring enough to create and maintain loving attitudes toward others. The best news is that God can be our greatest treasure in life and after death! If you will simply move God into the Top 10 of your Passion Hits List, He will do the rest!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 7: God Is Not Like Santa Claus

Our minds are often informed by well-meaning but misguided people. Among these are our parents. Other things may be as subtle as the fairy tales we tell our children. A predominant one is told in various forms all over the globe. It is the tale of Santa Claus (St. Nicolas) who brings ‘good’ children presents every year.

On the surface and with only a casual glance we might conclude that the tale is harmless but also useful. Reinforced by the song, “Santa Claus Is Coming to Town,” many children learn to fear that misbehaving will cause them to lose some or all of the presents that Santa might bring them at Christmas.

“Oh, you better watch out. You better not cry. You better not shout, I’m telling you why. Santa Claus is coming to town!” He sees you when you’re sleeping. He knows when you’re awake. He knows if you’ve been bad or good. So be good for goodness sake.” These words teach us that we must behave well or we will suffer. And often we treat each other and our children in this manner. We may even subconsciously hope to manage our children’s behaviors by such tales and songs.

The great tragedy of this is that it also affects how most of us perceive God. We begin to believe that God, not unlike Santa, will give us only dirty rocks if we behave badly. We also tend to believe that He is watching constantly to catch us in wrong doing. And we begin to fear Him. And, although it may be subconscious, this causes us to stay at a ‘safe’ distance from God.

So what is widely believed to be a harmless tradition, could actually drive a wedge between God and the very children He wants to heap goodness and love upon. To be sure, God does see all and know all. But God is the opposite of Santa. He not only **does not** stand over us waiting to strike us, but rather **struck His very own Son** in His crucifixion so He did not have to strike us. God wants us not to fear Him. He wants always to embrace us with His love!

Stop casting God in the image of Santa! See God for the most loving, tender, caring Father He is! Get up close and personal.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 8: Behavior Based Value

We often assess or determine a person's value based on their performance. Many would say that your measure of worth is the sum of your good behaviors minus your bad behaviors. Worse yet, you may live a life full of incredibly good things and commit one very bad deed and your value is associated only with the one bad thing you have done! How narrow minded! How mean! How negative! How ludicrous! How preposterous!

Whether you associate value with good behaviors or the absence of bad behaviors, this measure is faulty for still another very significant reason. Since every human being not only has the potential to behave badly, all human beings commit bad deeds from time to time. (Bad is when it is selfish to the harm of another.) So, if the measure of value of a person is behavior, no one has value. And if one big, bad deed negates all of the good, the quest for good behavior is futile at best and more likely bordering on insanity.

While we are busy condemning people for wrongful behavior, we ourselves are guilty of the same things. While we are busy trying to manage others' behaviors, our own judgment, condemns us if we will but look in the mirror. We are very quick to ask the courts for the maximum penalty for a crime committed against our children. Yet we beg for mercy if the villain is our own relative.

Think about this. If you truly love someone, you want to overlook their faults. If you truly love someone, you want to protect them from physical and emotional harm. If you truly love someone, you place high value on them. So, regardless of what we say about behavior-based value, the truth is that we actually determine another's value to us by how we treat them, not by how they treat us!

This is the essence of God's love. He places high value on every one of His children! That includes you! Believe it! Let God's love overwhelm you. This, and only this, will improve your behaviors toward others.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

**“The strongest deterrent
to *wrong-full* behavior
is a genuine affection
for the one I might *wrong*.”**

— J. H. Alan

VOLUME THREE

Day 9: Genuine Affection

As Christians we are very different from those who are not. We are to be so completely different that everyone notices that we are. And as Jesus put it, “By this will everyone know that you are My disciples, that you have love for one another.” So the distinction of Christianity is unconditional love for each other. That means that people know that we actually have affection for them and are not just going through the motions trying to look like we care. We have **e**-motions not just motions toward them.

Every man, woman and child alive today wants to be loved by someone. Christians should be the most loving people on earth. As a matter of fact, if we were, our churches would be bursting at the seams. The one earthly treasure which hinders us the most is the strong desire for a good reputation among men (applause). Another lesser treasure here is comfort and pleasure (indulgence). The third significant thing that is valuable to us here is to be worshipped (in control of our own personal kingdom and respected by others) and to tell others how they should behave. It is ever, only and always deep affection for God that causes one to delight in Him and those who are in Him, regardless of their behaviors.

I believe that my **treasures in heaven** are relationships with those whom I loved enough to introduce to a personal relationship with God for themselves. Seeing them again will be my greatest joy. (And, just so you know, no one lives in a mansion in heaven. The correct term is efficiency apartment.) Simply follow God's revelation. Live for the soul, developing relationships that last into eternity, and let the love of God flow so strongly through you that you are asked why you are so full of grace and peace in all circumstances.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 10: Superimposing Christianity on our Culture

Christians, although we should know better, consistently try to superimpose our standards onto those who do not share our beliefs. The church often tries to get non-believers to do what we fail to do ourselves. Actually the demands of the church are impossible to achieve. Moral purity is beyond the grasp of the natural man or even the Christian who is not deeply intimate with God. We are often preaching sermons, writing articles, and singing hymns, trying to equate our country and our culture with Christianity. It cannot be done.

The Christian Church is something that is supposed to be set apart. It is not the color of our skin, our ethnicity or our social standing that matters. The Christian Church is a new creation born of the Holy Spirit, out of the suffering of Christ. It is another culture altogether. It is a culture where loving others more than ourselves is the norm. We are to be different from the natural man.

We are to be other-caring rather than self-indulging, because we are risen with Christ. That is, we are to have the other-preferring nature of God as opposed to the self-preferring nature with which we were born. In order to achieve this you must “Seek those things that are above and set your will (heart), emotions (soul) and thoughts (mind) on the things that are above where Christ sits on the right hand of God.”

Consider every altercation in your experience with others and look for the self-preferring nature in them. You will find that all of them occur because of this self preference in those matters. Further, most altercations are based only on differences of opinion.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 11: Christian Tradition

A major problem with our churches is that we get so engrossed in the mundane, routine, traditional format, that God and the people get very little personal time together. We meet and greet on the way in and the way out of the building. Wouldn't it be refreshing if church were more like a family gathering at home on a holiday, where we were spontaneously engaged with one another, and God had a chair at the table and was enjoying the meal and conversation with us as though He were there in person?

Certain imperatives are set before us because Christ is risen. The scriptures say, "seek and set your affections on things above and cease to engage in selfish pursuits." Forgive everybody who has offended you as Jesus forgave those who nailed Him on the cross. Abandon yourself to Him by dedicating your time to Him. Time is, after all is said and done, the only currency of genuine affection. Most of us give God only the *left-overs* of our time. If Jesus Christ had given us only His spare time, we would all be forever lost.

We can, if we desire to see things as God sees them, give Him our attentions and affections at all times. We can include Him in our thoughts no matter what we are doing. But it takes practice to break our old habits of ignoring Him in order to develop new ones that keep Him constantly in our thoughts. Imagine as well if our relationships with those who meet us in church were as deeply affectionate as our family gatherings on holidays. Imagine inviting different ones over for after church dinner frequently.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 12: The Exchanged Life { mind - spirit - emotion }

For conscience' sake we tend to separate our experiences into two separate categories. Some things to us are spiritual and others are secular. Things that relate to church, God, religion, and so forth are considered our spiritual lives. All other necessary pursuits are treated as unspiritual or secular. This enables us to disconnect our spiritual principles from most of our life experiences. It also helps us justify emotional destructiveness. Unfortunately this also tends to support hypocrisy in all of us. It also enables us, somehow in good conscience, to operate selfishly while perceiving ourselves as selfless and maybe even generous people. It is mostly our rationale that resists God's purposes for our lives.

Living abandoned to intimacy with God, or anyone else, precludes a divided life. To God everything is spiritual. And in reality, that is true for every man. Craving to be loved, respected, indulged and served are deeply spiritual stimuli. "God is a Spirit and those who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Therefore it is only what is spiritual that can be an offering to God. And our spirit is always actively involved in everything we do. It is our spirit that makes every decision we face.

As Christians, we can turn some of the most mundane jobs into wonderful spiritual events. By including God in our awareness while making every choice in our day, we can make every moment a spiritual encounter. And our emotions follow these new choices.

Brother Lawrence, was just a kitchen worker in the monastery where he lived. He washed the dishes for the glory of God. When he was through with his humble work, he would fall down, flat on the floor and worship God. Whatever he was told to do, he did it for the glory of God. He testified, "I am so resigned that I would not take up a straw from the ground against His order or from any motive but that of pure love for Him." He was always happy in the presence of God!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 13: Knowing What to Expect

Every morning as I get up from my bed, I move about expecting God to bless my day and guide me through it. Every time I'm traveling, I expect Him to keep me safe. If He wants to take me to heaven more than He wants me on earth, I will not get home. There is no need to pray for God's protection. I already have it. When God is finished with me here, He will take me to Himself. In the meantime, I will thank Him day in and day out for everything.

Don't be distracted from your love of God by anything that promotes your prosperity, popularity or power. Remain constantly aware of the Presence of God within you. By faith God sanctifies us, that is, He declared us to be holy and sets us apart. We must obviously do our jobs, but if we do them *with* God, they are no longer mundane. They become opportunities to build relationships with each other and spread the love of God all around us!

Your faith is strengthened by assurance. And here is the cure of all cures. **Your life is hid with Christ in God.** Nothing can harm you unless it is God's will. No one can kill you, unless it is God's appointed time for your departure from this life. No malady or adversity should cause you to complain. When you see every difficult person or trying circumstance as a learning lab or endurance training, you will rejoice instead of grouse. The more you love God the more you will trust Him and want to be with Him and do things that please Him. The only way to attract any one to the Kingdom of God is to compel them with the unconditional love of God. And His love is delivered by the presence of His Holy Spirit within you. Let His love radiate!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 14: Intimacy Endures All Adversity

David was known as a man after God's own heart. He seemed to have few lapses in his focus on God. Yet his life was filled with trouble, heartache and relational carnage.

It is recorded in the story of Job that **Job** prayed daily for himself and his family. He was as true as true can be with respect to his allegiance to God. Yet, in one fell swoop, Job lost all of his children and grandchildren. Everything they had was reduced to rubble. Job was even inflicted with extreme medical maladies.

Another faithful man, **Joseph**, had tremendous faith and intimacy with God, but suffered incredible injustice at the hands of his own brothers. So just because one finds God to be very dear to himself, does not mean that life will be any easier than it is for an irreligious man. In fact, there is significant evidence that life is often more difficult for God's best servants than for most others.

Many believers through the ages from Jesus until now had a similar yet uncommonly deep affection for God. To be sure, their source of love and ours is the same rushing river of God. Anything positive in relationship flowing from us is simply the overflowing of our banks by the rising river of God's love. Left to ourselves our human nature will selfishly extract love from others rather than to lavish it upon them. To become channels of God's love to others is the very purpose for which we were apprehended (stopped in our tracks) by God. Paul stated in Philippians 2:13, "... but I follow after so that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Jesus Christ."

Tragically, many churches teach faith in Jesus, but little more. Relationships will ultimately fail unless the parties continue in hot pursuit of their mutual desire for each other. The primary objective for us and the purpose of God in creation is to develop an up close and personal relationship with Him.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 15: My Obedience to God Will Upset Others

Our most significant other often calls on us to do things that will inconvenience or distress others we love. Yet because we hold them as the **most** dear to us, we will let others be aggravated rather than disappointing our dearest. It is indeed our actions that demonstrate our true affections. We tend to stand up for, defend and otherwise support those we love. Yet, many times we cannot please every one at the same time.

When we say we love God the most but our actions betray us in that regard, it is time to either draw closer to God or at least stop saying that He is our dearest love. Obviously, we must sometimes disappoint some in order to accommodate others. The important thing to recognize in all this is that every decision is a testimony as to who or what is of greatest value to us.

God never forces us to do His bidding over others'. He simply offers us the opportunity to be up close and personal enough with Him to be and receive enormous blessing. God's will is not a matter of His plan A and B or His perfect and permissive will. God's purposes will not be thwarted by either you or me. If I am not willing to be used in the moment to accomplish His purposes, He will simply dispatch another to get it done.

You are likely aware of this as well. In every situation when God offers you an opportunity to be of service to Him, there will be those who will be unhappy if you change your plans on the spot in order to do what He has asked. We always have the option to diffuse the anger of those in our presence but in so doing we will create sorrow for our Lord. His sorrow is that we love others more than Him.

The first of the 10 Commandments is "You shall have no other gods before Me!" God knows we have many others whom we worship (place great value on). Our quest is to make Him first in all things. When we inconvenience others, rest assured, "God will use their aggravation in order to mature their relationship with Him as well!" Simply obey and leave all the consequences to Him.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 16: Love Is Pleasing

We have all been in love at some time in our lives. And those of us who have been madly in love with another person, know what it means to be madly in love. We cannot adequately describe the feeling with words. Nonetheless, we know it when we feel it. When you are overwhelmed with that kind of love, you will do anything your lover desires. And usually, when you know what they desire, you are already trying to fulfill their desire before they even ask.

Ultimately, we come to be able to finish one another's sentences. Many times we are already thinking a thought which they express, before they say it. And, so it goes. When you love someone deeply, you always want to please them. And the love story of the Bible is to show us how intimacy with God is the primary objective and romancing Him is essential.

One of the most appealing aspects of love, is that it comes without waring and without the baggage of manipulation or coercion. It is purely and simply an unadulterated, deep affection for another that creates an other-preferring desire for them. True love then is opposite of our natural inclinations to put ourselves before others.

One demonstration of this is the parent saving their child's life while sacrificing their own life in the process. The greatest demonstration of this on the landscape of God's creation of the universe in general and mankind specifically is sacrificing Himself, in the person of Jesus Christ. He did not sacrifice Himself to be a hero. He gave Himself for us because of His genuine and enormous love for us.

As opposed to the glory bestowed on the heroic individual, there was nothing but shame and disgrace heaped upon the Son of God. Yet God loves us so much, He allowed His only Begotten Son, to become a part of mankind and then be murdered by us in the most inhumane of all human punishments. When this love becomes posited within us, in the person of the Holy Spirit, we too can endure atrocities with joy at the hands of others who reject His love flowing through us.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 17: Emotion, Not Thought

Christianity differs from all other religions in that its central theme is **personal relationship with God** rather than adherence to religious creeds and confessions. Religion can be simply a thinking and doing process. Religion does not require, nor encourage, relationship with one's god. It simply requires obedience to creeds. Actually the definition of religion is "bondage to a creed."

Christianity stands alone on several particulars. One of these is the relationship of individuals with their Creator, God. Relationship is not a thinking proposition. It is an emotional proposition. We cannot love with our heads. We can only love with our hearts. The inclusion of human philosophy and science in our religious practice and teaching has caused us to drift as a Christian culture far from the *Christ-In* culture which existed in the wake of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. *Christ-Ins* were overwhelmed by the love of God. That love was the distinguishing factor of their faith in Jesus Christ.

When we fall in love, our spirit connects intimately with another. No amount of intellectual study of my lover will endear me to them. Only a mutual attraction to each other's collective emotional gallery will draw us into a deep desire for each other. And nurturing relationship is only facilitated by consistent pursuit of greater caring for the one we love. As the emotion (love) deepens, the connection strengthens. As the connection strengthens we feel more secure. And as we nurture the love affair, it develops into greater passion for each other and greater selflessness.

One simple test may help you know where your affections lie. If what you are doing has no thought about what benefit there might be in it for you, then your affection is genuine and the action is loving.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 18: Love IS Emotion

Love **is**, after all, an **emotion**. We know the distinct difference between emotion and logic as it is common knowledge that emotional decisions are generally more risky than logical ones. Just as we thrive on emotions, so does God. So He used His rational mind to engineer the universe and us. He did this to facilitate His ultimate purpose, that is to establish a love affair with any who would respond to His overtures toward them. But we cannot have affection for God with our mind. We can only know God in relationship through our emotional connection with Him, and a deeply affectionate one at that.

Many these days say that love is action. However, this statement fails to take into account the myriad random acts of kindness which are done by benefactors who actually hate those toward whom they have acted kindly. You cannot judge any act or word apart from the motive for which it is expressed. The word hypocrisy might come to mind. Kindness can be appreciated even if it is done with an ignoble motive. But kindness cannot be love, if it is not accompanied by the emotion of affection. Many criminals donate large sums of money or valuable resources to charity to cover their crimes or to avoid prosecution. When such donations are done blatantly, we might even call it bribery.

I have observed that most recipients of kindnesses can usually sense the difference between being used as an object of someone's project as opposed to being an object of another's genuine affection. Good deeds do not generate affection in the doer. But genuine affection will automatically produce good deeds toward others.

If you are a generous or kind person, ask yourself if you are this way in order to gain the approval, respect and admiration of those observing you. If not, it is likely that you have genuine affection for those upon whom your generosity rests.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 19: Is Your Love for God a Passionate Love Affair

It seems that generation after generation drifts farther and farther from God. Some of this is purely the tendency of the natural man to cater to his own whims. But tragically, much of the drift is caused by the incorrect doctrines and practices of the *Christian* way. As we make idols out of the scriptures and altars out of Biblical artifacts, we replace the love of God with various forms of self-righteous behaviors which undermine His love.

Beware of your own propensity to *stand on the Bible* making it an idol to be worshipped above all else. This relegates the God of the Bible to a lesser place. And, if in reflection on your life, you discover that the Bible has not produced a lifestyle which closely resembles the unconditional love that Jesus lived, consider the most viable explanation. You have placed more value (worth; worship) on the commands and dictates of the **word** of God than on the enormous **love** of God. The Bible is myriad stories of deeply personal relationships with God.

If you do not believe that God wants your obedience to be born out of love rather than duty, you will not find yourself in love with God. Many have a love for God, but it is diminished for them by feelings of guilt, shame, or fear. God's plan of Salvation for you, was to not only to cover the penalty of evil you commit, but also to remove all feelings of guilt or shame associated with that evil. Because, quite frankly, you cannot be intimate with anyone before whom you cower in either guilt or shame. God not only wants to be up close and personal with you. He also wants to be intimate with you. More so than you are with your most significant other on earth.

If you will abandon yourself to intimacy with God, you will eventually find yourself transformed into a most amazingly loving person. In order to **love like Jesus loves** you must unleash His Presence within you. It is actually **His love, not yours, that compels** others into a love affair with God for themselves.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 20: Experience: Irrefutable Testimony

There is a radical difference between reading about someone or something and experiencing them. We all know facts about many people, but only those with whom we share a close relationship can we thoroughly enjoy! Experience always trumps logical conclusions.

Love itself is extremely illogical, but once smitten by love, one cannot dismiss or forget the euphoric feeling of that love! The deep affection of God can only be revealed to us by the Holy Spirit at the moment we are smitten. Thus a personal deeply intimate relationship with God is infinitely more valuable and satisfying than simply reading the Bible could ever be.

The Bible was written to convey the story of God's love and grace from beginning to end. It was also intended to be a proof-text by which we can test our motives and complicity with the love of God. Vast numbers of people, including the very religious, are missing the best evidence for the existence of God and the person of Jesus Christ. Christianity has at its core a piece of irrefutable evidence. **Feeling is believing.**

When a person embraces Jesus Christ, according to the Biblical, historical record, he will feel the love of God as surely as he feels the love of another human being. Although the feeling cannot be described adequately with words, the feeling is unmistakably one of overwhelming affection. The purpose of God's introduction of His Son, Jesus, into humanity was to walk among us and communicate to us in human terms which we understand.

Once a person experiences the love of God, no amount of external coercion or manipulation can negate that experience or cause them to disbelieve. So if you want to experience the love of God, simply respond to Jesus' expression of love for you. It will produce in you a feeling of overwhelming affection that will never subside.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 21: Standing on the Word of God

"God said it. I believe it. And that settles it." This trite and useless phrase is often spoken in 'so-called' christian circles. Those who say it are extremely sincere in what they believe the Bible says on most issues. Yet much of what they believe the Bible says, comes from hearsay of others, whom they have trusted. Many of us have been misinformed on many issues.

It is senseless to say, "what I believe the Bible says settles it," for two reasons. 1) What you *believe it says* may be very inaccurate. Consider the opposing views of brilliant theologians who agree on very few interpretations. 2) *That settles it* presumes that you have all the right answers already which precludes any further pursuit of revelation (stagnation)! *Whenever the use of scripture denigrates relationship, its purpose is no longer being served and its message is abused by way of misinterpretation. Devoid of Jesus' love, the Bible is not God's Word.* — J. H. Alan

Many have talked about the Bible, studied it avidly and striven to comply with its very literal interpretation, but have missed the point altogether. If the scripture has only made points in your life, but no appreciable difference, it has surely become an idol before which you may bow, but through which you have not become as loving as Jesus was and still is.

The evidence of Biblical truth is human lives transformed into the image of Jesus as originally intended. God did not convey His word to us in order to spark verbal battles or to divide us from each other. The central theme of the Bible is redemption from evil (the selfish nature of mankind and its related carnage).

When you are up-close-and-personal with God; when you love others more than yourself and even show kindness to those who would hurt you, only then are you like Jesus! God **is** love.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 22: Do It Yourself

There are countless self-help resources (books, videos, audio tracks and so forth) to which we can turn which claim to show us *how* to be better Christians. We think it is our duty to become more like God. It is evident that most Christians bury themselves under piles of these resources or myriad religious activities in an attempt to do it themselves. That is, to *get right with God*, by their own efforts.

Yet, the more helps we explore, the farther from intimacy we get. And the quest for **righteousness** can only end in a personal and **deeply affectionate relationship with God**, in Jesus. The ways and means to human intimacy are identical to those needed to develop intimacy with God. It is one thing to be educated by the history of the Biblical records. It is altogether different to establish and nurture a deeply personal relationship with Him. Unfortunately we fail to realize that we are doing the exact same thing as the original couple in the Garden of Eden.

Partaking of the fruit of self-effort in an attempt to be more like God **is evil!** Instead of mutual affection between ourselves and God, we try to become God. The objective is not to become any other person than the one God created us to be. The objective is to deeply love one another by becoming intimate. Intimacy is that state of being where I know fully who you are and accept you “as-is.” To love you is to desire your satisfaction over my own.

Although education is useful and knowledge is power. There is no greater power in the universe than true love for another. To be properly educated in the Holy Bible, the context of loving others more than self must be applied to every story, parable, metaphor, analogy and other language device. Seek transformation, not just information. Love Like Jesus Loves! That’s how God loves! You can’t do it yourself. Simply surrender yourself to Him in every decision you make.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 23: It's Your Fault

To a large degree, nearly everything is your fault. By this I am saying that **your current circumstance** is likely the result of one or more **choices you made**. Obviously, this is not completely true, as children have little or no say in what their parents do or say to them. Yet, when we become adults, we are responsible for our choices from then on, regardless of whoever did or said whatever they did or said to us. To continue blaming others for what you choose to do is certainly of no value to you. And, quite frankly, no one else gives a rip. They are consumed by their own sorrows and pleasures.

When we blame others for the way we are, we somehow think that justifies our actions. But, that is not the case. When we blame others, somehow we think that if they would simply shape up, our problem would go away. This is not the case either. As soon as someone else whose similar idiosyncrasies come into our presence, so does our wrongful attitude and expression. If you are offended by anyone, consider this. They have likely bumped into a tender bruise in your ego. They did not create the bruise. They simply and unwittingly bumped it. And you lashed out at them.

If you are stuck in a shallow relationship with God, or anyone else for that matter, it is completely your own fault. God's Word is clear. He desires that we develop unconditional love for those around us, especially those who aggravate us. To this end, God has placed His Holy Spirit within a Christian (Christ-In) in order to teach you God's ways and affections. The Holy Spirit is the ultimate teacher of time and eternity. But, unless and until you desire to learn from Him, you will remain ignorant and dissatisfied emotionally and spiritually. It is **your choice**. No one else is responsible for your decisions.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 24: Be the Wind Beneath Their Wings

“’Tis an ill wind that blows no one any good.” And ’tis an ill person who has nothing good to say about another. You and I know that some people just get on our nerves. Often we can’t explain why. But we express our displeasure to them or to others behind their back. The nature of human nature is to promote one’s self, often at the expense of someone else. Many of us have been told, “You have to look out for yourself. No one else will.” To always look out for the good of another is reserved for the ‘mothering’ instinct.

The good news is that we were created to be lovers not fighters. Yet, we lapse into a selfish pursuit of our own life, liberty and happiness. At the same time we desperately grope about for someone, anyone, to love us. We are also engineered to want to be desired by another. Many times we clutch one with whom we are infatuated. Yet when they do not return the love we seek, our feelings are hurt. (our feeling of **love** is hurt.)

Worship is best defined as any expression which demonstrates the high value we place on the object of our worship. The human heart is engineered to worship and to be worshipped. We actually worship many others who never worship us in return. But when we worship another and that person worships us, we have an opportunity to develop an intimate relationship.

The secret of deeply affectionate relationships is contained in this pursuit: “desiring the pleasure of the object of my worship over my own pleasure.” Instead of being the ‘ill wind that blows no one any good’ become the wind of encouragement and good will as you become the wind beneath the wings of everyone in your path. God is more than willing to help you be this!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 25: Know God, Not Just About Him

Most religious people, even Christians, accept the doctrines of others rather than making up their own minds about God. We tend to become faithful to the religion of our parents. If we were treated badly by our parents, we might adopt anything other than their particular brand of religion. We seem to choose the *safety in numbers* over the narrow lonely road to life. The Bible is clear that the road to destruction is wide and heavily travelled. I suggest you abandon the *safety in numbers* theory in favor of the safety of God and His truth.

There is only safety and security in the love of God. So, until you seek God alone as your trustworthy life partner, you will be in danger for most of your life's journey! The great news is that when you become intimate with God, not only *will you know* it, but also *others will testify* that they see the love of God in you.

There is no limit to intimacy. Keep on seeking deeper and richer affection for God. Let me qualify the limitless nature of God's intimacy. His offer and supply is unlimited. However, **we can** and do limit the measure of His intimacy with us when we fail to return it. And we fail to receive it by crowding it out with selfish indulgences, applause and self worship!

The ultimate intimacy is mutually desiring to please our lover more than ourselves, while our lover possesses the same "other-prefering" motives toward us. Instead of asking God in prayer to satisfy your needs and wants, ask Him how you might bring Him pleasure in the situation in which you are praying. Listen! He will respond. Remember, prayer is a dialog with God, not talking at Him or begging Him to indulge you (or do *what you think is good*).

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 26 Control Freak or Stress Free

Having been born to be control freaks, we have great difficulty letting God be in control, or anyone else, for that matter. Yet, control issues are the predominant ones leading to stress and unbecoming behaviors. One of my own pastors once said, “The comfort of God is wrapped in my release of my control over my life.” Later God added to this, “*and the lives of others.*” So a major element of a life abandoned to intimacy with God is the release of all control to God.

As long as I tried to maintain control over this or that, I lived with a pretty great measure of stress. This stress turned my concern for matters into worry, anxiety, guilt, shame and sometimes even fear. So I began to equate *comfort* with *peace* and reworded my pastor’s statement. “The **peace** of God is wrapped in my **release** of my control over my life and the lives of others.” This one phrase has been a daily practice for me ever since.

Many pray for peace. We pray for peace among family and friends. We desire peace with those in our communities. We strive to bring peace to the whole world. Yet, peace eludes us, both locally and globally. The reason for this is most of us want others to be at peace with us, while we refuse to be at peace with them. The starting point for all negotiations for peace is to disclose our unique points of view in a respectful manner. But peace only, ever comes when both parties are willing to accept the other without any conditions for change, when compromise is not an option.

When I can accept you without expecting you to change any thing, I have peace. Even if you choose not to accept me in return! **My peace is not dependent upon anyone else. It is my choice!**

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

The comfort
of God
is wrapped
in my release
of my control
over my life
& the lives
of others!

VOLUME THREE

Day 27: Sick and Tired of Being Sick and Tired

When you get sick and tired of being sick and tired, of a less than satisfactory experience of God, is the very moment when God is most likely to begin revealing Himself in the most intimate ways! God is always passionately in love with us. He is simply waiting for any who will join with Him in a passionate love affair. Intimacy cannot be achieved by thought or imagination. Intimacy only ever occurs by way of desperate desire to be intimate in any relationship. If you are serious about becoming abandoned to intimacy with God, you *will*, at times, experience a desire to be with other people who want to pursue the same for themselves. But when complete intimacy with God becomes a reality for you, there will never be a lonely moment for you! God's presence is enough. I speak from personal experience. I have not experienced a single moment of loneliness in over 15 years!

Every experience in your life has the potential to teach you or others some valuable lesson. If you will search for the revelation each trial or difficulty may bring, you will be amazed at how much more God can teach you. Seize each moment (decision point), ponder its meaning with God, discover His purpose in it, and do what His Spirit directs you to do about it. "Seek and you will find." applies to every event in your life. Look for God in each one and you will see Him right there with you in it.

The point is not to **fully comprehend** God, but to **fully enjoy** what I do comprehend about Him. — J H Alan

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 28: Forgiveness Is A Choice You Make

written by one of my favorite song writers

Holding on to a grudge forever
You hold it in, and you think you'll never
Find a way to ever let it go

The mask you wear is an illusion
It only leads to more confusion
And causes pain and heartache in your soul

The pain you've carried for so long
Is a heavy load, and you're not that strong
So lay it down and give it to the Lord

Forgiveness – is an act of faith that God is in control
Forgiveness – is a choice we make of truly letting go
Forgiveness – is obedience to what we're called to do
Forgiveness – the choice is up to you!

Forgiveness – release your guilt if you're the one who sinned
Forgiveness – release the hurt if you've been sinned against
Forgiveness – is a miracle that only God can do
Forgiveness – the choice is up to you!

Forgiveness – is a miracle that only God can do
Forgiveness – the choice is up to you!

song entitled: 'Forgiveness' - © Doug Meeker 2021

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 29: God Cannot Forgive Sin

The only pathway to intimacy with God is forgiveness of our relationship crimes (sins). Now to be sure, God does not forgive in the manner which most think. God cannot just let the perpetrator go free and still provide justice to the victim.

God's forgiveness is like the motor cyclists' saying, *Pay it forward*. God *pays forward* the sins to Jesus, so that the due penalty of our crimes is *paid in full* by Him. No sin goes unpunished by God. God declared emphatically, "Vengeance is mine, I *will* repay." God will either let you pay your punishment forward to Jesus, or He will allow you to serve your own sentence (separation from relationship with God). That is the singular message of the Gospel.

Many respected '*Christian*' teachers, proclaim from their pulpits and lecterns, the false teaching of moralism. The proper response to acknowledged sin is, "Thank You, Lord, that Jesus has paid for this sin already!" Then go about your Father's work again immediately. One sacrifice and one repentance is all that God required for all of the sins of any one who in faith lets God *pay their sins forward* to Christ. But to give thanks in everything is the ultimate in freedom from guilt and shame.

When a Christian joyfully thanks God for the forgiveness already applied to their entire life, and instantly restores their communion with God through the Holy Spirit, they can immediately hear His guidance and walk in it. This is truly what the Bible calls walking in the Spirit. You cannot walk in the Spirit by simply not walking in the flesh. Walking in the Spirit is living in constant awareness of the presence of the Holy Spirit within and letting Him make your choices! His choices will always be laced with the unconditional love of God for you and for those in your present moment of influence.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

Day 30: What Is The Cross I Must Bear

“So, what the cross is for Jesus, it cannot be for you. The cross was death for Him and it is life for you. The cross was punishment for Him and forgiveness for you. The cross was judgment on Him and it is freedom for you. So when we come to love the cross and to stand before the cross, the cross is not a symbol of our pain, it's a symbol of His.

When Jesus said, "Take up your cross and follow me," He wasn't talking about pain or suffering. That was His deal with the cross. It's not ours. He was punished so that I could go free. He suffered so that I didn't have to. The cross is a symbol of your freedom, your forgiveness, your acceptance, the love of God, the generosity of God, the kindness of God, the mercy of God, the beauty of God. When He said "Take up your cross," He said, "Take up everything that's beautiful about me and follow me." "Take up everything that's marvelous about my love for you and come and walk with me. Come follow after me." — Graham Cooke, 'Abiding - John chapter 15'

Don't we want to follow someone who loves us and cares about our future? Don't we want guidance from a competent leader? Don't we want to feel secure in someone stronger and more capable than we are? Well that's who God is! And to think, "He loves us on our worst day as much as on our best day."

Granted, when the enemy is shooting at our leader, God, the enemy's bullets are also coming at us. When people curse God, they are also cursing those who have faith and trust in Him. But, our Commander-in-Chief can never be defeated. So we can walk with our heads held high. We actually know that we have already won!

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

VOLUME THREE

Day 31: The Bars of My Own Prison

The ultimate in frustration is to create unattainable goals or unrealistic expectations. It is our expectations which are not met that send us into fits of anger and animosity. Imagine your expectations of others as the bars of a prison which separate you from them. Also consider how awful your expectations of yourself, which cannot be realized, make you feel. You may place greater expectations on yourself than God does. Only you can take them down. You made them!



EXPECTATIONS / MY RIGHTS

- Bars that separate me from you
- Bars that I created
- Bars fabricated of my opinions
- Bars as strong as I choose
- Bars you cannot remove
- Bars you may not know exist
- Bars that are based on culture
- Bars which keep me from what I want most in life
- Bars of relationship separation
- Bars that GOD HATES
- see also: 10 Commandments

Freedom from aggravation, animosity and self-loathing is only a few bars away! The saw for bar removal is the choice to accept others “as-is.” Just be yourself and let others be themselves.

Confirming Scriptures:

Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day — First Taste

give me

see me

serve me

Three phrases revealing my motive.

Three words explain EVIL.

PROSPERITY

POPULARITY

POWER

Evil is the selfishness of the soul that will **indulge** self, and **applaud** self at the expense of others. Evil is attempting to **control others** against their will.

“All of us need a radiant idea of God. It’s the only place to live. To be astonished! To be amazed! To marvel. To be so caught up with the beauty of God’s nature, it becomes who you are. . . . It washes over you day after day after day, and you love every thought that you have about him. You love every word he says. You hang on it because it’s life” – Graham Cooke

Unless and until you are breath-taken by your affection for God, you will fail to reach your greatest potential. Affection toward and from another is the greatest desire of the soul. Even the animals get this.

VOLUME THREE

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John Henry's hope is that you find some insights about your relationship with God which will increase your love for Him and bring you peace, especially peace with yourself, and peace with God.

