

Volume 2 – 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.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 2 – 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 Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

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Volume 2 – 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:

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Volume 2 – 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.

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Volume 2 – 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 Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 2 – 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).

Volume 2 – 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 your selves 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.

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Vol. 2 – 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 be born as a human being. The best relationships are assured by 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. Underserved favor is the greatest gift 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?

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Volume 2 – 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

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Volume 2 – 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 we know that we have pleased God!

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Volume 2 – 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 God¹

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:

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Volume 2 – 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 church, your righteousness, your theology, your religion, or 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.

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Volume 2 – Day 13: My Heart IS 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 Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 2 – 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*.”

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Volume 2 – 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 our selves, 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.

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Vol 2 – Day 16: Imagine God in the Middle of Every Mess

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:

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Volume 2 – 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 Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

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Volume 2 – 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 have 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.

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**Volume 2 – 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 wants 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

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**Volume 2 – 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 I am consumed with pleasing them. If God's purpose in bringing cancer into the middle of my mess 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!**

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**Volume 2 – 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.

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Vol. 2 – Day 22: But I Want My Work for God to Be Seen

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:

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**Volume 2 – 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:

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**Volume 2 – 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:

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Volume 2 – 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.

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Volume 2 – 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 this is 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 Scripture:

My Aligning Experiences:

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Volume 2 – 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:

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Volume 2 – Day 28: The Good News and 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 that 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.

“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.

My Confirming Scriptures:

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Volume 2 – 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’ was expressed by 30 students in a 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:

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Volume 2 – 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.

Volume 2 – 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 Divinity. 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.

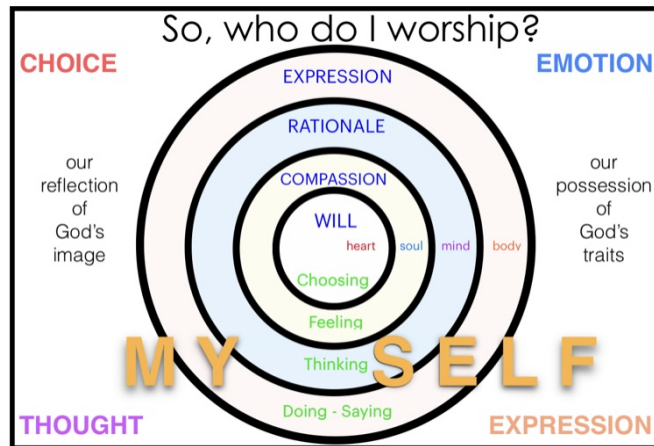
Although the partners in a human marriage have separate and distinct functions and roles within the relationship, unity of purpose is essential to a harmonious experience of relationship. So regardless of whether you believe the God of the Bible is a Trinity or three completely separate beings, they 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:

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Volume 2 -- Day 32



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

Christianity,
when properly
practiced,
is relationship
not religion.

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