

Volume 4, Day 1: Who Does God Help?

“God helps those who help themselves.” That only makes sense. Or does it? When we ask God to help us heal a physical ailment, does He give us surgical skills and tools to perform medical procedures on ourselves? “NO!” Does He just bolt out of the blue and heal our sickness? “NO!” Is God obligated to heal us? “NO!” Is God an unloving parent when He does not give us what we want? “NO!”

Then, why do we get angry with God when we do not get the healing we think we deserve? Well actually our anger is unfounded, and yet common to most of us, for two reasons. First, what we deserve is nothing. “There is none righteous, NO, not one.” “All of my righteousness is as filthy rags” to God. Secondly, God purposely allows in His wisdom that which He could easily prevent by His power.

Who does the surgeon help? Does he help those who help themselves? “NO!” Does the surgeon even ask you to assist him? “NO!” The physician performs his healing work on those, and only those, who agree that he is needed, he is the chosen one and he has WRITTEN PERMISSION from them to perform his work on them!

So, it follows then, even from our own experience in life, that God only helps those who will humble themselves and LET GOD DO HIS HEALING WORK! So if you have ever, and most of us have, been angry with God because He would not help you, APOLOGIZE for your arrogance. REPENT of your arrogance. [REPENT means to change your mind about what you believe, in this case about who needs who and who really does the job.] Admit that you are not the physician, but you are a willing recipient. And for sure, humble yourself under his skillful hand. God only helps those who admit that they need to be fixed. And God’s primary fixing, is the fixing of the soul. And the soul that is ‘fixed ’is the soul that rejoices in adversity and pain knowing that God IS love and can be fully trusted to have a ‘divine’ purpose in everything in the life of that soul.

Volume 4, Day 2: "... by His Stripes We Are Healed"

Does Isaiah's statement, "... by His stripes we are healed," mean that we obtain physical healing by Jesus' brutal beating and inhumane crucifixion? I implore you to consider this. What exactly did God have in mind when He designed the brutal, humiliating, massacre of His ONLY BEGOTTEN SON? Did God let Himself, in the person of His Son, be the most unfairly treated of all beings, human or divine, in order to heal our physical infirmities? Or did God create this heinous criminal act on the part of mankind in order to heal our 'selfish, corrupt, hurtful' souls?

If you claim to be a Christian, I would hope that you would exclaim that, "Jesus died to save the ungodly from eternal separation from God." Did Jesus live the perfect life, which we could not, only to die a criminal's death so that we could be more comfortable (prosperous), more highly respected (popular) or more worshipped by and in control of others (power)? Again, "NO!" That would be ridiculous. Yet, that is what we want and what we pray for.

Our anger with God and all others is sourced in our own childish self indulgence. We ask God to fix this or do that. We expect Him to take away all of our misery. We expect Him to define 'good' in the same manner as we define 'good.' But, scripture clearly declares that GOD defines 'good' as GOD HIMSELF. "GOD IS LOVE!" is a direct quote from His written Word. God's definition of 'good' is anything that fulfills His purposes. His purposes are always in the best interest of ridding His creation of evil and redeeming all who are willing to be in a perfect relationship with God.

Jesus, as the embodiment of God's love, humbled from the highest glory to the lowest human experience, did not "...lay down His life for His friends" in order to serve their selfishness. He died so that they too could (and would) die to selfish ambition and be redeemed forever.

My Confirming Scripture: My Aligning Experiences:

Volume 4, Day 3: Have A Good Day

I discovered while substitute teaching in my county that some schools are much easier to teach in than others. I was tempted to select just the easy schools and avoid the difficult ones. But as I reflected on the gospel, I realized that it is needed most by the most troubled people. The gospel is about wholesome relationship. And it is breaking relationship that creates the difficulties that plague our school system.

So rather than avoid the difficult schools, I simply chose the first available assignments and let God lead me to where he wanted me to teach. When I would walk into a school where the students were most challenging, I would often hear this from an administrator as I signed in to teach, "We hope you have a good day today." This came from a sense of guarded hesitation and expectation of the opposite. My response was always the same, "Oh, I will have a good day. I never let anyone choose otherwise for me!"

By the time the Holy Spirit called me to teach in the public school system, after having retired from a successful career in high tech, I had reached new heights in my relationship with God. I had discovered that my happiness could be found in his presence within me in the midst of the most difficult relational carnage I encountered. It is ever only and always when I remain aware of the presence of the Almighty in my soul that nothing can trouble me. Rather than being agitated or upset, I feel grief and sorrow for the relational brokenness I see, hear and feel.

If you are a believer in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit doesn't walk beside you behind you or in front of you. He resides within your soul. He could be your soul mate if you would but remind yourself constantly that He is present. He accepts you on your worst day as much as on your best day and wants nothing but the best for you. The day may be filled with turbulence and difficulty, but your awareness of His presence provides peace in the middle of any and every storm.

Pour the best within you, His enormous affection, on everyone around you and you **will** have a good day!

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 4: The Sin of Responsibility

When does acting responsibly become sin? You might retort, “Are you nuts? It is never a sin to act responsibly.” And, to be sure, you are in agreement with most people. We strive to teach our children to be responsible and contributors to the common good of our own community. We discipline them so as not to spoil them. And we often help them begin their adult journey with financial and other help. We are proud of them if they become successful in their chosen vocation and if they build friendships with others who are responsible as well.

Many also encourage others to be part a some religious order and to practice the teachings of the chosen religion in a responsible manner. In this case we might call it acting responsibly toward God. Yet we can, and often do, cross the line into sinful behavior. God’s Law defines sin as: “breaking relationship to serve selfish purposes.” We can act responsibly according to man’s laws, mores of our society, or even our appointment calendar, while we are breaking relationships all around.

The ultimate problem is when we fail to teach and practice an up-close-and-personal relationship with God. The highest order of obedience is obedience to what God wants us to do in the moment. When God’s Spirit reveals something which He wants us to do, and we fail to do it, for any reason, being responsible to anything or anyone other than God is sin. We actually do our children a grave disservice if we fail to teach them to be responsive to God rather than responsible to any person. “...Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 5: Law or Love/ Letter or Spirit

Wrap every rule in its reason.

Then use the rule in its season.

If it's peace that you want,

then the rule you won't flaunt.

You'll apply it by only its reason.

Here's what I do, when a rule's in my way.

I use its reason that lets me play.

But you, my friend, if you try this too,

I'll use the rule as a club to beat you.

You always must play it my way.

I have a reason for each rule I break.

And to me it makes sense, make no mistake.

If you'd simply give me benefit of the

doubt,

I highly suspect that you would find out,

the same rule you'd break,

if you swam in my lake. — J. H. Alan

Laws, man's or God's, are written and enforced as a matter of safety not mindless restriction or constraint. It is because of the affections we have and the desire to live safely in community, that we create laws at all. Yet much of the division and conflict within a society is created when we fight over the letter of the law versus the spirit of the law.

The first 4 of the 10 Commands of God are about breaking relationship with God and the last six are about breaking relationship with people. So when you are tempted to resist the constraint brought by law, consider that the purpose of that law is to promote healthy, affectionate relationships (love). Then attempt to comply with it in the spirit (reason) which it was established.

Jesus summed up God's 10 Laws as, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and expression, and to love your neighbor as much as you love yourself." Mark 12:30. But, to His own disciples He gave His Own new command, "Love each other as much as I have loved you." (Jesus was willing to die for the safety of all, even His enemies.)

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 6: Make Love Not War

In the '70s a popular expression was "Make love, not war." It was a pacifist statement made in repulsion of an unpopular war in which the United States was engaged. However the implications of the expression have a positive impact across the board. Obviously, when we love others, we are not likely to engage in violent arguments or fights with them. Yet, we mostly find fault with others and criticize their words or actions! Why on earth would we push people away from us, especially the ones we most want to be with?

Obviously, most of our negative expressions are directed at people or activities which we think are wrong or unfair by our own definition of good and evil. Yet we tend to lose sight of the fact that other people often have opinions which are different from our own which are not necessarily wrong. Actually, if we are intellectually honest, we must admit that there are no two people whose opinions or beliefs are completely the same. And the most foundational of all tenets of relationship is a mutual acceptance of the diversities as well as the similarities of others.

The one thing that is most common to all people is the desire to be accepted and embraced by others. A smile and a hug go a long way to brighten our day. And the more we accept others, just as they are without changing their opinions or behaviors, the more we will be accepted by others in the same way.

There is FREEDOM from animosity and angst in simply accepting the things which we cannot change. And to be sure, we cannot change anyone else. We can't even change ourselves. Only our Creator can change us but He will not do so, unless and until we admit to Him that we need to be changed and give Him permission to do so.

My Confirming Scriptures:

My Aligning Experiences:

DEEPER Every Day -- John Henry Alan

Volume 4, Day 7: Habit or Personal Desire

Do you have religious practices, such as going to church, feeding the hungry, providing shelter for the homeless, or giving to charity? Do you have predictable activities in which you engage or songs you might sing or books you might read? Is it possible that even what you do in worshipping God is the same week after week?

Why would I think that God would be happy with my monotonous routines? Aren't we made in God's image in order to be in relationships with each other and with God Himself? Maybe it's time to become up close and personal.

I was in church with my family from the time I was a few days old. My parents were so religious that they took me several times a week. I learned the Bible stories, I memorized scripture, I said the prayer for salvation in Sunday School at age six and as an early teen even led in worship with my music teacher. But I reached the point when I didn't want to go to church any more, but would not admit it.

When I was 14, an evangelist came to our church to conduct a revival. I don't even remember what he preached about, but his messages kept my attention. After the last meeting, I went to meet the evangelist and thank him for his good sermons. But I was caught off guard when my pastor put his arm around me and asked, "You're going to be a preacher too, aren't you? Not wanting to be embarrassed, nor to embarrass the pastor, I replied, "If God wants me to, I will."

As I lay in bed later, God spoke to me in my thoughts. "Did you tell the pastor that you would be a minister if I asked you to?" "Yes," I replied. He continued, "Did you mean that?" I said "No!" I quickly recoiled in fear that He might strike me for lying to the pastor. In the loud silence that followed, I asked myself, "If God cares enough about me to meet me up-close-and-personal in my own room, why wouldn't I do anything He asked of me. So I said, "I'll say it again now and this time I mean it!" My heart flipped as I fell in love with God and was truly born again. Never again did I go to church just for appearances sake. I loved God's house!