

# **Getting a GRIP on Life**

## **An Exegetical Study of the Abiding Life**

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## **PREFACE: MY STORY**

In a survey I heard quoted, 80% of the people who identify themselves as evangelical Christians were either disappointed or discouraged in their spiritual lives. I can't speak to the accuracy of the 80% figure, but I can agree with the description. For many years of my spiritual life, that described me!!

I became a believer in 1965. In the first few years of my "new life" there were a lot of ups and downs, a lot of mountaintop experiences alternating with valleys of disappointment. It didn't take too long before the valleys seemed to outnumber the mountaintops! Like most of us, I tried to find consistency in my walk with Christ by doing the things I was told would mature me in my walk with Jesus: I attended church on a regular basis, I joined a variety of small groups, I did a personal Bible study, I read books by authors who I respected for their walk with Christ, I did my best to have a regular "Quiet Time", I attended as many retreats and seminars as my schedule would allow, and I shared my faith with everyone I could.

In those early years, I had expectations that these efforts would bring lasting stability and consistency to my spiritual life. These expectations were supported by the reality that there were positive changes in my life. Of course, there were still some sinful habits that remained but I was confident they would soon be overcome if I just hung in there and kept doing what I was doing. However, as time marched on, I seemed to reach a limit of what was being overcome. Certain habits and patterns of sin stayed with me no matter what I did. I was on the spiritual roller coaster of commitment – failure – confession; re-commitment – failure – confession; re-commitment. This disappointing inability to achieve true change in some areas of my life got so bad that I reached the point of not wanting to do anything that would take me to the mountaintop of hope again. It was just too painful when the "old" "I" returned ever so quickly. I settled into a "this must be all there is" mentality. I accepted as fact that there never would be a consistent victory over certain sins. I would just have to live with the failure and guilt of losing the spiritual battle in certain areas until I went to heaven to be with Jesus.

Then, in the Fall of 1999, I was invited to be part of a men's Bible study that changed my life! As we studied together, I came to understand concepts about the spiritual life that was life-transforming in a new and dynamic way. These truths have permanently changed my spiritual life from one of defeat and discouragement to one of expectation and excitement. Often, when I make this statement, I am asked, "Tom, would your wife agree with that? Would Carol agree that you are a different person these past years from the person she knew before?" I can honestly say she would, because she has said so, both to me and to others. One of the greatest joys of my life is when she shared with me that she had told our daughters, "You have a new father!" Her joy about what has been taking place in my life encourages me to continue growing in understanding and applying these truths.

A second question frequently asked is, "Is it transferable? Have others been changed like you have when you shared these truths?" Again the answer is "yes." Some time ago my wife Carol and I were spending the weekend with family and friends. A newlywed Christian young couple was part of the group. They had been married less than a year but it seemed like it was already headed for divorce. The wife cried as she shared her frustrations with her husband. She said, "I can't stand to look at him or be around him." Over the weekend I shared the basic truths you will be reading in this book, the primary one being that Jesus can live His nature – His love and compassion and forgiveness – through as we permit Him. As this couple was driving home I

received a call. The wife's first words were, "It works!" She went on to explain that as she was driving along when the same old feelings of disgust and despising her husband were coming over her but she just prayed and asked Jesus to live His love for her husband to live through her. Her attitude and her feelings immediately changed. She and her husband are still together and are continuing to grow in understanding and applying the Abiding Life.

Sharing the truths I shared with her is what this book is all about. And I want to make something very clear. I am not talking about another discipleship "program", or a set of "Spiritual Principles." This is not another "4 Quick Steps to Spiritual Victory." If you can relate to anything I have said so far about coming to the point of having a "this must be all there is" mentality you have found out like I did that such "quick-fix" attempts to find satisfaction in your spiritual life is inadequate.

What this book is about is coming to a clear understanding, and personally applying Paul's affirmation, *"I am crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me."* (Gal. 2:20)

It is learning to "Get a GRIP on life!"

## **ABIDING LIFE: A DEFINITION**

When we abide in Christ we allow His nature and character to live itself out through us. Some call this the exchanged life, exchanging Christ's life for ours. Some call it having Christ as life. Whichever term is used, it simply means to be filled with the Holy Spirit at any given moment, so that the fruit of the Spirit (the Godly nature and character of His love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control) flow out through us and impact every circumstance we find ourselves in and every personal encounter we have.

We are not called to live a set of rules called "The Christian Life." Instead, we are called to manifest the quality and character of life that results from allowing Christ to live His nature out through us.

Therefore: The 3 GOALS of This Workbook Are: 1.) EXPERIENCE The Abiding Life Personally, 2.) EXPRESS The Abiding Life to Others, and 3.) EDUCATE Others So They Too Can Experience & Express The Abiding Life

**BE READY!** Expect spiritual conflict because you are learning spiritual truth! Satan will be telling you everything in this study is a lie!!! But who is the liar, God or Satan?

## **WHICH OF THESE TWO BEST DESCRIBES YOUR SPIRITUAL LIFE?**

"Think of it: you are a shadow of the person you were meant to be. You have nothing close to the life you were meant to have. And you have no real chance of becoming that person or finding that life. However, you are forgiven. For the rest of your days, you will fail in your attempts to become what God wants you to be. You should seek forgiveness and try again. Eventually, shame and disappointment will cloud your understanding of yourself and your God. When this ongoing hell on earth is over, you will die, you will be taken before God for a full account of how you didn't measure up. But you will be forgiven. After that, you'll be asked to take your place in the choir of Heaven. This is what we mean by salvation."

*John Eldredge, Waking the Dead, p. 62, describing how most believers he has counseled define their salvation.*

OR

"The Christian Life is a NATURAL life and a SIMPLE life!"

"Who is smarter and more powerful, Satan or God? So, if sin is so easy, spirituality must be even easier!"

*Michael Wells, Abiding Life Ministries International*

The second description is possible!! This workbook is a guide to such a spiritual life.

## A THOUGHT FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

What if spiritual maturity is not the result of years of study and learning? What if living a victorious and meaningful spiritual life is natural and simple? Consider the following: Paul's first missionary journey, AD 46 – 48, covered eight cities in twelve months. That means he averaged only 1.5 months in any one city. Yet, with very limited time, Paul was able to appoint elders in each of the cities he had visited and established a body of believers in. Acts 14 records this first appointing of Elders.

*20 But while the disciples stood around him, he arose and entered the city. And the next day he went away with Barnabas to Derbe. 21 And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, 22 strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, "Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God." 23 And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:20-23)*

The responsibility of Elders has not changed since these first ones were appointed. Elders are to be men of spiritual maturity who shepherd a local body of believers. They must meet specific qualifications to affirm that they can lead others to spiritual maturity as they guide and mentor.

How could men so quickly be qualified to be Elders? How could these men, with just a couple of months with Paul, be spiritually mature enough to lead a body of believers? How could they be qualified to shepherd others into spiritual maturity?

These men were mature enough to be Elders so quickly, even though they did not have years of Bible teaching, because they understood and applied to their lives the truths of this study. Remember, the New Testament had not been written yet. Paul, who appointed these men, had not even written his first epistle. Even so, by understanding and living out the basic truths of the Spiritual life that Paul had taught them, they were qualified to lead others in their church families, guiding them to understanding and living out these truths as well.

Later Paul would be inspired to write these truths in his epistles so that the church throughout history would be able to learn and apply them too. They were written for us! Thus, spiritual maturity, resulting in a victorious and fulfilling spiritual life, does not require years of study. Bible knowledge and Biblical understanding are important. We should diligently study and learn as much as we can. But victory and successful spiritual living in our daily lives are not based on our knowledge and learning alone. It is based on our understanding and application of what it means to have Christ as life. If we understand what it means to have Christ as life, we will be able to victoriously live out all we know.

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## OUR PURPOSE

At one time or another we have all asked ourselves the "Great Philosophical Questions": Who am I? Why am I here? What is the Meaning and Purpose of my life?" God's answer to these questions is very simple and clear:

*"Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth. And God created man in His image, in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:26-27)*

image = To be a copy of; a replica of; to be able to Express the Essential Nature of that which is being copied or replicated

likeness = Basically the same definition used interchangeably with "image" in other OT passages. Only here used with "image" in the same verse, signifies a true or faithful replica

**From these definitions, what do you think being made in the image of God means?**

So, who are you?

You are a replica of the living God, made in His image and likeness.

Why are you here?

You are here to express the essential nature of God to the world around you

What gives your life meaning and purpose?

Fulfilling what you were created to do, expressing the essential nature of God to the world around you

Thus, no matter what else you might do in life – be a doctor, a plumber, a lawyer, a businessperson, an electrician, a veterinarian – you will never sense a true significance or meaning in your life if you are not exhibiting the essential nature of God as you go about your daily life and tasks.

In many books, Chapter One is simply a general introduction to the "Big Idea" the author will flesh out in the rest of the book. Not so in this case. To understand and incorporate into our lives this foundational principle that the ultimate reason for God's creation of mankind was so they could be expressions of His essential nature is it! If we miss this, our Christian life ends up being discouraging and disappointing because we never get a handle on the true meaning and purpose of our salvation. Restoration to being able to be what God created us to be is the Gospel. Everything that follows that restoration is just the icing on the cake. But without the cake, the frosting is superfluous. Grab hold of the cake and take it with you throughout your reading!!

## OUR PROBLEM

Being created to be a copy or replica of God Himself, we were designed to be able to express and exhibit His essential nature to the world around us. Therefore, the first thing we have to ask is, "What is God's essential nature? What is God like?"

"Essential" is defined as that which is necessary, indispensable; that which constitutes the basic nature of a thing. Based on this definition, what do you think it means to "express the essential nature of God?"

### **How would you answer the question, "What is God like?"**

The Bible says God is loving, creative, patient, kind, forgiving, intelligent, powerful, and a ruler or one of authority.

### **Using a Bible Dictionary or a Concordance, research some Bible verses that define the nature of God.**

It should be no surprise that Mankind reflects these characteristics of His nature to a certain extent. We were created to do so.

But, if we are created in God's image, is God also evil, violent, and vicious like Mankind? Of course not!! So why do we do such things? We do such things because we have an internal problem.

*"That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." (Mk. 7: 20-23)*

Where does Man's (our) true problem lie?? In the heart!!

### **What do you think Jesus meant by "the heart?"**

Heart = Biblically speaking, the heart is the center or source of all one's emotions, thoughts, decisions of the will, passions, desires, values, priorities, creativity, and motives.

This "heart" problem is the result of Adam's disobedience to God. God had set a limitation on Adam and Eve, "Do not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil." They rebelled against Him by eating from that tree. This rebellion, and its consequences, is called the Fall of Mankind. Since the Fall, every man and woman's heart has been governed by self-centeredness – being concerned primarily with one's desires, needs, or interests.

In his book, Lifetime Guarantee, Dr. Bill Gillham describes three basic types of self-centeredness: Yucky, Plain Vanilla, and USDA. The "Yucky" person sees him or herself as worthless. They think of themselves in terms of what they think others think of them. What they "hear" is that they are stupid, that they will never amount to anything, that they should be more like their brother or sister, that they can't do anything right, etc. This person ends up with a "poor self-image" or is a person of "low self-esteem."

The "Plain Vanilla" person is what most of us are. We see ourselves as not the worst but not the best either. We have achieved some "successes" in life but don't see ourselves as ever being the "hero" or the "star." We might be motivated once in a while to improve ourselves or try to change for the better, but for the most part, we just get on with life, making the best of it, feeling that we are doing o.k. Yet, we are still focused primarily on ourselves, fearing rejection, and are very concerned about what others think of us. Therefore, we are careful not to let people get too close and see the "real me" but since everybody we know is pretty much just like us, we feel fairly safe and secure.

The USDA person is the super-achiever. He or she has had high standards set for them, and they have met them! They are the straight "A" students, the best players on the team, the ones voted "Most Likely to Succeed." They are the ones who become very successful in life. They are powerful, financially secure, and leaders in their chosen professions. The foundation of their self-centeredness is pride – an excessively high regard for themselves. They think of themselves as better than others.

Although these three do differ somewhat, the center core of each person is a focus on self. This self-centered focus governs our emotions, thoughts, decisions of the will, passions, desires, values, priorities, creativity, and motives. This reality leads to the thoughts, desires, acts, and feelings the Bible calls "the sins of the flesh."

**Look up the Definitions of "pride" "self-centeredness."**

**Give Biblical examples of "the sins of the flesh" from - Rm. 1:26-32; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5-9**

There is a consequence of these sins.

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (Eph. 2:1)*

**What do you think "dead" mean here?**

Dead here means we are separated from God, unable to be in relationship with Him, and, most important of all, we are unable to express His essential nature.

Why are oil spills in the oceans so devastating? Oil spills are so devastating because oil and water do not mix. No matter what one does, the oil remains on the surface of the water, floating along, ensnaring surface wildlife with a life-threatening covering of oil and destroying the ecology of the water as a whole.

God's Holiness and justice demand that He keeps Himself free from any contact with, or contamination from, sin. God is unable to mix with sin as oil is unable to mix with water. So, we are "dead." We are unable to have a relationship with God and be in fellowship with Him. We have a heart governed by self-centeredness. This heart naturally leads to the sins of the flesh, which are the direct opposite of the essential nature of God. By being unable to express God's essential nature we can never have the life of meaning and purpose and significance God created us to have.

We will never be able to fulfill our created purpose until we get our heart problem fixed. But it is fixable!

## GOD'S SOLUTION

If you were asked, "Why did Jesus come?" what would you say? Most believers would immediately say something like, "Jesus came to die on the cross to pay for my sins. If I put my faith in Him and His death for me I will go to Heaven when I die." While this statement is certainly true, it is only a part of the reason. Art historian Kenneth Clark points out that there is not a presentation of the Cross in Christian art until AD 430. He states his first experience with the cross was on a church door in Milan, Italy. But even then, the cross was not the center focus. It was off to the side, at the edges of the door.

### **What does this lack of emphasis on the Cross imply?**

It means the Gospel message that "Jesus came to pay for our sins so we can go to Heaven when we die" was not the focus of the Christian message. Before AD 430 the emphasis of Christian art is on the empty tomb, Jesus as the Good Shepherd, and other reflections on the new life that Jesus came to give.

*"The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly." (Jn. 10:10)*

### **What do you think Jesus meant by "abundant life?"**

The word translated "abundant" means meaningful, superior, and significant. Jesus is saying He not only came to get us to Heaven but to give us a powerful, victorious, and wonderful life here and now. He came to make it possible for us to once again live the life we were created to live. He answered the question of why He came differently than most of us do.

*"And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book, and found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.  
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,  
And recovery of sight to the blind,  
To set free those who are downtrodden,  
To proclaim the favorable year of the Lord."  
And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon Him. And He began to say to them, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." (Luke 4:16-22)*

Jesus says He came to preach: the gospel (good news) to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, set free the downtrodden, and to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord. What is this "Good News"? How does it accomplish what Jesus promised? This "Good News" is a two-step process. First, Jesus pays the just penalty for our sins of the flesh produced from our self-centered heart.

*“He (God the Father) made Him (Jesus the Son) who knew no sin {to be, to become} sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Cor. 5:21)*

### **What do you think it means for Jesus to "become" our sin?**

It means He became the sins of each one of us as if He had done them Himself.

*"And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us {and} which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross." (Col. 2:13-14)*

### **What do you think a "certificate of debt" is and why do you think what Jesus did allows God to forgive us our transgressions?**

An example of a certificate of debt is a monthly credit card bill. Each purchase made during the month is listed on the monthly statement. A payment amount is due. Until you make a payment, you have a debt. Your monthly statement is your certificate of that debt until payment is made.

Our spiritual certificate of debt is God's accounting statement of every sin we have done, are doing, and will do in the future. The payment due is "death" – eternal separation from God. Jesus makes the payment for each of us by having our individual "certificate of debt" transferred onto Himself as if He had done each sin Himself and dying with it on the cross. On the cross Jesus was separated from His Father, He "died." He picked up the penalty. His payment releases us from the bondage to sin our first father, Adam, sold us into.

*“For we know that the Law is spiritual; but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin.” (Rm. 7:14)*

sold = Transfer of ownership

If you have been sold into bondage to sin, becoming "owned" by sin, what does that imply?

"Bondage" implies a restriction or limitation of some kind. Hearing the word, we would naturally think of being tied up or in some other way restrained. But the word also means to be under the control and to be subject to some person or power beside ourselves. Before our new birth, sin resulting from self-centeredness controls us. We are under its power. We are unable to "not" live out the sins of the flesh. Adam sold us into bondage to sin when he willfully chose to disobey God.

Jesus payment ransoms us and redeems us from the sin master who owned us. This is what Jesus meant when He said He had come to set the captives free.

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45)*

### **How would you define a "ransom?"**

ransom = the price paid to set free a slave, a captive, or a kidnapped person

By paying the price of "death" for us, Jesus made it possible for us to be ransomed from our bondage to sin. When we individually put our faith and trust in what Jesus did, we are freed from this bondage.

*"(Jesus) who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." (Titus 2:14)*

### **How do you think something, or someone is "redeemed?"**

redeem = to release on payment of ransom, to liberate by payment of ransom

Applying these definitions to ourselves, it means we are no longer "owned" by sin. As a result, we are no longer obligated to do what sin wants us to do or to be the person sin wants us to be – a self-centered person exhibiting the sins of the flesh.

Jesus, God in human form, became every sin that any human being has ever done or will ever do. Then, He took those sins to the cross. There, in a miracle we will never completely understand, God the Father and God the Son were separated. Jesus "died" with our sins. (This separation took place during the 3 hours of darkness recorded in Matt. 27:45-46 that affirmed God's "forsaking" His Son) In those 3 hours, Jesus paid the price necessary to ransom and redeem us.

When we hear this message and believe it, God forgives us our sins and restores us to a relationship with Him. At that same moment of belief, God, Himself, in the Person of the Holy Spirit, comes to live within us.

*"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God's own possession, to the praise of His glory." (Eph. 1:13-14)*

### **"Believe" means to accept something as true. What do you think the Gospel truth is we are to accept?**

We are to believe the truth that Jesus was the Godman dying in our place, taking all your sins with Him!

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, {even} to those who believe in His name, who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)*

### **How do think someone "receives" Jesus in the context of John 1:1-13?**

To "receive" Jesus means to believe Him when He says He is the Son of God, Messiah, and to believe His message – that He was dying in our place with our sins. Or to personalize it, "I believe Jesus was the Son of God and that He died in my place with my sins as if He had done

them Himself." Plus, in that moment of believing, we undergo a "spiritual" heart transplant!! Our very nature is changed. We become a new creation. This is the second step of the "Good News."

*"Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances."  
(Ezekiel 36: 26 – 27)*

### **What do you think God meant by “a new heart?” and “My Spirit?”**

At the moment we put our faith and trust in Jesus, God removes the "heart of stone" that is governed by self-centeredness and replaces it with a heart that is governed by His love. This new heart produces a spirit that seeks to know Him and please Him, replacing the self-seeking spirit of "me first" that emanates from the "heart of stone." Plus, He puts His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, in us, who enables us to fulfill our desire to please Him.

*“He saved us, (from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin) not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior....” (Titus 3:5-6)*

regeneration = To reproduce

renewing = To restore to former perfection; to restore to a former state after decay or impairment

### **What do these definitions imply about the difference between our old heart and our new heart?**

Our new heart is a heart that has been restored to being a heart just like Adam had before he sinned and spiritually died. It is a heart governed by a hunger for God. It is a heart that desires fellowship with Him.

*"Therefore, if any man (anyone) is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold new things have come." (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

new creature = From the verb "to make"; to fabricate, to completely change (God completely changes our very nature when we are born again)

old things = The original; those that existed from the beginning; (The actions and attitudes that resulted from inherited nature from Adam we were born with)

The "old things" = Greed, Jealousy, Lies, Arrogance, Immorality, Anger, Cliques, Sensualness, Rebellion, Evil, Gossip, Slander, Maliciousness, Impurity, Envy, Abusiveness, Insolence, Quarreling. (Rm. 1:28-32; Gal. 5:19-21; Col. 3:5-9)

passed away = perished; died (No longer exist as a part of the person's nature.)

new things = A new kind of; unheard of; unprecedented; not in existence before (The actions and attitudes of a kind of person that has never existed before)

The "new things" (the nature of God) = Love, Compassion, Humility, Kindness, Gentleness, Patience, Forgiveness, Sympathy, Joy, Concern, Self-Sacrificing, Empathy, Service, Peace, Hopeful, Self-Control. (Gal. 5:22-23; Col. 3:15)

have come = to exist, to be (This new person is here!)

Our new heart, and the reality of the Holy Spirit living within us, transforms us into a new kind of human being, into something unheard of, into something unprecedented, into something never in existence before. Although we struggle against the desires of the flesh (more on that later), we are now motivated by our new heart to naturally seek to express the "new things." These "new things" are the essential nature of God. We have a desire to manifest these "new things" because we instinctively know that in doing so we will be living the abundant life Jesus came to give us. We will know meaning and purpose and significance because we will be fulfilling the purpose we were created for.

## APPLYING GOD'S SOLUTION

But we need a power source to give life to our new heart. Our new heart is like an electric motor. Without a continuous input of power from a source outside of itself, it cannot do what it was created to be. An electric motor has been designed and put together with everything it needs to fulfill its potential but without a continuous influx of power outside of itself it cannot fulfill its purpose. Our power source is a Person.

*"Jesus says, 'I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.'" (John 15:5)*

### **What do you think Jesus means when He says, "apart from Me you can do nothing?"**

In a vineyard, a branch does not produce fruit. It bears fruit. Detach a branch from its vine and plant it in the ground on its own and it will die. In and of itself it cannot draw life from the soil. It must be attached to a vine to bear grapes. Without a vine to give it life, it is unproductive and dies. Spiritually speaking, if we are not abiding in Christ, we too are "dead." This means we are at that moment separated from God and unable to express His essential nature. The result is we do not have a sense of significance, meaning, and purpose we seek. If we choose moment by moment to abide in Christ we bear "fruit." This "fruit" is the "new things" defined on the previous page. These "new things" are the manifestation of the essential nature of God through us. As apples are the fruit of an apple tree, the "new things" are the fruit of abiding. When we abide and bear this fruit, we are fulfilling our created purpose.

So, "apart from Me (Jesus) you can do nothing", means nothing that is a true expression of God's essential nature. Without Christ producing His life through us, we are simply a poor, limited imitation of the real thing.

To put it another way, the believer is like a pipe. A pipe is a conduit for the liquid that flows through it. It "carries" the water but does not produce it. The believer can now choose to be a conduit of the life and nature of Jesus.

Paul puts it this way:

*"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me." (Gal. 2:20)*

### **What does "living by faith in the Son of God" mean to you?**

Jesus' nature is the very nature of God. Paul is saying he believes that as he chooses to abide as a branch in Jesus, the "fruit" of Jesus nature will flow out through him. He will be expressing the essential nature of God in his thoughts, actions, and feelings. He lives by faith that Jesus can and will do this. The key is that we must choose to allow Jesus to live Himself out through us.

*"Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in*

*newness of life. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus." (Rom. 6:3-5, 11)*

baptize = To put into, to immerse

We must all ask ourselves if we believe this affirmation of dying with Him and being raised with Him is just "spiritual" truth, meaning it is not something that happened but is something we are to believe anyway. Did my old self-centered nature die in Jesus? Paul's inspired words say it is the literal truth.

Jesus went into the tomb fully human. He was resurrected with a body that could eat and drink just like before, but something had changed. He could suddenly appear in a closed and locked room in bodily form without entering by the door. He was now something new and unprecedented, something never in existence before. As those who have been raised with Christ, we too are new. The person we were, the one who had been sold into bondage to sin, died with Christ. The person whose nature was one of self-centeredness died with Christ. The person who naturally produced the "Old Things" died with Christ. We were raised with Christ to a newness of life. This word "newness" is another form of the word translated "new things" in 2 Cor. 5:17. Thus, this new life we have is something unprecedented, something never in existence before. Our very nature has been changed.

*"Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts, and do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God." (Rm. 6:12-13)*

consider = to believe to be true, to reckon as true

What does it mean to consider, believe, or reckon? Think of it this way. You make an appointment with your doctor for your regular check-up. You are feeling great and don't expect any problems. Your doctor runs the normal tests and discovers a problem. You still don't feel anything, but you have to "believe" what your doctor is telling you because he is the expert and you trust his diagnosis. You have to "reckon" yourself to be sick even if you don't feel sick. Positively, because we have been placed into Jesus and co-crucified and co-resurrected with Him, we are to consider (believe, reckon) ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God. We are to believe that our nature is no longer evil and sinful. We are to believe that we are now by nature people who love God. We are people who naturally desire to know Him and serve Him. We are to believe it because God says it is so.

As a result of believing this truth, we are asked to make a choice. We are asked to present our mortal (physical) bodies to God rather than to sin.

**What do you think Paul had in mind when he said, "...present the members of your body?"**

Because we have been born again, for the first time we have a choice. Before our new birth, we were slaves to sin. We had no choice but to use our bodies as instruments to express the

sins of the flesh. Our mortal bodies were the instruments through which sin expressed the "Old Things". When our feelings were controlled by anger, we would lash out with bitter, accusing words, perhaps leading to physical blows. When jealousy controlled us, we would gossip to others about those we were jealous of. When our sexual drive arose, we would run to the computer to seek a porn sight.

But now God has made us new. When we believe what God says is true about us, we are to act. We are to present our bodies as instruments for God's use. The verb present is in the present tense. This tense means an action that is continuously being done. We are moment by moment, constantly, to be presenting our members to righteousness. By making this continuous choice, our mortal bodies become instruments to express the "New Things", the "New Things" which are the essential nature of God. When tempted by anger, instead of harsh words from an angry tongue, His peace on the Cross that manifested itself in "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" can manifest itself through me in my circumstance. Jesus was tempted in all ways just as I am yet He was without sin. Whatever sin may tempt me, He has resisted. That resistant can flow through me if I present my mortal body to Him in the moment of temptation. There is a teaching of Jesus that makes this clear. On the night He was betrayed, after the Last Supper in the upper room, Jesus and the 11 were on their way to the Garden of Gethsemane. On the way, they passed a vineyard. Taking His last teaching opportunity, Jesus taught them the vital lesson of how to live the spiritual life by using the vineyard as an analogy. Understanding this passage is so central to living the new spiritual life that we will look at it in depth.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to "...go and make disciples....teaching them to observe all that I have taught you." The logical question is, "What is a disciple?" The dictionary defines a disciple as "an adherent of the doctrine and philosophy of another, a follower." To be a disciple of Jesus is to believe what Jesus taught about how to live life and to apply that way of living to our own lives.

So, the question then becomes, "How did Jesus live His life?" In essence, we are asking, "How did Jesus live the Christian life?" Most of us would reply, "He was God. He lived a Godly life because He was God." But in the mystery of Jesus' incarnation, Jesus did not live His life on earth out of His Deity. Phil. 2: 6-7 tells us that Jesus "...did not hold equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...."

In other words, Jesus gave up the free expression of His Godly powers. Although He was both God and man in a oneness that only God can fully understand, during His life on earth He limited Himself to His humanity. That humanity was fully dependent on the Father to manifest Himself through the human Jesus. Jesus did not raise Lazarus from the dead; the Father did it through Him. Jesus did not give sight to the blind man; His Father did it through Him. Jesus did not preach the Sermon on the Mount; His Father did it through Him. Sounds heretical you say? Check these verses:

*"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know –" Acts 2: 22;*

*"Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works." John 14:10.*

Jesus lived His Christian life by depending on His Father to live through Him.

Paul was an outstanding disciple of Jesus. How did he live the Christian life? He lived it by depending on Jesus to live through him, just as Jesus had depended on His Father to live through Him. In his letter to the Galatian Christians, Paul says, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life I live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."* (Gal.2: 20) To the Christians in Colossae Paul writes, *"And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me."* (Col.1: 29) To the Christians in Rome he says, *"For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed."* (Rm.15: 18)

Paul was "an adherent of the doctrine and philosophy" of Jesus. He followed the "how to live" philosophy/pattern of his Master. He lived in dependence upon Jesus, as Jesus had lived in dependence upon His Father.

And this is exactly how Jesus expects us to live our lives as Christians - depending on Him to live His nature out through us. This is what He teaches us in John 15: 1-11. In this passage, Jesus uses the analogy of a grapevine and its branches. Just as a branch cannot produce fruit in and of its self but must be a conduit for the vine's nutrients to produce fruit, we as Christian cannot live the Christian life in and of ourselves. We must be a conduit for Jesus to live His nature out through us.

There are three main points that we need to understand in this passage. The first point is the central truth found in vs. 4-5:

*"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing."*

"Abiding" means letting Jesus live His nature out through us as He let His Father's nature live through Him. (Jn.14: 8-10)

The second point is found in vs. 8:

*"My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*

In this verse, Jesus tells us that the Father is glorified when we bear much fruit. To glorify is to enhance the reputation of another, to cause their dignity and worth to be seen, understood, and acknowledged by another. When we abide in Christ, letting Him bear the fruit of His nature and character out through us, God the Father's reputation is enhanced as others come to see God for who He is through us.

The third point is found in verse 11:

*"These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."*

The result of our choosing to abide is abundant joy. This comes from experiencing the satisfaction, delight, and lively pleasure of being what we were created to be – an expression of the essential nature of God.

Let's take a closer look at this passage verse by verse. One of the most reassuring facts of our Christian walk is found in verse 15:1.

*15:1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.*

Jesus states here that His Father is the vinedresser. What is the responsibility of a vinedresser? It is to assure production from the vines. Thus, the ultimate responsibility for us to be bountiful fruit-bearing branches in the vine of Jesus lies with God the Father. We can rest in the fact that the Father has willingly assumed the responsibility of overseeing our maturing as Christians. We can rest in the fact that the Father, with all His wisdom and power, will do everything He can to get us mature and productive for Him. Since He has chosen to limit Himself to using us to bring glory to Himself, He will do what is necessary to see that He gets the most from us!!

*15:2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every {branch} that bears fruit, He prunes it, that it may bear more fruit.*

How does God work? What does He do? He does what He can to influence us to choose to abide in Christ. This verse tells us that if we are choosing not to abide, and therefore are not bearing fruit, the Father lifts us up and prunes us. (Lifts us is a more appropriate translation than takes away. Both translations are possible. The context determines what to use. No responsible vinedresser would throw away a branch that has great potential. Branches lying on the ground are lifted up and tied off to get them into the sun to give them the best possible chance for productivity.) But what does this imagery mean? What can the Father do to influence us? He can bring circumstances and events into our lives that take us to the end of our self-sufficiency. When we must face things that are beyond our resources to meet and overcome, we must turn to Jesus. When we face temptations that have habitually overcome us in the past, we must turn to Jesus. We must admit that apart from Jesus we can do nothing. When the Father has brought such things into our lives, with the result that we turn to Jesus and learn His sufficiency, we are ready to apply it in all other areas of our life. We learn how to abide in the crucible of need and then apply what we have learned to a moment by moment walk of abiding. (cp. 2 Cor. 12: 7-10)

*15:3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.*

*15:4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither {can} you, unless you abide in Me."*

*15:5 "I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing.*

What is this "word" Jesus is referring to in verse 3? It is the word "believe." John uses "believe" over 100 times in his gospel and epistles. Two prime examples are:

*"...for unless you believe I am He, you will die in your sins." (Jn. 8:24)*

*"They said therefore to Him, 'What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?' Jesus answered and said to them, 'This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.'" (Jn.6: 28-29)*

In our terminology, those 11 men walking through the vineyard that night with Jesus were saved by their belief in Jesus. They had been born again as Jesus had described in Jn.3. They were ready to be branches in the vine of Jesus. They were ready to be productive and bear fruit. Jesus and the Father could take up residence in them (Jn.14:23) as soon as Jesus had cleansed them of their sins by His death on the cross. They only needed to grasp hold of and apply the truth of abiding, to become the fruit bearers the Father wanted them to be. Their coming flight from Jesus at His arrest and their denial of Jesus at His trial and crucifixion would be the crucible the Father used to enlighten them of the foolishness of having any confidence in their sufficiency to fulfill the mission Jesus would give them. They would fail miserably at these crucial times. They would from then on know the truth of Jesus' words "...*apart from Me you can do nothing.*" The remembrance of their failures would drive them to abide. From then on, as they compared their failures in this time of great testing to Jesus' obedience, they would know that only Jesus Himself, living through them, could give their mortal flesh (Rm.8: 11) the life necessary to bear fruit the Father desired to produce through them.

*15:6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch, and dries up; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*

Who are these guys? ("they") In a literal vineyard, they would be field workers under the authority of the vinedresser who remove the unfruitful branches so the resources of the vine will go to the better-producing branches. In a literal vineyard, these unproductive branches would be burned.

What does this say to us? This teaches us that God will do everything He can to draw us into abiding, as described in vs. 2. But just like a literal vinedresser can be faced with a branch that does not produce after he has done everything he can, God will let a Christian "go" who has stubbornly refused to be guided into abiding in Jesus.

It is possible to be an unproductive believer. Think of Jesus' parable of the soils. The seed of His word that fell on hard ground was snatched away by birds. This speaks of those who hear the message of Jesus but choose not to believe. The middle two soils refer to believers (the seed germinates and brings forth life), but either the difficulties of this life or the materialistic temptations of this life pull their lives away from abiding. They do not bear fruit. They may be members in good standing of a sound, Bible-based church. They may teach Sunday School or work with the youth. They may do any number of things that those who observe them count as a fruitful ministry, but the reality is, they are living out of their resources and abilities. What they are accomplishing has no eternal value for them. It is their fruit, not Jesus' fruit through them. They are not glorifying the Father. They do not experience the fullness of joy that Jesus offers. The resources of the divine vine go to others.

This warning does not mean that we "lose our salvation." It is simply a warning that to choose not to abide has serious consequences.

*15:7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you.*

Although this promise is foundational to all prayer, it is a specific promise in this context. The whole concept of abiding, of Jesus living Himself out through us, of people encountering the nature of God when they meet us, is hard to believe! It almost sounds like something out of a Science-Fiction novel!! Yet, here Jesus promises us if we choose to abide in Him, and these words of illustration of a branch and a vine abide in us, we can ask Jesus to bear the fruit of His nature us through us, and He will. He will manifest His Divine nature through our mortal bodies. That is His promise to us.

But we have to ask. The step of asking is the acknowledgment that we understand that apart from Jesus we can do nothing. The act of asking is our acknowledgment that we are stepping out in faith. God wants us to. Jesus is willing to. We activate the truth by our faith in asking.

*15:8 "By this is My Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and {so} prove to be My disciples.*

To glorify is to enhance the reputation of another person or thing. It is to cause the dignity and worth of that person or thing to be seen, understood, and acknowledged by another. We glorify God by being disciples of Jesus. We glorify God by living in dependence upon the life and power of Jesus to manifest the essential nature of God through us. By yielding ourselves over to Jesus, we bear much fruit that is supernatural. We exhibit the "New Things" of our "New Heart". People see a difference in us that is unlike anything else in the world. They encounter the very nature of God. By this, the Father is glorified.

*15:9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.*

*15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love.*

God's love for us is unconditional. This means that nothing we do can make God love us more, and nothing we do can make God love us less. (Rm.5: 8 "But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.") Yet, we all have times of "feeling" unloved. Usually, such times are when we have sinned or when difficulties come. Whatever the scenario, Satan is always ready to whisper in our ear that God certainly couldn't love us because....!! (Fill in the blank!) Jesus tells us here that although we are never unloved, we can feel unloved. Yet, it is not a circumstance that makes us feel unloved. We only feel unloved when we choose not to abide in Jesus' love by not abiding in Him!

How do we abide in His love? We abide by keeping His commandments. So, the logical question is, what commandments is Jesus referring to? The context tells us. There are two commandments in this context. Keeping both is how we "prove" we are Jesus' disciples. Remember, by proving we are Jesus disciples, we glorify the Father, and that is our purpose. The first commandment is found in John 13: 34-35,

*"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.*

The second is found in Jn.15: 4-6 and can be summed up with the words "abide in Me". And the truth is we cannot exhibit the first commandment without obeying the second. To truly love one another as Christ loved us is impossible without abiding in Jesus. Apart from abiding and experiencing the love of Christ flowing through us by the power and presence of the Holy Spirit we can only express human love. Human love is not miraculous love. Human love cannot meet the standard of agape love (1 Cor.13: 4-8), and agape love is the love Jesus had for us. The simple fact is, whenever we feel unloved by God, there is only one reason. We are not at that moment abiding in Jesus. If we choose to abide, we experience the assurance of God's love ourselves and exhibit God's love to others. If we choose not to abide, we lose the assurance, rest, peace, and contentment that is the reality of experiencing God's love for us. We have severed the connection of a branch to a vine and have therefore lost the life of the Vine.

The solution is simple as well. We confess (agree with God) that we have chosen not to abide and permit Jesus to live through us again. Moment by moment, we will either be abiding and experience the love of the Father and the Son, or we will be in sin, having disobeyed the commandment to abide, and will not be experiencing the love of God.

*15:11 "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and {that} your joy may be made full.*

The dictionary defines joy as "an emotion of keen or lively pleasure arising from present or expected good; exultant satisfaction; great gladness." This is what Jesus wants us to experience. He wants us to know "full" joy. That joy can only be realized as we live the life we were created to live. And we can only do that when we moment by moment choose to be an abiding branch in the Vine of Jesus. When we offer our mortal bodies to God, when we choose to abide as a branch in the Vine of Jesus, how does He bring the "New Things" to life through us?

*"But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.  
(Gal. 5:16)*

walk by the Spirit = to live each moment in dependence upon the Holy Spirit just as we depend on our legs when we walk naturally.

When we choose to present our mortal bodies to righteousness, we are allowing the Holy Spirit to bring the nature and character of Jesus to life through our new heart. In the analogy of the vine and the branches, the Holy Spirit is the life-giving "sap" that produces the "fruit." When we choose to abide as a branch in the Vine of Jesus, the Holy Spirit flows through us and we produce the fruit of the Spirit, which is the very nature of God. We exhibit the "New Things" through our emotions, our thoughts, our decisions of the will, our passions, our desires, our values, our priorities, our creativity, and our motives.

Here is another analogy. Think of the radio app on your smartphone and the radio waves surrounding it. What must happen to the app for it to play the music that surrounds it? It must be tapped on. Like that app, our spiritual life must be "turned on." Our new heart is the radio app. The Holy Spirit is the radio waves. When we choose to present our members to righteousness we "turn on" our new heart. Then the Holy Spirit "plays" the very nature of God through us.

## **What is your understanding of the Person and work of the Holy Spirit?**

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity. Although He is a spirit, He is a Person. The Bible attributes to Him the characteristics of a person – intellect, emotion, and will.

### Intellect

*"For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. (1 Cor. 2:10-11)*

*"And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Rm. 8:26-27)*

### Emotion

*"And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph. 4:30)*

### Will

*"But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually just as He wills." (1 Cor. 12:11)*

The Trinity is a "mystery", something only God fully comprehends. How can this Person inhabit each of us individually at the same time? How can this Person be in multiple places at the same time? Only God knows. But as we learned in Eph. 1:13-14, each one of us was sealed and in-dwelt by this Person at the moment we believed the message of the Gospel. Like any tool we use that we don't completely understand, like a car or a computer, we can appropriate the Person and work of the Holy Spirit as He is revealed to us in the Bible. We do not need to understand everything to apply what we do know.

I am definitely what our modern age classifies as "technologically challenged." I have no idea how a radio works technically. The same is true of my computer and my car. But I know how to use each of these to my benefit. I enjoy my music. I write using my Word program. I get from here to there in my car. I don't have to know the technology that makes these work to have the benefit of their use. We all have valuable "things" like these in our lives that we benefit from. In the same way, we don't have to understand the "technology" of the Holy Spirit to experience His benefits. We just need to believe what the Bible says and yield to Him moment by moment and experience His fruit through us.

## OUR STRUGGLE

The call to present our mortal bodies to God and to walk in the Spirit is opposed!!

*"For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please." (Gal. 5:17)*

flesh = We inherited from Adam an essential nature of self-centeredness. The flesh is the habit patterns we developed to nourish and protect this self-centeredness. These habit patterns are the "Old Things" expressed through our mortal bodies. The flesh is the habitual outburst of anger whenever we feel insecure or put down. The flesh is the habit of being jealous whenever someone else gets something we wanted. The flesh is the habit of gossip by which we try to keep ourselves important by putting others down.

### **What are the habits of the flesh you struggle with?**

When we accept Jesus as our Savior and are born again, our nature of self-centeredness is crucified. It has died in Jesus. However, we still believe this nature is part of us because of the feelings we have. Like an amputee that still feels a lost limb, these old habits of acting and reacting feel natural to us. That is because these patterns have burned neurological pathways in our brains. Think of these pathways as a file on your computer. You have a file that says every time you feel insecure or put down, you must respond in anger. That is how you have responded in the past, and that is how you should respond this time. But that response was generated by your old nature of self-centeredness. That nature is dead and gone. It's time to "burn" a new pathway. By choosing to abide in Jesus in that moment of feeling put down or insecure, the Holy Spirit will put to death the feeling of anger (Rom 8:13 "... if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live") and will produce instead God's nature of peace and security. Each time you face that feeling of anger and choose to abide instead, the new pathway gets wider and stronger and the old pathway gets narrower and weaker.

Pilots must learn to trust their instruments when they fly. There is a connection between the inner ear's sense of balance and the pilot's ability to see the horizon. Flying when the horizon is obscured, like in thick clouds or at night, will affect a pilot's sense of "right side up" and "upside down." The pilot may "feel" he is flying right side up when in actuality he is flying upside down. The only way he can be sure he is flying right side up is to forgo his feelings and believe his instruments. He must have faith in what his instruments are telling him rather than in his feelings. God tells us our old self died in Jesus and that we were raised to new life with Him. Our new self cannot desire the sins of the flesh. These are now contrary to our nature. This is what God says in the Bible. The Bible is our "instrument panel." Will we believe it or what we feel?

**Can you accept, believe, and apply the truth that your flesh and its desires are not the real you, and that no matter how "real" the flesh feelings, attitudes, and desires are, they are not from "you" but the sin which indwells your flesh? Why or why not?**

We find this truth hard to accept because to sin seems so natural, so normal, so real, just the same as it did before we believed. Let's dig a little deeper into this.

The first thing we must do is to identify the "actors" in our lives. To do this we will look at two verses in Rm. 7.

*"For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate." (Rm. 7:15)*

How many "actors" are there in this verse? One – the "I". For many of us, this verse is the "normal Christian Life." We take comfort in the fact that a spiritual leader like Paul endured the same struggle that we do. But wait. Paul doesn't end there. He goes on to say:

*"So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me." (Rm. 7:17)*

Here Paul identifies two "actors" – himself and the "sin which indwells me." He makes a distinction between himself and the source that causes him to practice the very thing he hates. This same concept is repeated in verses 19 and 20 of Romans 7. In verse 19 there is only one "actor",

*"For the good that I wish, I do not do; but I practice the very evil I do not wish."*

In verse 20 there are two,

*"But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."*

God has inspired Paul to articulate the same truth twice in five verses. This means God wants us to "get it." He wants us to understand that the distinction between the new creation we are and the source of sin and temptation is vitally important.

Paul takes personal responsibility for his actions in verses 15 and 19. He is not saying, "The devil made me do it." Yet, he is acknowledging that the source of his wrong actions is not himself but the "...sin which indwells him", verses 17 and 20. The source of his actions is a separate entity from himself. It is not him!!!! He succumbs to it. He responds to its enticement. He acts out as it wants him to. But it is not him!!!! Like a virus, it lives within him and affects him but it is not him!!!!

This is the concept we must grasp. The spiritual battle that wages within us is NOT a civil war. It is a war, but it is not my "old" nature against my "new" nature. It is a war between us as a new creation and the sin which indwells us. Our sin nature was crucified with Christ. By God's grace, we are new creations with a new nature. We must stand against the temptations emanating from the sin which indwells us. We must boldly say, "That's not me!"

Let's look closer at this entity called the "sin which indwells me." The word "sin" is used 41 times in Romans 6-7-8. In 40 of these uses, the word is in the noun form. In the noun form, the word is not referring to an action or an attitude. It is not referring to the "old things." Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words defines the noun "sin" as "an organized power/persona acting through the body that produces actions." "Sin" is the virus of self-centeredness that lives in the flesh patterns burned into our neurological pathways.

"Sin" speaks to us and tells us, primarily through our thoughts and feelings, that we are not new. Since we think and feel the same, we must be the same! If we feel a certain way, we must act a certain way. If we believe our feelings are telling us who we really are, and we don't act as we feel, we will consider ourselves to be a hypocrite or worse. We will be attempting to act contrary to reality! And people who don't live in reality are mentally ill!!

This is the battleground for the person who is a new creation. Will I believe what God says is true, and trust the Spirit to give life to the new me, or will I believe thoughts, desires, and feelings whose source is Satan speaking to me through the sin which indwells my flesh?

Paul summarizes this conflict in verses 21-24 of chapter 7,

*"I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members. Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?"*

He is "wretched" because of a sense of personal failure, of knowing what he wants to do but doing the very things he hates! He has come to realize that in and of himself he can never live up to the expectations his "new heart" has given him. So he cries out, "Who will save me...." Notice, the solution is a Person - a "Who....", not a "What...." We find our victory in a Person, not in a methodology or a program. Victory is not found in "5 Basic Steps to Christian Maturity" or in more Bible Study or in more prayer or in a more consistent "Quiet Time." Victory is Jesus!!

How is Jesus our victory? God reveals this to us in Rom. 8:1-17. First, God inspires Paul to reaffirm to us that we do not have to be stuck in the wretchedness of Romans 7:15 and 19. In 8:1 Paul writes, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...." Usually, this verse is taken out of its context and used to affirm the complete forgiveness of sins we have by our faith in Jesus as our Savior, resulting in the assurance that we will go to Heaven when we die. But the word "condemnation" and the context do not support that definition here. The word Greek word translated "condemnation" in our English Bible means "penal servitude." Because of Adam's sin, every person born is penalized to serve sin. But Paul has come to understand that even though he has had passed failures, he is not condemned to live continuing to fail. There is hope for freedom from the sin which indwells him.

With Paul, we should rejoice in the expectation that we can be free from the sin which indwells our flesh.

*"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death."* (8:2)

We can be free when we understand, know, and believe that God has condemned sin in the flesh.

*"For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh,"* (8:3)

Because of the sacrifice of Christ, God can say to sinful flesh, "You no longer have authority to control the lives of those who have been born anew by faith in My Son. My Son's death in the flesh cancels out your former right to control them through their sin."

Once we have come to know and believe this truth, we can take the next step. The next step is to set our minds on what is true about us.

*"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God." (8:5-8)*

The simple fact is what we set our minds on is what controls us. What we believe to be true about who we are is what becomes true in the actions and attitudes and emotions of our lives. If we "see" ourselves as "condemned" to live out Rm. 7:15 and 19, then we will live in that turmoil. We will experience the "reality" of living out the flesh and its desires, the "old things." We will be angry, lustful, jealous, greedy people.

But if we "see" ourselves as new creations, with a new heart and desires, and with a new power source – God Himself in the Person of the Holy Spirit living within us - we will experience the "reality" of being a new creation. We will be people marked by actions, reactions, and attitudes whose source is the life of the Spirit within us. Actions, reactions, and attitudes that result from our being people full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Who can give such life and power? Only God!

*"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you." (8:11)*

The Spirit of God, the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead, now lives in us. This Spirit will give life – God's life – to our mortal bodies. Our mortal body is the physical body through which the "old things" expressed themselves. It is the arms and legs and eyes and tongue and brain which used to express the actions, reactions, and attitudes whose source was the "heart of stone" we were born with. But there is now One living within us who can put to death the temptations of these "old things." He executes the "old" and gives life to the new.

*"So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; (be out of fellowship with God just as we were before being born again) but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. (8:12-13)*

This same mortal body that used to express the "old things" can now express the "new things" if we choose to let the Holy Spirit put to death the temptations of the sin which indwells us. It is our choice. What we express is the nature and character of the one we allow to control us – the sin which indwells our flesh or the Holy Spirit.

In my natural-born state, I am not a patient person. In situations where my patience is tested and lost, anger and harsh words often result. After being born again, I rejoiced in the fact that one of the Fruit of the Spirit was patience. I anticipated being a much more patient person.

However, that did not turn out to be the case. As Paul so clearly stated, I knew what I wanted to do but ended up doing the very thing I hated. This was especially true in my relationship with my wife Carol. As with most couples, after a day of being apart, when we got together at the end of the day, we would catch up on our days. Carol would ask how my day went and I would lay out the "facts" of my day. What I did, who I talked to, and any events that might have happened. Then it would be her turn. But her turn included not only "facts" but a lot of feelings and impressions - those wonderful facets of a woman's nature that men don't have.

After a while, my patience can start to wear thin. But I know she needs to talk so I try to endure. Inside, the battle is that after a while I just want to get up and go veg somewhere. My limited, natural, human patience has reached its limit. What do I do?

Before I came to understand the Abiding Life, I believed I had two natures – my old sin nature and my new spiritual nature. I had been taught the example of having a white dog and a black dog inside me. The white dog represented my new spiritual nature. The black dog my old sinful nature. Which one would dominate my life was the one I "feed" the most. If I had a daily quiet time, participated in small group Bible studies, went to church regularly, prayed regularly, and trusted God as I shared my faith, my good nature would be well fed and would dominate my daily life. I would be motivated to yield to the Holy Spirit and the Fruit of the Spirit would be mine, including the patience I needed to sit with Carol beyond my human patience level. The only problem is it didn't work. It didn't work for the patience I needed and it didn't work in any other areas of my life where sin dominated. It was just too easy to rationalize that my old nature was too strong and I had to give into it.

But now I know I only have one nature. The new heart that God gave me at the moment I was born again. And I understand completely why I give in to temptation. It isn't because I didn't feed the good nature enough. It isn't because the old nature was just too strong for me. It's because in a moment I chose not to be an abiding branch in Jesus. In a moment I choose not to allow the Holy Spirit to put to death the flesh and bring the life of Jesus alive through me. How patient would Jesus be listening to Carol? Patient without measure! That patience can flow through me. Now when I sit down with Carol I simply yield to Jesus and say, "Jesus let your love, patience, compassion, and concern flow through me to Carol right now. I yield to the Holy Spirit to bring Your life alive through me in this moment." And it works! Don't ask me how. The Bible says it will and it does.

When my flesh pattern of wanting to end the conversation and go veg rears its ugly head I just yield again to the Holy Spirit and His ministry of putting to death the flesh. Immediately I am filled with loving compassion, concern, and joy in the moment. Do I fail sometimes? Of course. And I fail in other areas too. I still sin! But I know why. It was my choice not to yield. I chose not to walk in the Spirit and let His Fruit flow out of me. How do I get back to abiding and being filled with the Spirit? I must confess my sins and once again choose to present our members to God

*"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9)*

### **What do you think it means to "confess?"**

Confess simply means: To agree with

We agree with God that we have believed the flesh instead of Him.

We agree with God that we have presented our mortal bodies to sin instead of to Him.  
We agree with God that we have chosen not to abide in Jesus.  
We agree with God that we were not filled with the Spirit.  
We agree with God that the resulting actions, feelings, and attitudes were sins.

faithful = God will always, constantly, consistently forgive us; He will remember our sins no more, i.e. He will no longer consider our sins in terms of our relationship to Him. It will be as if we had never done what we have just confessed.

righteous = God is not violating His holiness or justice in forgiving us because Jesus has already accepted the wages for what we are confessing

forgive = to send away, to not take into account, to pardon

cleansed from all unrighteousness = to purify from sins we are not even aware of

So, when we confess our sin (agree with God that we have violated His will and way) our relationship with Him is restored because the momentary relational barrier of that sin will no longer be taken into account. Jesus has already paid the price for the sin we are confessing. This meets God's Holy justice. Thus, God can restore fellowship with us when we confess. Because of God's great love for us, He will always choose to forgive us and even apply His forgiveness to sins we are unaware we are doing.

After we have confessed our sins, we simply choose to once again abide in Christ and be filled with the Holy Spirit.

The flesh still believes that self-centeredness, and its resulting habits, is our natural state. The flesh is in opposition to the Spirit. The Spirit affirms to us that we have been crucified with Jesus and have been raised with Him as new creatures and that the desires of the flesh are not our true selves. We must choose whether to believe the flesh or the Spirit. Moment by moment we present our members to the one we believe. Ultimately all sin is acting contrary to the will and way that God has ordained for us to live. Sins result from choosing not to do God's will and be filled

### **At any given moment, how do we know who we are believing?**

We know by the feelings, actions, and attitudes we are living out. If we believe God, the Holy Spirit will control us.

*"And do not be drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Holy Spirit."  
(Ephesians 5:18)*

### **How do we know when a person is drunk?**

We know because the person exhibits the characteristics of drunkenness - loss of balance, slurring of words, or a different personality than usual.

### **How do we know if a person is filled with the Holy Spirit?**

We know because the person exhibits the fruit of the Spirit - love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control - and the rest of the "New Things." When we are filled and walking in the Spirit, we will be expressing the essential nature of God. We will reflect God's image. The "New Things" will be expressed through our mortal bodies. As a result, we will experience meaning and purpose and significance in our lives because we will be doing what we were created to do.

If we believe the sin which indwells our flesh, we will be exhibiting the "Old Things" through our mortal bodies. We will be doing so because we have chosen not to abide in Christ and are not walking in the Spirit. These expressions of the "Old Things" are sins. This conflict between the flesh and the Spirit is an ever-present, 24/7 battle.

### **The flesh has two allies in this battle, what are they?**

The allies are the world and the devil.

*"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest." (Eph. 2:1-3)*

### **How would you define the "course of this world?"**

The course of this world is to be "I" focused. Everything we do ultimately feeds our need to be number one.

### **How would you define "the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience?"**

Self-centeredness is this spirit.

### **Who is "the prince of the power of the air"? Why do you think so?**

Satan, because he is the ultimate "I" person!

The essence of what the flesh, the world, and the Devil represent can be summed up in two words, "I Will".

*"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! "But you said in your heart, I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly in the recesses of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High. (Isa. 14:12-14)*

When Satan rebelled against his place in God's creation, he said, "I will be my god and I will be bigger and better than God, Himself." This spirit of "I will" is how he deceived our first parents.

*"Now the serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Indeed, has God said, 'You shall not eat from any tree of the garden'?' And the woman said to the serpent, 'From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat from it or touch it, lest you die.'" And the serpent said to the woman, "You surely shall not die! "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings." (Gen. 3:1-7)*

They believed Satan's lie that God wanted to keep them less than they could be. They believed Satan's lie that disobeying God and eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil would make them better than they were. They made a willful decision to disobey God. The result is that Satan, and his spirit of "I Will", now governs the world and every human being born into it. Our first parents sold mankind into slavery to Satan and his spirit of "I will"!!

### **How does Satan tempt us through our flesh?**

Satan plants thoughts and desires in our minds as if we were the originators of them. He uses the "sin which indwells my flesh" to create desires for things that are contrary to my new nature. An Example:

*"But a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a piece of property, and kept back some of the price for himself, with his wife's full knowledge, and bringing a portion of it, he laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back some of the price of the land? "While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not under your control? Why is it that you have conceived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God." (Acts 5:1-4)*

### **Why did Ananias keep back some of the money he was given from the sale of his land?**

He wanted the "glory" of being seen by his friends as a generous, sacrificing Christian while satisfying his greed by keeping some of the money for himself.

### **Where did Ananias get the idea to lie about the price of his land?**

Peter says Satan filled his heart. (Acts 5:3) Satan gave him the idea.

Is Satan a weird or scary being who wears a red suit, has horns, and carries pitchfork? Of course not! The Bible tells us that Satan is an angel who rebelled against God. Satan confronted our first parents directly – face to face. Now he works by "filling" our hearts.

### **How do you think Satan "fills our hearts?"**

He does this by placing his thoughts, ideas, desires, and feelings into us through our flesh. He does this by placing these thoughts, ideas, desires, and feelings within us in our own voices. He didn't say to Ananias, "Ananias, why don't you lie about the amount of money you got for the land you sold. You can receive praise from your friends but still have money in your pocket." Instead, speaking in Ananias's own voice, he plants the thought using the first-person voice, "I can lie about the amount of money I received, get praise, and still have money in my pocket." The result is that Ananias believes the thought to lie is his own. He believes the thought to lie comes from himself. But it can't be! As a believer, his heart is good. It cannot think and desire such things.

### **If the source of the idea was Satan, why does Peter hold Ananias accountable for his sin?**

Because Ananias should have known where this thought was coming from and chosen to reject it in the power of the Holy Spirit. As believers, any thought, feeling, or desire that is contrary to God's will and way is not from us. Satan generates these thoughts, ideas, desires, and feelings in us through the "sin which indwells my flesh." Satan is tempting us to let go of the Holy Spirit, break free from abiding in Christ, and live out the actions that his planted thoughts, ideas, desires, and feelings require.

### **Is being tempted to sin a sin? Why or why not?**

It is important to remember to be tempted is not sin. Jesus was tempted in all ways but did not sin. Therefore, to be tempted is not a sin. Since the thoughts, ideas, desires, or feelings Satan is tempting us with did not originate from ourselves, it is not a sin to have them. Satan gives them to us. Then, Satan accuses us of being a rotten human being for having them. How diabolical is that?!

Here is how it works:

Satan has authority over the indwelling sin in the believer (the flesh patterns in the brain) to:

1.) Deceive the believer by implanting thoughts and ideas with the believer's own "voice."

Then:

2.) The believer **CHOOSES** with his will

3.) To **SET HIS MIND** on the deception

4.) Which results in **HEIGHTENED EMOTIONS**

5.) Which increases **PRESSURE** on the will

6.) Which **CHOOSES** to "do the very thing I hate."

### **When does temptation become a sin?**

Any thought, idea, desire or feeling becomes an act of sin when we choose to live it out. We can only live it out by choosing to break free from abiding in Christ. This decision to break free results in our being governed by the sin which indwells our flesh and its habit patterns instead of the Holy Spirit. When faced with the initial thought, idea, desire, or feeling we must choose to stand against it in the authority of Jesus. We are in Christ, seated at the right hand of the Father, having His authority over Satan and all his emissaries.

*"If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God." (Col. 3:1-3)*

Here is the strategy for victory over temptation:

*"Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Rm. 12:2*

Think right to live right!!

First, we must IDENTIFY the source.

A surgeon leaves a surgical sponge in you during surgery. There is not a problem "with" you. There is a problem "in" you. After our salvation, our problem is the power of sin "in" us, not our old Adam nature warring against our New nature."

*Rm. 7:17 "So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which indwells me.*

*Rm. 7:20 "But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me."*

*1 Pet. 5:8 "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

Moment by moment Satan attempts to disrupt our abiding as a branch in the Vine of Christ by using the power of sin that indwells us to tempt us. He does this in three ways:

- 1.) By sowing first-person pronoun "thought seeds" in our minds which will "bloom" into fleshly actions, attitudes, and feelings if left unchallenged. This is what Satan did to Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:3-4).
- 2.) By getting us to think and act with a "law mentality." The law mentality says to us, "I must....", "I will....", "I won't....", "I can't...." It takes us back to the big "I" way of thinking and feeling. We turn to ourselves to achieve rather than turn to Jesus and abiding in Him.
- 3.) By getting us to accept these thoughts and this mentality as our true selves based on our feelings rather than believing what is true about us based on what God has said is true about us in His Word.

We must IDENTIFY where our thoughts and feelings are coming from.

Second, we must REMEMBER who we are.

To stand firm against the onslaught of these thoughts, this mentality, and these feelings we must REMEMBER who and what we are as believers. We are new creations. Our old ways of thinking, acting, reacting, feeling, evaluating, prioritizing, and believing have been put to death when we were crucified with Christ. Christ is now our life. As we abide in Him, His ways of

thinking, acting, reacting, evaluating, prioritizing, and believing will freely and naturally live themselves out through us.

*Rm. 6:3-4 "Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been buried with Him through baptism into His death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life."*

*Rm. 6:6 "knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be powerless, that we should no longer be slaves to sin."*

*2 Cor. 5:17 "Therefore, if any man is in Christ, there is a new creation; the old things passed away (perished), behold, new things have come."*

*Gal. 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and delivered Himself up for me."*

*Rm. 8:2 "for the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death, you who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the spirit."*

We must REMEMBER that any moment we "feel" one of the emotional "old things" or "feel" like carrying out one of the "old things" actions that we are being tempted, through the power of the sin which indwells our flesh, to believe and/or act upon a lie from Satan. These feelings and/or thoughts are not our true selves. We must IDENTIFY Satan as the source of these false "feelings/thoughts".

Third, we must RESIST in the authority of Jesus. Having IDENTIFIED the source, having REMEMBERED who we are as new creations in Christ, we must choose to RESIST the devil by the authority that is ours by our ascension with Christ to the right hand of the Father in Heaven. By that authority, the devil must flee.

*Matt. 28:18 "And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, 'All authority has been given to Me, in Heaven and on earth.'"*

*Js. 4:7 "Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you."*

*Rm. 8:13 "...but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live."*

Example: "Satan, I recognize this judgmental attitude towards \_\_\_\_\_ as coming from you through the sin which indwells my flesh. I choose to deny its truth and believe what God says is true about me instead. By the authority that is mine in Christ, you must flee."

Then we will EXPERIENCE the abundant life offered to us by Jesus, We are who we were created to be.

When we IDENTIFY the source, REMEMBER who and what we are in Christ, CLAIM these truths by faith, and CHOOSE to resist the devil, we will EXPERIENCE the abundant life that Christ promised us. We will no longer be in bondage to the things we hate. Instead we will EXPERIENCE the contentment that comes to one

*"who can do all things through Christ who strengthens, empowers, and enables ...." (Phil. 4:13)*

*"Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." (1 Pet. 5:8)*

But

*"Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you". (Js. 4:7)*

**How do we "resist" the Devil?**

**Why must he flee from us?**

## IN SUMMARY

As those who have accepted Jesus and been reborn, we are free from Satan and his power. But Satan continually tempts us through the world and the sin which indwells our flesh.

The flesh, influenced by the world, and prompted by Satan, asks us to believe what it says is true about us and to act accordingly.

The flesh asks us to believe what it says we want and desire and feel is our true self.

God asks us to believe Him and what He says is true about us.

Moment by moment we must decide and choose who we will believe.

In any moment, if we choose to abide in Christ, we will experience peace and joy as we exhibit the "New Things". We will be what we were created to be – an image of God. Just as people encountered God as they interacted with Jesus, they will encounter God when they interact with us.

If we choose the flesh, we will have a conviction of wrongdoing as we exhibit the "Old Things".

Then we must decide if we will confess or not.

If we choose to confess, we will be restored to fellowship with God. Once again we will have peace and joy and know meaning and purpose. We will be what we were created to be.

If we choose not to confess, we will continue in sin.

As a result of continuing in sin, we will lose the peace and joy, the meaning and purpose, which come from living as we were created to be.

This loss will continue until we do choose to confess.

The Christian life is simple and natural.

Moment by moment we are to choose to abide in Christ, thereby experiencing the joy of bearing the fruit of His life through us.

We experience joy as we abide because we are fulfilling the meaning and purpose for which we were created. We are image-bearers of God.

But a diabolical and vicious enemy opposes us.

He desires to steal from us the abundant life God has for us.

We are at war.

We will never know the ultimate peace and joy of our new birth until Jesus returns for us and we lose this body of flesh in which sin resides.

Until Jesus comes for us, we must resist our enemy by faith in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us, relying on the Holy Spirit, confidently affirming that:

*".... greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world." (1 Jn. 4:40)*

And

*".... this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith." (1 Jn. 5:4)*

## Getting A GRIP On Life

Now that you have completed this workbook, if you are not sure you have ever put your trust in Jesus and become a new creation, it is helpful to take a moment to talk to Him and the Father in prayer. The words you say are not as important as your heart's desire. Even so, here is a simple prayer you might follow;

Father,

I acknowledge I have said and done things that are a sin. I now realize that these sins have created a barrier between You and me and that I will never know true meaning and purpose in my life until I am restored to a relationship with You. I now choose to trust Jesus as the One who took my sins into Himself, clearing away the barrier between You and me. I accept that I am reborn as a new creation in this moment.

Thank You, Father, that You have given me a new heart and a new spirit and have placed Your Holy Spirit within me. Thank you, Jesus, that You loved me enough to come and be sin for me that I might be restored to relationship with my heavenly Father.

Father guide me in my understanding of how this all works!! I want to know You to the fullest so I can experience the meaning and purpose you have created me for.

AMEN

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