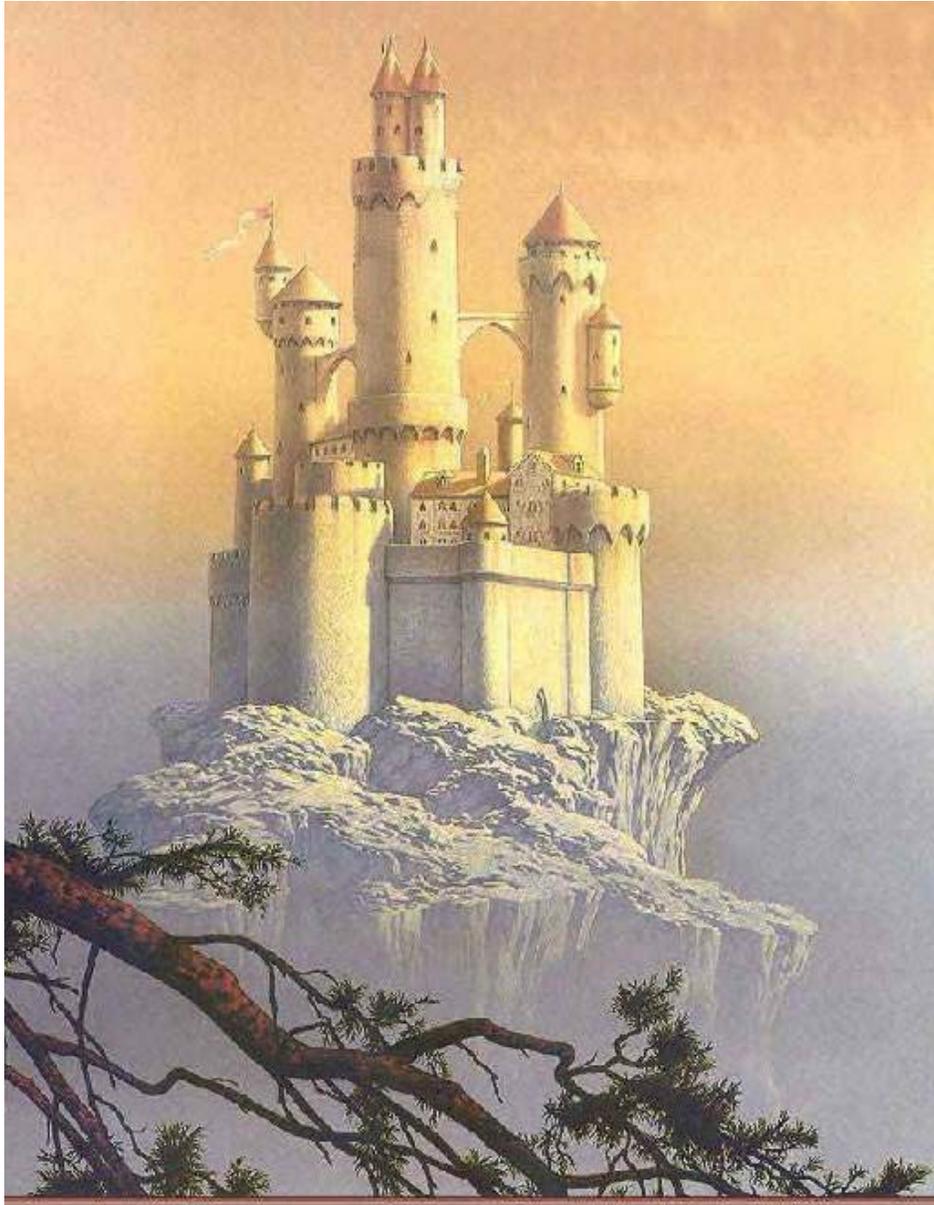


# The Victorious Christian Life



**A guide to developing a Christian life that's not only stable in the times of storms, but is refreshing and beautiful.**

*By Michael Bronson*

## **Contacting the Author**

To email the author:	<a href="http://BibleHelp.org/email.htm">BibleHelp.org/email.htm</a>
His statement of faith:	<a href="http://BibleHelp.org/statement.htm">BibleHelp.org/statement.htm</a>

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Edited by *Janet Bronson* and *Jean Prediger*

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# The International Outreach of BibleHelp.org

This book is a partial printout of my website BibleHelp.org. BibleHelp.org has 18,000 new visitors a month from 120 countries. Over 100,000 chapters are accessed every month. Although this website was started as a small personal ministry, it has taken on a life of its own. It has become a ministry in-and-of itself. I still work full-time as a Corrections Officer, but this website has given me opportunities I never thought would be possible.

Now that the website has grown, I feel it is important to raise prayer support for it. Therefore, I am asking you to consider praying for this website on a daily basis. Not only would it be greatly appreciated, it would give your prayers an international impact. You can download a prayer card at:

[BibleHelp.org/prayweb.htm](http://BibleHelp.org/prayweb.htm)

## BibleHelp.org



*Using the Internet to bring Christ to a lost world*

### Prayer Reminder Card

- God will lead people to the website who could be helped by the material
- God will meet the needs of the visitors' hearts
- I will have God-given wisdom as I answer people's questions

*Over 18,000 new visitors a month  
Visits from over 120 countries*

# International Outreach of BibleHelp.org

Over 28,000 new people a month visit BibleHelp seeking spiritual help. These visits come from the far corners of the world (over 130 countries). Listed below is a partial list of countries:

- 
- |                     |               |                      |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Albania             | Germany       | Norway               |
| Andorra             | Gibraltar     | Oman                 |
| Anguilla            | Greece        | Pakistan             |
| Antigua and Barbuda | Greenland     | Panama               |
| Argentina           | Guatemala     | Papua New Guinea     |
| Aruba               | Guyana        | Paraguay             |
| Australia           | Honduras      | Peru                 |
| Austria             | Hong Kong     | Philippines          |
| Bahamas             | Hungary       | Poland               |
| Barbados            | Iceland       | Polynesia (French)   |
| Belarus             | India         | Portugal             |
| Belgium             | Indonesia     | Romania              |
| Belize              | Ireland       | Russian Federation   |
| Bermuda             | Israel        | Saint Lucia          |
| Bolivia             | Italy         | San Marino           |
| Bosnia-Herzegovina  | Ivory Coast   | Saudi Arabia         |
| Botswana            | Jamaica       | Singapore            |
| Brazil              | Japan         | Slovak Republic      |
| Brunei Darussalam   | Jordan        | Slovenia             |
| Bulgaria            | Kazakhstan    | South Africa         |
| Cambodia            | Kuwait        | South Korea          |
| Canada              | Kyrgyzstan    | Spain                |
| Cayman Islands      | Kenya         | Sri Lanka            |
| Chile               | Latvia        | Sweden               |
| China               | Lebanon       | Switzerland          |
| Colombia            | Liechtenstein | Taiwan               |
| Costa Rica          | Lithuania     | Tanzania             |
| Croatia             | Luxembourg    | Thailand             |
| Cyprus              | Macedonia     | Trinidad and Tobago  |
| Czech Republic      | Malaysia      | Turkey               |
| Denmark             | Malta         | Turks and Caicos Is  |
| Dominica            | Mauritius     | Uganda               |
| Dominican Republic  | Mexico        | Ukraine              |
| Ecuador             | Moldavia      | United Arab Emirates |
| Egypt               | Morocco       | United Kingdom       |
| El Salvador         | Mozambique    | United States        |
| Estonia             | Namibia       | Uruguay              |
| Faroe Islands       | Nepal         | Vatican City State   |
| Fiji                | Netherlands   | Venezuela            |
| Finland             | New Caledonia | Yemen                |
| France              | New Zealand   | Yugoslavia           |
| Georgia             | Nicaragua     | Zambia               |
|                     |               | Zimbabwe             |

# Comments from our Visitors

“Great stuff that you wrote ... Your material is excellent” -*Darell*

“I was very moved by your site! Thank you sooo very much for making clear Who Jesus is for us...”  
-*Sam Holland*

“God bless you for your book of The Incredible Power of Prayer.” -*Dereje Ethiopia Africa*

“Yours is a wonderful site. ... You have a lot of good material and we’ll be sure to “advertise” the site to the members of our church.” -*Bob and Angie*

" I am currently producing a small magazine ... I am hopeful you will permit me to use some of your writings in our magazine.... your writings are well worth printing ... I will also list your site as "a must stop by Site" in our magazine. -*Phil (magazine owner in Australia)*

“I have gone thru a bitter divorce 2 yrs ago now and have just started to get over the bitterness ... Thank you, your site is just what God knew I needed and sent me there so on a blessed start.” -  
*Linda*

“I just wanted to drop a line to say that your articles on the net has encouraged me and has given me some insights on how to share Christ with others! Thank you very much for publishing the part on Friendship Evangelism! -*Monica Malaysia*

“Thank you for your sections on God’s will. ... Today I have found myself encouraged and inspired at a crossroads in my life. I’ve really been in a dragged out slump, but I think that today will be the turning point that’s been needed. Thanks for pointing me back towards God.” -*David*

“I found your site very interesting ... I read most of it over a few day, it raised some interesting issues. And I enjoyed it.” -*Terje Australia*

“ ... may you please also help us ... by writing an article specifically for our paper ...” -*Spike (a group of teens with a small newspaper in South Africa)*

“... even though I have been teaching the Bible for the last 22 years, I have indeed learned many new thing from your book ... your book has rekindled the fire inside of me ...” -*Alabert Bombay*

“I was reading this article on here about forgiveness .... I am wondering about forgiving yourself. ... I feel horrible. I want to feel better.” -*anonymous*

“I logged on to this website .... I want to serve God forever” -*Anette Africa*

“I just wanted to thank you HEARTILY for your Bible study ... I just started it, and I am finding your study so helpful! I am going to take one section a day, digest it, and meditate on the Biblical and theological concepts. I am even taking notes!” -  
*Jamie*

“I just want to say thank for web-sites like yours. I found many information/spiritual guidance that is quite interesting and quite true.” -*Nico South Africa*

“I just have to comment that this site is terrific!” -  
*Michelle*

“You have such a great site; God bless you and your work.” -*Irene*

“... I don’t want to hurt anymore, I have hurt so much in my life” -*anonymous*

“... many are and will continue to benefit from your writings” -*Bev*

“I surfed today for references concerning the will of God ... captured my interest.” -*Micke Sweden*

“Something (Holy Spirit ?) told me to go on-line and I visited your website. I read and printed out both reference sections of Chapter 9.07 and found them extremely helpful particularly section 2 (in-depth). Again thank you so much for your website. I will be certain to recommend it to others. Keep up your wonderful work for the Lord.” -*Michael*

“I honestly think that the Holy Spirit led me to your site.” -*Jamie*

“I just wanted to thank you for all the good you are revealing with BibleHelp.org. I was looking for some help with an issue and stumbled my way to the site and found great comfort and understanding in what I read. I am now a daily visitor to the site and will promote it to friends. Thank you for caring and teaching the Christian Faith in such a casual informative way” -*Todd*

“Please inform me when the downloadable file would be available. I’m interested to have my own complication of the articles. Fortunately, I am at the crossroad of my religious life and I’d like to learn more about my faith.” -*Yvette Philippines*

“I really enjoy your site.” -*Rich*

“Thank you, this was exactly what I was looking for.” -*Marcel*

“I recently found your site online and I had to let you know ... It has been a blessing to my life. I found it when i most needed it.” -*Josh*

“... The thing that concerns me is that I carry this ‘sin’ in my heart and it hurts so badly...” -  
*anonymous Romania*

“God bless you for your service to the saints” -  
*Albert*

“Thank you for putting up such a helpful page.” -  
*Shelly*

“Praise God! I entered bible study in an engine, saw your site and it intrigued me. I clicked on about stumbling Christians, which, unfortunately is where I am now. You have uplifted me tremendously. How I wish I knew the email addresses of so many members of my former church. I would forward it to them all. But, primarily, you have helped me to get back on track with God.” -*Sonny*

“Thanks and God bless you abundantly.” -*Anette Ghana, Africa*

“I just want to tell you that what you have is a very awesome thing.” -*Jeff*

“I truly am inspired by what I have read so far. God is working in my life through your efforts, and I thank God for all your hard work.!!!” -*Bev*

“I am not sure exactly sure why I am struggling, but ... I don’t know why I’m doing this, but I hate it.” -  
*Rick*

“Awesome, No words except All glory to God. “ -  
*Annahona*

“... Oh, how I felt touched by the portion I have currently be able to read.” -*Gerald*

“I’m grateful for your website and information about how to know God’s will for our lives. Thank you.” -  
*Amy*

“I have always had a tremendous fear of death, and about a year and a half ago, I was diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma, and about eight weeks into my treatment, my brain made a tremendous shift. All of the sudden, I became constantly engulfed in my fear of death. I was wondering if there was any way for me to be helped to overcome this, so I can enjoy my life again...” -  
*Jason*

“Interesting Website. Grace be to you.” -  
*John*

“So far I haven’t found any that you missed. You did a really good job. I really like your site.” -  
*Noreen*

“I just want to tell you that something wonderful happened to me today through your writings. Many issues that I have been facing were soothed over by the peace and assurance I found in your words ... I believe the Lord was speaking to me ... Thank you so very much from the bottom of my heart.” -*Greg*

“Thank-you mike for answering my desperate call for help. I am back on track. “ -*Sophia*

“I wanted you to know that I deeply predicate your site and I commend you on your examples, they seem well thought out and applicable ... and would like to use some of the materials you have at our local church” -*Carl*

“Thanks for having this site so I could print what I needed.... “ -*Tom*

“Your site was very useful... ” -*Ron*

“I would like to thank you for having such a precise and informative website such as this one! The topics and studies in your website gave me inspiration, hope, and answers to a lot of my questions.” -  
*Paige*

“Thank you for creating such a great site with just the information I needed about doing God’s will.” -  
*Shirley*

“I found your website today, I really, really like it a lot.” -*Noreen*

“... I still don’t know why this happened, I never wanted to hurt JESUS ... Pray to help me not to look at the circumstances ... and now I feel I HAVE MESSED IT ALL UP.” -*Richard*

“Thank you for your ministry and help.” -  
*Anonymous*

“I just wanted to tell you I just read your page on the Power of Prayer. I think this sort of thing is excellent. Keep it up + may God Bless you always!” -*Coner*

“I just want to thank you very much for the chapter of your book on ‘Standing up for principles.’ It has been a great reading for me and a comfort in knowing that I have done the right thing in deciding not to pursue a violation of my rights and principles in a work environment. ... I look forward to reading more of your book.” -*Hellen*

“Your chapter ‘Finding the Elusive Will of God’ is very good material. I am using for our current Bible Study. -*Regimon*

“... I do enjoy reading it and it also refreshes my mind. Hearing the way you explain things was helpful and I really did enjoyed it ... Please keep up the good work in the Name of Our Lord.” -*Rev Dale*

“Your Chapter 9.07 had some helpful information in it describing the Trinity. It can be quite a complex subject.” -*Jerry*

“Hi, I have just been reading your site and can’t get enough. It is priceless.” -*Bill*

“I stumbled on your web site today during a search and found several topics very helpful. Thank you for your work.” -*Phil*

“I really like your references concerning Jesus Christ as God.” -*John*

“ ... the Lord led me here today... your obedience to the Lord has blessed me.” -*Dawn*

“Thank you very much for all this information, it has helped me greatly. A friend referred me to this site because I had a Bible project for school. I greatly appreciate the many stories and have used many of them.” -*Am*

“Wanted to say I really enjoyed the writing on creation, it was very interesting.” -*Lance*

“I interested very much with your idea and approach of friendship evangelism ... hopefully will apply it in my ministry.” -*Berson*

“Your site is enlightening and I appreciate the emphasis on Jesus Christ.” -*Edwin*

“Thanks for your web-site.” *James*

“Yours is a wonderful website.” -*Angie*

“I found your site today and I am very excited.” -  
*Anonymous*

“... It is a wonderful blessing to have a place such as this to come to and be refreshed. Once again, I say Thank You!” -*Doug*

“Its amazing, my husband and I were having a discussion about Jesus being God and I couldn't fully answer his question ... when I jumped on the web and found your web site ... you had put it together perfectly ... it was easy to talk to my husband about it. So thank you again for your wonderful web site.” -*Christine*

Thank you for such a wonderful website. Your website is so inspirational. I will be sure to pass it on to my friends. -*Mark*

*Letter one:* "... if you could take a minute to pray for my cat (Rocco) to find his way back home safe I would really appreciate all the help I can get."

*Letter two:* "Hi I just sent an e-mail 2 seconds ago asking for you to say a prayer to help my kitty come home and wouldn't you know it by the grace of God the very second I clicked on send now he jumped right in the window out of nowhere I don't exactly know what to think of that but it was pretty amazing the timing of the whole thing well I just wanted to tell you thanks anyways." -*Allison*

[Editor's Note: Well, I don't know what to think either. In case any of you are wondering, my prayers are not that powerful.]

### **Editor's Note:**

Since many of these emails are from different countries, they had some grammatical errors, etc. As a result, some of the comments had to be edited a little to correct some of the glaring errors. I have, however, left most of the smaller problems unchanged.

# Meet the Author



Mike and Janet

BibleHelp.org originally started as a personal ministry of Michael and Janet Bronson (both lay-Christians). It has, however, taken on a life of its own. It has about 17,000 new visitors a month from over 120 countries. About 85,000 chapters are accessed a month. Go to the Comments page to see what some of the visitors have said.

Mike works as a Correction Officer in a prison that was once known as the “Largest Walled Prison in the World.” He has Associate Degrees in *Science* and in *Computer Electronics* (EET). He also graduated from New Tribes Mission’s missionary training (Bible School, Boot Camp, Jungle Camp, and Language School).

Mike designed several computer projects for the Department of Corrections and, as a result, was asked to work on loan in the Deputy Director’s office. While in the Deputy Director’s office, he worked to improve security within the prison system through the use of computers.

A couple projects he designed are *Statistical Analysis of Assaults* (SSA) and *Prisoner Visit Registration* (PVR). With SSA, data on all assaults are fed into the computer and analyzed. Graphs are printed showing assaults by time, location, weapons used, etc. The assaults at each prison are compared with the assaults of the other 40 prisons. The program is even able to compensate for various security levels and prison populations. As a result, many “hot spots” were identified and rectified. Assaults have been greatly reduced. A sample of the printouts is shown below.

With PVR, all people visiting prisoners must register on a statewide computer system. Not only has this system eliminated an antiquated paper registration system, it has greatly increased prison security. I won’t go into the details, but we have substantially reduced a large variety of security problems with this system.

Janet is a high school chemistry teacher. She has a BS from Liberty University and a Masters degree from MSU. Like Mike, Janet is very computer-

literate and is skilled in programming and computer repair. She has worked hard getting computerized lab stations for her students and multimedia tools for her teaching.

Janet has a passion for sewing and has a Pfaff 2140 embroidery sewing machine. She enjoys making clothing from scratch and has developed a ministry of making special clothing for newborn babies, etc. Being able to embroider professional designs on the finished product tops off a beautiful garment.

Mike and Janet share many common interests. They both were lifeguards when they were in school and enjoy construction work. They are both skilled in carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, roofing, and some cement work. They use their construction skills as an outreach to their neighbors and would like to be able to do some missionary construction projects in the future.

Mike and Janet host many family and church parties at their home. Their two acres of land and 5-stall garage are ideal for large crowds. Kids love playing foosball, air hockey, and racquetball (the court is built in the garage). Their fountain (which pumps 5,000 gallons an hour) is, of course, a gigantic kid-magnet. Occasionally, an unsuspecting adult is also “attracted” to the cool inviting water.

“Food fights” are a big hit with everyone. Mike and Janet buy two grocery carts full of day-old bread (for \$7) and have 20 minutes of total mayhem. When it’s finished, bread is everywhere. Apart from the plastic bags, there is no cleanup. The birds, squirrels, and deer eat it all within a few days.

#### Interesting Side Notes about Their Engagement

**The first “I love you.”** The first time Mike told Janet he loved her was in a fortune cookie at a Chinese restaurant. Mike inserted the note in a fortune cookie and made arrangements with the manager to have it delivered at the end of the meal. However, the waitress brought the wrong cookies. Fortunately, the manager realized what happened and corrected the problem.

**Asking permission for Janet’s hand.** Mike asked Janet’s father for permission to marry his daughter. After he was given permission, Mike gave him 10 ceramic cows. The chapter *Johnny Lingo’s Eight Cow Wife* explains the significance of this gift.

**The proposal.** Mike and Janet were eating a meal at a fancy restaurant when Janet noticed some gold writing on her plate. As she cleared the plate with her fork, she saw the words, “Janet, will you marry me?” (Mike had the plates custom made a couple weeks earlier.) As a side note, Janet almost missed this proposal. She lived two hours away and she almost canceled her visit because of a major snowstorm.

**Her engagement ring.** Since Mike loves chocolate, he asked Janet if she would make some brownies. When she broke open one of the eggs, out came her engagement ring. It took Mike 10 hours of experimenting to figure out a way to successfully get the ring inside the egg. Needless to say, Janet was a bit surprised.



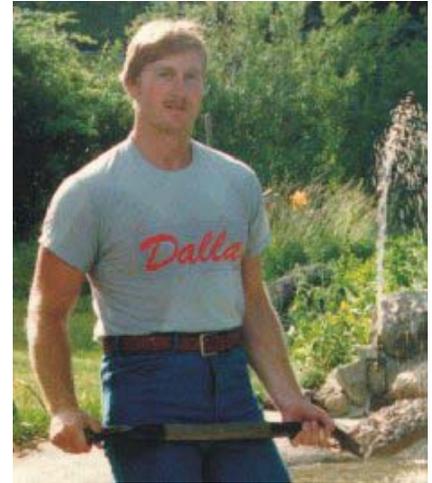
Mike “hard at work”



Janet



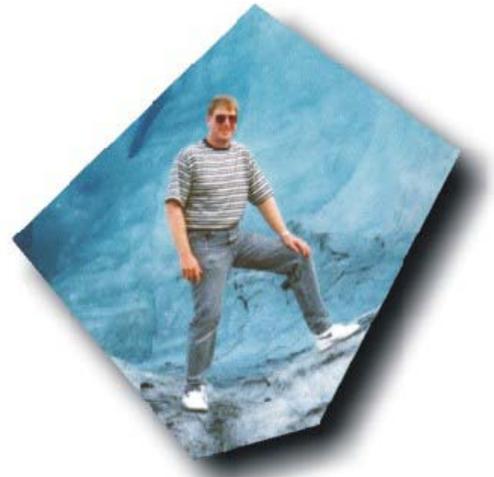
Preparing for a water balloon fight



Mike



Horseback riding in Alaska



Walking on glaciers in Alaska



The prison where Mike works



Our fountain that pumps 5,000 gallons an hour



The racquetball court built in our garage



Our garage that Janet and I built



Sample of Jan's embroidery



Jan in her sewing room



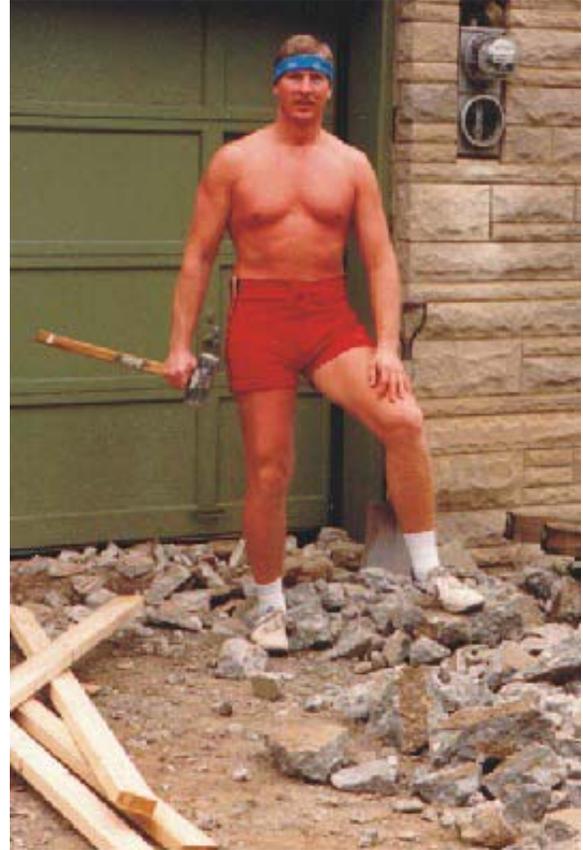
Mike in Jungle camp (1975)



Our family



Mike in the Honor Guard



Mike breaking up our driveway

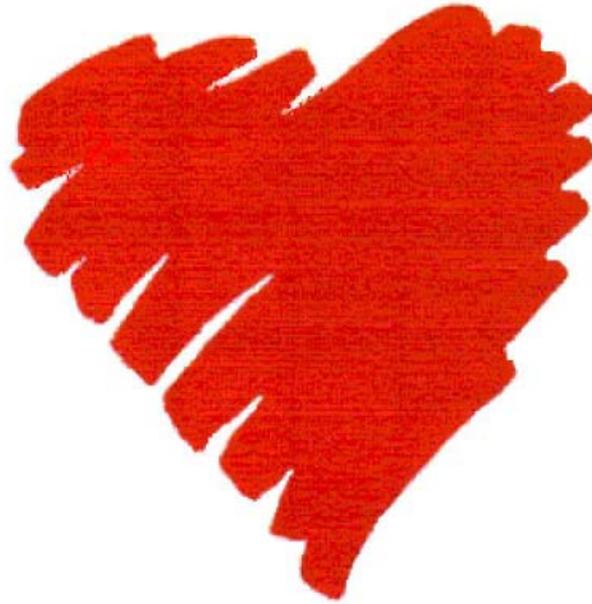


One of our famous "food fights"



The kitchen / dining room that we remodeled from scratch  
(It's nice having a wife who is as good in construction as myself)

# How Quickly are People Going to Hell?



On average, it has been estimated that someone dies and goes to Hell every time your heart beats. For more information, go to <http://biblehelp.org/signal.htm> (a chapter called *Signal of Need*) to see how this estimate has been calculated. Here is how the numbers add up:

1.65 per second  
99 per minute  
5925 per hour  
142 thousand per day  
52 million per year  
3.6 billion per average lifetime (70 years)

## The World Famous *Destiny Counter*

**13,745,286**

I have created the *Destiny Counter* to help you visualize this problem. The goal of this counter is to help Christians see the urgency of taking the gospel to the rest of the world.

To start this counter, go to <http://biblehelp.org/lost.htm>. You can leave this counter running on your computer (in the background) for days, weeks, or months. You can leave the counter running even though you have logged off from the Internet

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## **Section 1: A Life that's Refreshing and Victorious**

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## A Rose Standing Amongst the Rubble



### Chapter: 1.01

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Panicked eyes turn skyward as the sirens begin to scream. The black storm clouds, 200 feet above the ground, pull behind itself a vale of darkness. These sinister clouds, rolling like waves on a beach, look like evil itself is pouring into the town.

What started out as a normal storm now grips the attention of every onlooker. It is just a matter of time before the calm would be shattered. At first, the flag in the center of town shows just a hint of a breeze. Gradually, it begins to rise up, showing its full colors. As the wind increases, the pole begins to bend under the pressure. Suddenly, the flagpole snaps off, sending 20 feet of metal into a car's windshield.

Nearby, trees are shattering like matchsticks as the storm grows in intensity. The howl of the wind is replaced by the dreaded sound of a freight train. The beast drops its long arm out of the sky to demonstrate its awesome power. The tornado, dancing back and forth, shows no mercy to the homes below. As quickly as it began, the terror was over. In a matter of minutes, multiple homes and lives are destroyed.

In the midst of the mayhem and destruction was an unusual sight. A single rose standing boldly amongst the rubble. This fragile beautiful flower survived the storm. It survived a destruction that even concrete and steel couldn't withstand.

This rose is an excellent picture of what a Christian should be like: Strong enough to survive the storms, while remaining beautiful and refreshing. Unfortunately, many Christians find it difficult to be both strong and refreshing. The Christians who are very strong tend to be more cold and sterile and those who are refreshing tend to be less consistent in their Christian walk.

Being a Christian is a fantastic experience. Obviously, the forgiveness of our sins and our inheritance in Heaven are important benefits of our faith. However, our life here on earth should be fulfilling and rewarding. Unfortunately, many Christians have never experienced the "abundant life" of which Jesus spoke.



Living in a fallen world can be difficult. There are diseases, hardships, and premature deaths. Mean, rude, and cruel people often disrupt our lives.

Everyone, both Christians and non-Christians have to face these problems. As Christians, however, we have an additional adversary: Satan. He knows hurting us is the one way he can hurt an otherwise untouchable God. Of course, if a Christian is successful in leading others to Christ, he becomes even more of a target for Satan.

To prepare for these difficulties, many work hard at becoming strong and faithful Christians. They ground themselves in the Word and become extremely disciplined. Not only is this commendable, this is something all Christians should do.

Unfortunately, many Christians develop a hard emotional exterior while trying to solidify themselves against Satan's attacks. They lose the love and passion for Jesus. Their warm and gentle touch becomes cold and firm. Their loving and passionate speech becomes sterol and clinical. These Christians are no longer refreshing to be around. They have lost the inner beauty that attracts others to Christ. In a sense, it is like a person being trained by the military's Special Forces. They become excellent fighting machines, but their personality becomes stiff and formal.



Remember the rose? It didn't survive the storm because it was hard like steel or stone. Its survival had nothing to do with its *own* strength. Likewise, our survival in this storm of life will not be because of our internal strength. Our protection has to come from something that is more powerful than the storm. God is our protection. Ps 33:16-20 says the size of the King's army can't save him, a warrior's great strength can't help him escape, and

a horse's great strength can't bring deliverance. Ps. 3:3 says, "You are our help and shield." (At the end of this chapter are many verses calling God our shield and protector.\*1)

God expects his children to be diligent in their spiritual preparations. We are to ground ourselves in His Word and develop a close walk with Him. However, our lives should still be as soft and refreshing as the rose. Our strength and stability should come from the protective hand of God, not our hardness. Prov. 21:31 says, "A horse is prepared for the day of battle, but safety is from the Lord." God requires us to do our part to protect ourselves spiritually, but God is the one who actually provides the protection.

This *hardening* process is a natural occurrence that takes place whenever a person is exposed to rough elements. For example, when a person works with rocks everyday, he will develop a hard protective coating on his hands called callous. Likewise, when a person works in a difficult and hostile environment, his emotions can become calloused.

"I'm going to kill that officer if he doesn't back off!" an angry prisoner vented to another prisoner. "I'm sick and tired of this place and I'm fed up with being told what to do." A couple minutes earlier I had a run-in with this prisoner up on the Fourth gallery in the prison where I worked. Unknown to the prisoner, an officer in a nearby gun turret overheard the threats on my life. Before other officers could be brought in to put him into segregation, the prisoner went down to the officer working on Base in the block and said, "You tell Bronson to back off. If that punk keeps messing with me, I'll drop him off the Fourth gallery." (Since it would be too offensive to quote verbatim what the prisoner said, I eliminated some of his choice adjectives.)

Subsequently, he was locked up for threatening behavior. To our surprise, this prisoner, who was in prison for double murder, was found not guilty of threatening to murder me and was released back into general population. The reason: The prisoner never made the threats *directly* to me. Since he

never told me to my face that he wanted to kill me, the prison court ruled the prisoner's words were not intended to intimidate me or cause me to fear for my life. This ruling caused such uproar that even the *Free Press* ran an article about it (Nov. 10, 1986).

Working with violent, anti-social people with intense behavioral problems is extremely difficult. In order to cope with this, many officers develop a hard exterior. Although this hard exterior helps the officer deal with some brutal situations, it is a hindrance in dealing with normal situations. This hard exterior is not conducive to a happy home life.

It doesn't have to be this way, though. A person who works with rocks can use lotion to keep his hands soft. Likewise, an officer working in a prison can keep himself from becoming emotionally hard. It isn't easy, but it can be done. Surprisingly, the officers who have been able to accomplish this are usually the most successful in dealing with prisoners. Not only can they handle the rough situations, but their calm and friendly demeanor often defuses volatile situations.

Although being emotionally calloused is problematic, being spiritually calloused is even more problematic. There are a couple ways a person can become spiritually calloused. One way is for a person to focus too much on their Christian preparations and subsequently lose their love for Jesus. There is a reason why seminaries are sometimes referred to as "cemeteries." The Church in Ephesus (Rev 2:1-7) was doctrinally sound, but had "lost their first love." The mechanics of their Christian experience became more important than the person with whom they were supposed to adore.

Exposure to the daily grind of the Christian experience is another way a person can become spiritually calloused. I think pastors can easily relate to this. A pastor's job, by its very nature, can be very difficult. However, strife in their church, brought on by petty fights over things like the color of the carpet, takes its toll. To survive, many pastors have become calloused spiritually.



*A life that's refreshing and victorious*

My goal for this book is to help you develop a Christian life that is exciting, consistent, and victorious. I want you to be able to develop a Christian life that not only is strong enough to withstand the storms, but one that will be attractive and refreshing to others.

I think you'll find this book is written from a perspective quite different from other books on Christian living. I have had four years of Bible training (New Tribes Institute) and have worked as a full time Christian worker. I also know the difference between lofty theological theories and practical down-to-earth solutions. Having worked in the prison system for over 15 years, I know exactly where the "rubber meets the road." I think you'll find the solutions provided in this book are practical and beneficial. To illustrate the unique approach I have taken in this book, I will tell you about another experience I have had.

When I was an officer at the prison, the Deputy Director of Corrections discovered that I was skilled with computers and asked me to work in his office. I designed computer programs for him for over four years. I was in a very unique position. Not only was I highly skilled with computers, I also had an intimate knowledge of prison operations (a

rare combination). As a result, I was able to design computer programs tailored-made for the prisons. I knew from first-hand experience the areas that would benefit the most from computers and I knew how to write the programs to meet these needs. These programs were down-to-earth and practical.

Likewise, I am currently in a unique position in the field of Christian service. Not only do I have extensive theological training, I have an intimate knowledge of the struggles Christians face. I personally had to struggle in a wide variety of situations. The solutions I have developed are not targeted for a specific group, such as the lay-Christian or the pastor. These practical and down-to-earth solutions have been developed for Christians in all walks of life.

This book provides practical solutions to many of the common problems Christians encounter. It is designed to help bring the Christian to a more mature and enjoyable walk in Christ. A balanced and mature Christian will be more consistent, productive, and happy in his Christian experience.

Recently, I bought my wife a Pfaff sewing machine that also does embroidery. It's a fantastic machine, but each card holding about 15 embroidery designs cost about \$120. A couple months after I purchased the machine, I discovered there were places on the Internet that gave away free designs (some made by professionals and others by sewing enthusiasts).

After spending several hundred hours searching the far corners of the Internet, I have collected over 18,000 designs. Although there are hundreds of sites that offer only one free design, there are other sites that offer 50 to 600 designs. As a help to other embroidery enthusiasts, I posted several articles on the Net showing where these designs can be found. More important, I have shown them how to get over 4,000 designs by visiting only 10 sites. Instead of spending an incredible amount of time searching the Net, they can acquire an impressive library of designs very quickly. The bottom line is this: massive gains can be made with minimal effort

(in comparison) if you focus on the correct areas.

This same principle holds true when it come to developing spiritual maturity. A great deal of spiritual maturity and stability can be obtained if the Christian focuses on the correct areas. That is the purpose of this book. Christian maturity is, of course, a never-ending process. I have found, however, a Christian can greatly reduce his struggles and frustrations if he is well grounded in some basic areas. View this book the same way as the embroidery list I have mentioned. It will not provide you all of the answers, but it'll give you a great start.

My desire is not to make money from this book. My desire is to help others develop a solid and exciting life in Christ. This is the reason I am now making this book available on the Internet. Hopefully, in the near future you will be able to download a printable version of this book.

I have literally invested several thousand hours and several thousand dollars in developing this book. My wife has sacrificed a great deal of her time editing the manuscripts. If you find this book helpful, please share this Internet address with a friend and pray that God would use this material for His Glory.

### **Verses calling God our shield and protector**

**Ps. 28:7** "The Lord is my strength and my shield."

**Is. 43:2** "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you, and when you pass through the rivers they will not sweep over you"

**Ps. 7:10** "My shield is God Most High."

**Ps. 115:9** "He is our help and shield"

**Ps. 144:2** "He is my loving God and my fortress, my stronghold and my deliverer, my shield in whom I take refuge."

**Dt. 33:12** “Let the beloved of the Lord rest securely in Him, for He shields him all day long.”

**2 Sam. 22:3** “My God is my rock in whom I take refuge, my shield . . . .”

**Ps. 33:20** “He is our help and our shield.”

**Ps. 91:7** “A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.”

**Prov. 2:7** “He is my shield to those who walk blameless.”

**Prov. 30:5** “He is a shield to those who take refuge in Him.”

**Ps. 91:4** “He will cover you with his feathers and under His wings you will find refuge; His faithfulness will be your shield.”

**Ps. 3:3** “You are a shield around me . . . .”

## The Victorious Life



### Chapter: 1.02

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The heinous clicking noise pounded away as the roller coaster slowly worked its way up the first hill. As the cars reached the top of the 250-foot hill, its occupants prepare for the inevitable. Suddenly, the roller coaster began its rapid descent and the thrill-seekers plunged toward Earth at 70 m.p.h.. The cold metal tracks guided the cars through their reign of terror. Its solid grip subjected its occupants to pressures as great as three G's (three times the force of gravity).

Roller coasters at the amusement parks are great, but they are less than desirable in your spiritual life. The spiritual roller-coaster ride that plagues many Christians causes an enormous amount of frustration, guilt and discouragement. It produces a feeling

of helplessness similar to that of being thrown about in a small sailboat by the mighty ocean waves. Disillusionment begins to surface. Guilt overwhelms us and our lack of answered prayers seems to indicate that something must be wrong in our lives. We feel like the apostle Paul did in Romans 7:15-24. Here Paul says he cannot do the things that he wants to do, and he does the things that he does not want to do.

Our spiritual defeats may be small and unnoticeable or they may be common knowledge to those around us. When a person accepts Christ and is born again, he receives a new spiritual nature. His old nature does not die, but rather, continues to war against the new nature. The Christian will always experience this struggle between the two natures as each battles to gain supremacy. This battle rages throughout our lifetime and can be intense and almost overwhelming at times.

There can be a life of victory for the Christian, a life free from the relentless ups and downs of the roller-coaster ride. Many Christians have resigned to the idea that they cannot obtain victory or “rest” in this lifetime. These people do not realize that victorious living can be a reality. Christians do not need to be subjected to every dubious hill and valley of the spiritual roller coaster. The believer can obtain consistency, peace and rest. However, let us not confuse this victorious life with unattainable sinless perfection. A victorious Christian life is not a life void of sin, temptation and frustration, but a life of control and consistency.

Being victorious is not a result of being a “super” Christian or specially “touched” by God. Rather, it comes from an understanding of our true position in Christ. An incomplete understanding of God’s forgiveness produces a tremendous amount of guilt and frustration, thus spiritual fatigue. This understanding is similar to that of a loving and mature married couple. This couple has developed a deep trust and understanding of each other. They do not hope they can trust the judgment of the other, they *know* they can. When circumstances seem to say otherwise, their trust in each other will carry them

through until they can talk it out.

Satan fights on many fronts in our lives and some tactics are more effective than others. Making us feel *overwhelmed, isolated or completely self-sufficient* are his most powerful tools. An improper understanding and approach to these areas will leave us vulnerable to the attacks of Satan.

Focusing on our past sins and failures can overwhelm us. This is one of the most destructive tools of Satan. With it, he steals our joy and spiritual strength. In their own lives, many Christians find it hard to “forgive and forget” their sins and shortcomings. Whether it is a single major failure, or an accumulation of many small failures, the result is still the same. We feel we are unworthy of enjoying intimate fellowship with God.



*The victorious life is not a life free of external struggles and temptations. It is, though, a life of INNER peace and rest.*

We must learn to completely clean our slate with God and feel fully forgiven after each sin. Picture having some special company over for dinner. Your best china and tablecloth are out. As the dinner starts, everyone is very careful not to spill anything on the beautiful tablecloth. Inevitably, though, someone makes the first spill. This person, of course, feels bad and a great effort is made not to do it again. As the meal continues and more stains appear, the guests are less cautious about being sloppy. By the end of the week, the tablecloth is so

soiled that no one really cares if they are the next one to spill. The consensus has become “What difference does one more stain make?”

Many Christians have failed so many times they just do not see the point in trying anymore. They have failed so many times already they feel there’s no benefit in resisting their current temptation. However, if the Christian sees himself as having a perfect record, he is much more determined to resist temptation. When we understand the marvelous truth of being completely forgiven, we will not feel overwhelmed or defeated.

Learning to leave the past behind reduces a great deal of stress and pressure. We must live in the present. We have no business wallowing in the sins of our past or fretting over the potential hazards of our future. We must continually draw on the Lord for our strength. Being victorious in the past does not mean we will be victorious in the present. Having a close walk with the Lord in the past does not necessarily reciprocate to a close walk with God now. Our strong communion of the past provides no strength for the present. We must draw our strength from God continually. Many songs revolve around the regeneration process of waiting on the Lord and drawing our strength from him. Yet, “Day by Day,” nor “Hour by Hour” is frequent enough. We must draw from Him “Moment by Moment.”

The Vietcong (VC) used isolation to break our POWs during the Vietnam war. They would separate a soldier from the rest of the POWs requiring him to carry the burdens of his collapsed world alone. The VC would parade before him newspaper clippings of anti-war protests showing how his country had betrayed him. Sometimes, the final crushing blow would come when the VC showed him a letter or telegram (usually forged) telling him his wife had divorced him or that one of his children had died. Many prisoners were overwhelmed and gave up all hope. This resulted in mental and physical deterioration. Some POWs were isolated for many years from the truth and their families.

Isolation produces feelings of rejection and abandonment, leading to resentment, frustration and discouragement. The thought that no one really cares for you can be emotionally devastating. When a person perceives himself as facing a hostile world alone, he becomes overwhelmed with a feeling of futility. Now, emotional, physical and spiritual deterioration sets in.

Feeling cut off from our friends, especially our Christian friends, can be painful. Yet, feeling cut off from God is extremely devastating. Satan will do everything within his power to make us feel isolated from God. He may amplify our weaknesses and failures, then try to convince us that God is disappointed. We do not usually feel God has outright deserted us, but we think He must be tired, impatient or just plain disgusted with us. We convince ourselves God must be viewing us with the same critical eye we view ourselves.

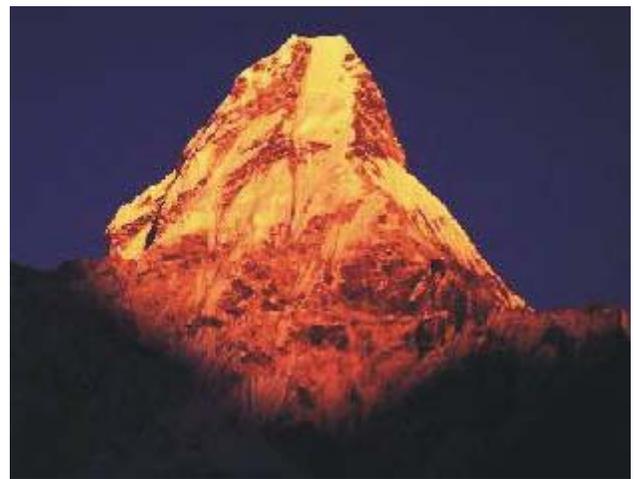
Satan is the father of lies, and he will lie to us about God and other Christians. He knows if we feel abandoned by God we may simply give up altogether. We may go for years or even a lifetime before we find the truth. As Christians, our relationship with God should be based on what the Bible says, and not on what people or Satan says. Understanding this will save us much future grief.

An ever-present danger of a Christian living successfully is the temptation of becoming overconfident in one's skills and abilities. There once was a woodpecker pecking away at a mighty oak tree. The bird pecked once, twice but on the third hit, a lightning bolt happened to strike the tree and knocked it over. After picking himself up off the ground, the bird thought "Who would have guessed that after just three pecks with my beak, this tree would fall over." Be careful to give God full credit for all the mighty works that He does in your lives.

Not only is overconfidence an insult to God, it also denies Him of His due glory. Overconfidence leaves us open for spiritual bankruptcy. Spiritual bankruptcy happens anytime we rely more on our own strength than God's. Satan is not too con-

cerned with how he renders us ineffective, only the fact that we are ineffective. If he cannot drag the Christian backward with sin and guilt, he will try tripping him up with a big push forward, making him too successful. However, the net result of both tactics is still the same: The Christian turns from God's mighty power to human strength and intellect.

Victory and stability grow in our life as we learn to draw our strength from God. This strength, stability and the fruits of the Spirit are natural by-products of a committed Christian. A grapevine does not struggle and strain to produce grapes; it produces them naturally. Likewise, we Christians do not become fruitful when we struggle and strive; a fruitful life must come naturally.



*You cannot have a "mountain-top experience" without valleys to contrast the difference.*

Inner rest, an internal life free of struggles, worries and pressures, characterizes the victorious life.

Although the Christian can be plagued by many external problems, the inner spirit can be at peace and unconcerned with the future. This rest allows the believer to rejuvenate his strength. Isaiah 40:31a says, "But they that wait (or rest) upon the Lord shall renew their strength." Resting quietly in the Lord is important. When Psalms 46:10a states, "Be still and know that I am God," it is emphasizing the importance of making time in our busy schedule to reflect on the presence and person of God.

Some Christians view the victorious life as a life free from temptation and conflict. This could not be further from the truth. Although we are promised victory if we follow God principles, we are not promised an absence of temptations and conflicts.

The children of Israel were promised complete victory in their conquest of the Promised Land if they remained faithful and obedient to God. This victory, though, was not given automatically; they had to fight each battle one at a time. In the first seven years of conquest, Israel did not lose a single soldier in battle except on one occasion. The battle at Ai is found in Joshua 7. In this conflict, Israel lost 36 men because of the sin committed by one person, Achan. Once this sin was confessed and punished, Israel again became victorious. Unfortunately, after seven years, Israel turned their eyes away from God and their victorious life ended.

There are three lessons to be learned from Israel's conquest of the Promised Land. First, a life of victory does not include an absence of problems and conflicts. Second, there can be victory and rest for the believer in this lifetime. We can have consistent victory in all temptations and trials we face. Finally, this victory and rest is dependent solely on our obedience to God.

Hebrews 4:1-11 exhorts us to "enter into His rest." This rest is compared with the rest (or victory) Israel had when they first entered the Promised Land. There were many Old Testament Hebrews who missed God's rest and victory because of their unbelief. We, as Christians, can choose to enter into His rest or face a life of frustration and struggles.

God created the world and universe in six days and on the seventh day He rested. The work had been completed and God rested. Likewise, the book of Hebrews exhorts us to rest in the same way God rested on the seventh day. He has done all the work for us through Christ who died on the cross. Now, we can rest from our inner struggles. God created the Sabbath Day to provide the Hebrews with physical rejuvenation. Likewise, God has

created an inner Sabbath Day rest to provide us with spiritual rejuvenation.

The choice is ours. We can rest in Christ, draw from His strength and produce fruit naturally, or we can live a life of fruitless struggles and frustrations. Entering into His rest is not an option for the Christian worker; it is a prerequisite.

## Learn to Walk before You Run



### Chapter: 1.03

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The ground shook as the drivers revved their mighty engines in preparation for the quarter-mile sprint. The two race cars, standing side by side, will be pushed near their breaking point to obtain the best time. Both drivers ready themselves for the massive acceleration that will pin them to their seats.

The starting flag drops and the drivers engage their engines. One car bolts out with a thundering roar. The other jerks forward 30 yards and stalls. The driver flushes with embarrassment as the realization sets in; he started the race in third gear.

Everything in life has a natural progression; you start out simply and slowly, gradually working your way up to something more advanced. This principle applies in Christian service as well. Spiritually, you must learn to walk before you try to run. If you run before you are ready, you will end up just like our race car driver; stalled and humiliated. Not only would this be a major embarrassment for you, but an area to be ridiculed by unbelievers.

In Luke 14:28-32, Jesus stressed the dangers of rushing into a Christian service unprepared. The believer must first count the cost to see if he is

willing and able to pay the price. Jesus illustrated this with the story of a man who started to build a house but soon discovered he did not have enough money to complete it. As a result, all those around him mocked him. As Christian workers, we must carefully evaluate our preparation and maturity to determine how fast we should “run” spiritually.

In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul explicitly warns us about putting a novice (new Christian) in a position of leadership. New Christians do not have the maturity or stability to handle the pressures and temptations of leadership. A novice in such a position can easily swell up with pride due to his lack of spiritual stability.



*Anyone can start a race, but  
not just anyone can finish it.*



*Before you set out on your spiritual race,  
be sure you are prepared and ready.*

Maple trees demonstrate the stability brought on by

slow consistent growth. Soft maples grow quickly. Yet, because of the rapid growth they are more prone to cracking. (My car experienced this after an ice storm.) Hard maples, on the other hand, grow slowly. This slow consistent growth produces a solid tree that can withstand most storms. Spiritual and emotional stability usually is a result of slow consistent growth. Do not expect to achieve 15 years of spiritual growth in three months. Likewise, do not allow yourself to be put into a position of spiritual service that requires spiritual maturity beyond your present capacities.

“Christian Workers: Prepared and Ready,” focuses on the special needs of the Christian worker. This section is designed to help you avoid some of the major pitfalls that have rendered many Christian workers unusable in Christian service.

## The Same Sun that Melts Wax, Hardens Clay



### Chapter: 1.04

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The small plane shook violently as its landing gear clipped the top of a tree. Another violent shimmer resonated through the plane as it ripped off the tops of several other trees. Screams, mingled with the loud sound of crushing metal, pierced the air. Then, there was silence. Blood, glass, and snow decorated what used to be the cockpit of the small private plane.

As Mike and Ed pulled themselves from the wreckage, they discovered that two of their friends didn't survive the crash. Though they considered themselves lucky to have survived, they soon realized surviving the crash was insignificant compared to what lay ahead of them.



The crash occurred in the middle of winter (Dec. 1981) and they were stranded somewhere on Mount McKinley in Alaska. Even if they were experienced mountain climbers with adequate gear, their chances of survival would be minimal. Although they were fortunate enough to have been reported missing, a rescue was still far from certain. Short days (4 hours of daylight) and blizzard conditions hampered several rescue attempts. After five days, however, a rescue party made it to the

crash site. Mike lost all of his toes and 5 fingers and Ed lost both of his feet.

Seventeen years later (Nov. 15, 1998), *Dateline* ran a story on these two men. It was amazing how differently these two men responded to this accident. They both were exposed to the same tragedy, yet their responses were completely opposite. Mike appeared to be very bitter and angry. He even sued the very people (National Guard) who tried to rescue him. Ed, on the other hand, seemed to be happy and has gotten on with his life. He seems to have accepted the losses that life dealt him and has moved on. In fact, with artificial legs, he even tried to climb the very mountain that almost took his life.

Someone once said, "The same sun that melts wax, hardens clay." The attitude with which we approach a problem will determine the effect it will have on us. Similar experiences can impact people differently. Problems will either soften you and help conform you to God's will or they will harden you with bitterness and anger. A difficult experience will either make you more appreciative of God or more hostile to Him. We all know of people who are bitter and angry with God because of something that has happened in their life. Yet, there are other people who have gone through similar experiences and are very happy and appreciative of God.

The basic difference is the person's attitude. They can either blame God (which will result in bitterness) or they can keep their eyes focused on Jesus. Focusing on Jesus does not make your troubles go away nor does it help you "make sense" of the confusion. It does, however, help you maintain a proper perspective of eternity and keep you heading in the right direction.

The next time you are faced with a difficulty, remember that you have a choice on how it will affect you. You can allow this problem to soften your heart toward God or you can allow it to harden your heart with bitterness. If you become hardened and bitter, you have only yourself to blame.

## The longest day



### Chapter: 1.05

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Imagine waking up with a profound sense of déjà vu. Today seems to be starting out exactly the same as yesterday did. You know it is February 3<sup>rd</sup>, but everyone else seems to think it is February 2<sup>nd</sup>. Everyone is doing exactly what they did yesterday. The radio is playing the same music and the newspapers are covering the same stories. Even the questions, I mean answers, read on *Jeopardy* are the same. Day after day this phenomena repeats itself. The cycle has no end. Even when desperation drives you to kill yourself, the dreaded day starts all over again. Despite your better judgment, you think to yourself, “Maybe this is Hell.”

The movie, *Groundhog Day*, has a similar story-line. Phil (played by Bill Murray) is a selfish, obnoxious, and sarcastic TV weatherman who is sent to the small town of Punxsutawney to report whether or not the groundhog sees his shadow. Phil can't stand this small-town mentality and resents being put on this assignment. This is one day he would love to forget, but he can't. It just keeps repeating itself. Of all days to relive, this is probably one of the worst.

Phil goes through a variety of emotions. At first he

is confused and scared. After a while he begins to realize, if there is no tomorrow, then there are no consequences for his actions. He engages in a large variety of activities such as overeating, trying to outrun the police, robbing an armor car, etc. He learns, like many other unfortunate people, unbridled pleasure is not fulfilling. He is left feeling empty and unsatisfied.

Phil turns his sights on a new conquest; winning the heart of a fellow reporter, Rita. Everyday he talks to her, asking her questions about what she wants in a man and what she cares deeply about. Everyday he builds on what he has learned from the previous day. Eventually, he learns exactly what to say and do to make her fall for him in one day. It is the perfect day with the perfect guy. His motives, however, are impure and he ends up getting slapped. He tries it again the next day and again gets slapped. Day after day he gets slapped. The adventure of his conquest starts to grow old. Although he wants his conquest, his heart is no longer in it. He is just going through the motions. Even this pursuit loses all meaning and fulfillment.



His pleasure turns to despair. He figures the only way he can break this cycle is to kill himself. So,

one day he kidnaps that troublesome groundhog and drives a truck off a cliff. To his horror, he is still stuck in the cycle. He tries every possible way to kill himself, but the dreaded day keeps reappearing. Waking up after dozens of “successful” suicides, he concludes he must be a god. He points out to a friend that he is not *the* God, but just a god. His friend responds, “You are not God. Trust me on this one. This is 12 years of Catholic school talking.” Phil responds, “Well, maybe God is not actually all-knowing. Maybe He’s been around so long, it just seems like He knows everything.”

Phil turns away from thinking he is a god. Yet, he is so unhappy. What, then, is he going to do with his eternity of days? Seeking his own pleasure and ambitions has left him empty. This is where his life makes a positive change. There are two things that change in his life. First, he starts thinking about others instead of himself. Since he has experienced this day thousands of times, he knows exactly when an old lady will have a flat tire, when a child will fall out of a tree, and when a customer will choke on some food at the local restaurant. Everyday he makes sure he is there to help them in their time of need.



The second change is his decision to *live in the present*. He has a choice of despising each day or enjoying it. He decides to make the most of the time he has. So, in between helping other people, he starts improving himself. He learns to play the piano. He studies counseling and medicine. He uses these skills for the benefit of others.

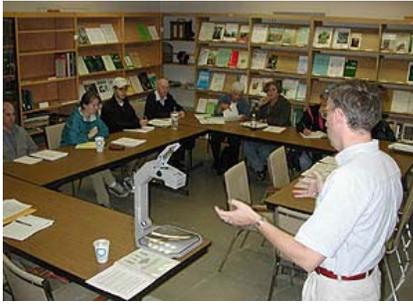
Phil learns to accept the life he has been given. Since he is no longer seeking personal gain, others are attracted to him. Since he has learned to live in the present and to be content with whatever life brings him, his eternity of days is no longer viewed as a curse. Phil is a changed man. Although he is no longer trying to win Rita’s heart, she becomes attracted to him. He inadvertently becomes her ideal man. Once Phil changes from the inside out, the mysterious cycle of days suddenly disappears. Just as his nightmare came without notice, it also left without notice.

There is much we can learn from this scenario. One of the most important lessons is to live in the present. Most of us have difficulty living in the present. We are continually looking forward to a future event. We are often unhappy with some part of our present circumstance and we assume, life will be more enjoyable when these problems are resolved. For example, we may say, “When I get married ...” or “When I have a baby ...” or “When I finish college ...” or “When this pain goes away ...” or “When I lose 40 pounds ...” In reality, if this problem does go away, there will always be another to take its place.

Maybe the future event you are waiting for is Heaven. You might be thinking, “When I get to Heaven and rid myself of this crippled body...” or “I can’t wait to get to Heaven to get out of this terrible marriage...” With some people, it may even be something like, “I can’t wait to get to Heaven to get all of my rewards....”

We are so preoccupied with *waiting for* or *preparing for* some future event that we completely miss out on the present. Sometimes we view time only as the space between points A and B. We endure this time instead of living it to the fullest. Take a close look at your life. Are you living in the present or are you just enduring the present in anticipation of a future event?

## What's Important to You?



### Chapter: 1.06

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A man giving a seminar about time management gave the following illustration to his students. "Class," the teacher said as he put a two-gallon glass jar on the table. "You have only so much time in your life." Reaching into a box, he grabbed a rock the size of his fist and put it into the bottom of the jar. While putting more of these rocks into the jar he said, "You can fill it with whatever you want; you have the choice."

After filling the jar with these rocks he asked if the jar was full. The whole class said it was. He then poured some marbles into the jar and asked if it was now full. The students hesitantly said, "Probably not." The teacher then poured sand into the jar and asked if it was now full. The students, now onto his game, said, "No." Finally, he poured some water into the jar. Looking at the students, he asked, "What important lesson should we learn from this demonstration? One student boldly stood up and said, "We should learn it doesn't matter how full our schedules are, there is always room for more."

The teacher said, "No. The lesson you should have learned from this was if you want to fit the big rocks in the jar, you must put them in first. They will not fit if you put the other items in first. The rocks are symbolic of the big things in our lives, such as our family and spiritual lives. You must attend to them first before you do anything else. If you don't make them your first priority, you'll never get around to them."

I have addressed this point several times in this book; Christian workers often neglect their families. They are so busy in God's vineyard that they lose their own vineyard. I do not believe God is honored if we work so hard for the Lord that we neglect our family. It is important for you to identify the "big rocks" of your life and deal with them first. If you don't, those areas of your life *will be* left out.

A friend of mine was at a store with her daughter. She was in a hurry because she was already running late to pick up her other daughter. As she was leaving the store, she saw her husband entering the store. Rushing past him she quickly said, "I'm sorry I can't stop to talk. I'm already late and don't have any time to spare. Sorry."

As she was getting everything in the car, she accidentally shut the door on her daughter's hand (fortunately, her hand was not hurt). As she opened the door she turned and saw her husband standing next to her. Quietly and politely he asked, "Do you have time to talk now?"



*Time is like money. You can spend it on whatever you want, but once you spend it, it's gone*

I see so much of myself in this incident. Time is a limited and precious commodity. There are so many things that "need" to be done and so little time to do them. In my rush, I sometimes forget the most important thing, which is spending time with God. When I am rushing around with all of my projects, God is patiently waiting to spend time with me. Sometimes, it takes an "incident" to get my attention so I can hear God say, "Do you have time to talk now?" God wants to spend time with you. Don't crowd Him out with your other "important" things.

## A Slice of Humble Pie



### Chapter: 1.07

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Tim was proud of his latest project. His 30-foot tall flagpole stood proud with Old Glory flapping in the breeze. The Persian Gulf War stirred his patriotism and he wanted to display his support. Later that week a storm blew his flagpole over. Tim had failed to properly anchor the pole into the ground.

Simple logic tells us that tall objects need to be supported. The higher the object, the more support it needs. In fact, skyscrapers have anchors of concrete and steel that run in several directions. Some of these anchors are 30 feet thick and a quarter mile long. If a tall object is not properly anchored, it will fall over.

The same principle applies in the spiritual realm.

We all realize the importance of being anchored in Christ. It keeps us from being blown over by the temptations and trials of this world. Although you may not have thought of it, being successful is another reason to be anchored. When a person becomes successful, he is like a tall building rising above its surroundings. The more a person is exalted, the more vulnerable he is to being knocked over. Remember that pride of his exalted state is what brought Lucifer down. This is the reason God warns us about putting a new Christian in a position of leadership.

There are two important things we can do to keep from being knocked over. First, we must make it a point to *continually* draw our strength and support from Christ. When we have our lifelines tied firmly to Christ, it is hard for us to be moved. Unfortunately many Christians, when they become successful, seem to spend less time drawing on the power of God. Instead, they tend to rely more on their own strength and abilities. The very time they need to be anchored the most becomes the time they are anchored the least.

The second thing we can do is make it a point to *continually* humble ourselves at the feet of Jesus. It is hard to knock a person over when he is already lying flat on the floor. The Bible has multiple warnings about pride and spends a great deal of time instructing us to be humble.

The less we apply these principles in our lives, the more need there is for God to provide us with *supplemental* support. He may give you a “thorn in the flesh” so you’ll have a continual reminder to draw close to Him. The apostle Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” was given to him to keep him from “becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations” given him (2 Cor 12:7). God knows our hearts and understands our limitations. He knows if we need supplemental support. Please understand not all calamities and health problems are “thorns in the flesh.” Many problems in life are simply a result of living in an imperfect world.

Another thing God may do is give us a slice of what

I call humble pie. This is usually an event that causes us to realize our lack of value outside of Christ. Sometimes it may be a humiliating experience or it may be a failure that is designed to get our attention and point us into the right direction. Humble pie comes in all shapes and forms. Any Christian who has been greatly used by God has eaten a least a slice or two of humble pie. Some had to eat several whole pies before God could use them.



*The Leaning Tower of Pisa is an excellent example of starting with a good foundation*

He strutted up to the podium to deliver his message. Every step and movement was rehearsed to obtain the desired effect. George, like other seminary students, was required to practice speaking at various local churches. Unlike most of the other students studying to be a minister, George was

proud, brash and felt he was God's gift to the church. His parade to the podium was a reflection of his attitude. I don't know what happened to him as he started to speak, but the sermon was a total disaster. Humiliated, he walked off the podium a very humbled person. Later, someone made the comment that if he would have walked onto the stage with the same humility as he walked off, the outcome may have been quite a bit different.

Maintaining our humility is something we all struggle with. Our old nature wants us to be the first and best. Even the disciples had trouble with this. In Luke 9:46, the disciples were arguing about who among them was the greatest. In Mark 10:35-45, James and John asked Jesus to give them very prominent positions in the new upcoming kingdom. Jesus told them that if they wanted to be great they had to be a servant. If they wanted to be first, they had to be slaves to all.

Someone once said, "After people are exposed to your ministry, are they left thinking more about you or about Jesus?" I personally feel the more we leave our name out of our Christian service, the less chance there is for us to take the credit and glory. It's not that there is anything wrong with having organizations or buildings named after you, it just requires more stamina to resist the temptation of becoming proud. Henry Parsons Crowell was a very wealthy businessman who gave over 65% of his income to various Christian causes, including Moody Bible Institute. Although he was known for being generous, most people were unaware of the depth of his giving. The reason for this was his insistence of not receiving the credit. He felt it was God's money in the first place and he was only being a steward of it. He would not even allow buildings or organizations to be named after himself.

Everyone needs to feel important and successful. This is part of our nature. If we don't receive our proper recognition, we feel like we have been shortchanged. We all have different personalities and aptitudes. Part of my makeup drives me to want to meet needs when I see them. If I see a problem, I try to find a solution. Every place I have

been employed I have done this. Often, when I would see a need outside my realm of responsibility, I would develop a solution at home. Many of them have been implemented. It brings me great satisfaction to fix problems.

At one of my jobs, I created several projects on my own time and initiative. These projects were implemented company-wide. Since I did not present these projects in a high profile manner, most people, except for my close friends, were not aware I authored them. In the course of human events, I fell out of favor with the powers-to-be. Later on, to my amazement, the company newsletters started crediting other people for the projects I had developed on my own time.

At first I was outraged. I spent a great deal of time trying to determine my response. I dug out all of my correspondences that proved I had authored these projects. I made preparations to hire an attorney to help correct this misinformation. Then, I began to evaluate my motivation. Basically, I was jealous that someone else was getting credit for something I had done. When I began to think about this problem in light of eternity, I asked myself, "So what? What difference does it make if others don't know I authored these projects? God knows the truth and His opinion is the only one that matters." I wasn't being denied money, just recognition.

I realize that not everyone would handle this situation the same way I did. Some may say I was wrong for not "standing up for myself." Those who know me, though, know I am not afraid to stand up for myself or what I feel is right. Having worked as a Correction Officer in a prison has taught me a great deal about standing firm and not being pushed around. I have, however, learned to carefully select my battles. I only have "X" amount of energy and I don't want to waste it on frivolous battles. In this situation, I choose not to waste my energy in a battle whose primary objective was to bring attention to myself.

As I mentioned earlier, everyone will eventually

have to eat a slice or two of humble pie. I have, however, no desire to eat a whole pie if I don't have to. I have found that the Christians who continually humble themselves at the feet of Jesus seldom need to be brought low through humiliation. Although we must all eat some humble pie, I'd rather fill myself with chocolate cream pie.

## Downing a Duck



### Chapter: 1.08

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Pete rushed over toward the two prisoners engaged in a fight. To his surprise and horror, he realized he had bitten off more than he could chew. Before him were two prisoners with knives. As they stepped toward him, they said they hated cops and wanted to kill him.

Just when he thought all was lost, another prisoner, Terry, stepped in between them. Somehow, Terry convinced the two prisoners to back off. As they walked away, Terry said, “Friends have to stick together. You’ve always treated me fairly, Pete. You’re not like the other cops in this joint. I’ll make sure those guys don’t bother you again.”

Later that day, Pete brought Terry several packs of cigarettes. It was his way of showing Terry his gratefulness. Unknown to Pete, Terry had staged the fight in the first place. He wanted to create a situation that would develop a bond between Pete and himself. Ironically, the very cigarettes Pete brought in to show his gratefulness were used to pay off the prisoners who staged the fight.

Terry has been working on his duck (an employee who is easily manipulated or fooled) for a long time. This fight was just one of the many steps used to compromise this officer. “Downing a duck” is a gradual process that usually takes 8 to 16 months. The objective is to slowly draw an employee into your friendship and cause him to commit small rule violations to help you out. After a period of time the rule violations become more and more serious. At some point the prisoner will ask the employee to do something illegal, such as bring in some drugs. If the employee resists, the prisoner will bring up past violations and threaten to expose the employee unless he cooperates.

After a lot of careful cultivating, Terry was ready to turn his duck into the “golden goose.” He told Pete to bring him a complete officer’s uniform. Pete resisted. After being told every rule infraction (including bringing in drugs) had been meticulously documented, Pete consented.

On the appointed day, Terry put on the officer’s uniform and walked to the front gates. After several close calls, Terry walked out of prison. Terry’s flight to freedom, however, appeared to be short lived. As Terry was hitchhiking down the road an officer from his unit pulled over and told him to get into the car. Terry was about to say, “OK, you got me,” when the officer asked Terry where he wanted to be dropped off?

Pete’s professional failure had far reaching implications. While on the run, Terry killed three people in a robbery. With most cases of manipulation, the manipulator develops a passionate hatred toward the duck. This situation was no exception. Terry became obsessed with getting his duck fired. In his attempt to inform the authorities of Pete’s part in the escape, Terry got caught.

Now, back in prison, Terry was asked to talk to a person who was writing a book on con games. At the end of the interview, the author asked, “Now that you are back in prison, are you trying to acquire a new duck?” Terry leaned back in his chair and took a piece of gum out of his pocket. He

slowly opened the wrapper and stuck the gum into his mouth. Terry stood up and walked toward the door. Smiling, he turned to the author and said, “They don’t sell gum in this joint. Later man.” (Source: *Con Games*, pages 78 - 92)

Almost every officer who has worked in a prison has, at one time or another, been tested to see what kind of duck he could be made into. Fortunately, most officers have utilized their training to avoid being compromised.



The Bible describes Satan as a roaring lion, searching for someone to devour. Although some prisoners are experts in entrapping people, Satan is far superior. He is an expert on human behavior. Think about it, he has had thousands of years to perfect his art of deception. I have to believe he has a “file” on every one of us and he knows all of our weaknesses. He knows what buttons to push to make us stumble. C.S. Lewis’ book, *Screwtape Letters*, is a collection of letters from a high level demon to a low level demon telling him how to compromise a Christian. Even though these letters are fictitious, they can provide some insight into the possible inner workings of this underworld.

Satan and his demonic forces would love to destroy

you and your testimony. The demonic forces are not sitting back hoping you will have a moment of indiscretion. Rather, they are slowly building a web around you so that one day they will be able to entrap you.



Do you think King David’s sin with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11) was simply an isolated moment of indiscretion? God had described David as a man after His own heart. Yet this great man of God was lured into committing adultery and murder. I can’t believe a man who was this solid could have made such a major blunder without having been previously weakened by Satan.

Even before the sin with Bathsheba, there are several indications David was already experiencing moral decline. For example, despite God’s specific instruction that Kings not have multiple wives (Deut. 17:17), King David had acquired several wives and concubines (2 Sam. 5:13). Just before David committed adultery with Bathsheba we find the interesting phrase (2 Sam. 11:1), “... at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab....” Many theologians believe this verse implied King David should have been leading his troops into war instead of living in the luxury of his palace. They say this shows he had already declined spiritually.

I believe Satan spent years trying to destroy David's kingdom. Obviously, there's no way of knowing the actual step Satan used to down his duck, but I'm sure it was well thought out. This was a major coup for the powers of darkness and I'm sure they had a large victory celebration when David fell.

We should not be overly obsessed with the activities of Satan because this will be counter-productive. We should, however, be aware of his schemes and work hard at keeping him from obtaining a foothold in our lives. We should try to be aware of the subtle ploys Satan might try using on you.



*Satan is a roaring lion, searching for someone to devour.*

Sexual and marital infidelity seems to be the Achilles' heel for many Christians. Throughout history many great believers have fallen victim to these temptations. Every Christian should take special precautions to protect himself in this area. If King David (a "man after God's own heart") and King Solomon (the wisest man in the world) both suffered complete moral collapse in this area, who do we think we are?

As I mentioned earlier, downing a duck consists mainly of focusing on the small "insignificant" violations. Most officers are too smart to get

caught up in a major violation right away. It's the small insignificant things they don't pay attention to. The bottom line is, if something is wrong, even if it is small, don't do it.

There are two problems with not dealing with the "little" sins on a consistent basis. The first problem is it makes you vulnerable of being entrapped by Satan (as described above in the story of the escaped prisoner). The second problem is our little sins have the ability of becoming front-page news. Although they may not seem very important in the grand scheme of things, they still can be embarrassing if others find out about them. This embarrassment can be a hindrance to our testimony.

An incident that happened to my co-worker shows how a little problem can quickly mushroom into a large problem and become front-page news. He was driving to work when the police pulled him over for a burned out taillight. When the policeman ran the routine LEIN check on him, my friend was told he was wanted for tax evasion. He was arrested, taken to jail, stripped searched, and booked.

As it turns out, six years ago, he had incorrectly calculated his city income tax. He still owed \$15.90 on his taxes. Instead of notifying him that he owed more money, the city issued a warrant for his arrest (which they say is standard practice). Since he was late for work because of being arrested, he was marked AWOL and received "loss time." On top of that, since he worked for a law enforcement agency that fires its employees for felonies and some misdemeanors (even if they are committed outside of work), his employment was placed under review. A written reprimand was eventually placed in his personnel file. Besides having to pay back taxes of \$15.90, he also had to pay penalties, fines, court cost, and legal fees.

When he asked the clerk why they didn't send him a letter six years ago informing him of his mistake, they told him something absolutely astonishing! She said it is not their policy to send out letters informing taxpayers of errors. They simply turn the person's

name over to the police requesting a warrant for their arrest. Although they claim to send letters to delinquent taxpayers informing them there is a warrant for their arrest, my co-worker never received one.

Although this seems bizarre, this is a real life example of how small problems can quickly expand into large problems. We all have small indiscretions that we choose to ignore. It may be something as simple as overstating your mileage on your travel voucher or cheating a little on your income tax. Maybe you are engaging in some “harmless” flirtation at work with your secretary or you occasional look at pornographic material. Would you be embarrassed if others found out about these things? If Satan cannot compromise you with a major sin, he may be willing to hinder your testimony by exposing some of your minor sins.

You may question how small secret indiscretions can become public. Obviously, not all of our secret “little” sins become public. What would happen, however, to your testimony if others were to find out about them? I have seen too many situations where small problems have been blown into large problems. I will give you a couple examples.

The first example is about my boss’s wife. She was sitting at a traffic light when the guy in front of her decided he was sticking out too far in the intersection. He put his car into reverse and backed into her new Cadillac. It didn’t hurt her bumper, but it did cause the airbag to explode. This in turn broke the windshield, resulting in the hood and fenders being scratched by the broken glass. After replacing the hood, fenders, etc., this little “harmless” bump ended up costing the insurance company over \$12,000. Needless to say, the insurance company is investigating this repair shop for fraud. Nevertheless, a small bump ended up causing a great deal of damage.

The second example is a problem I had with my Visa card. I was having problems with an Internet order, so I called my credit card company to see if I had been charged for a product. Shockingly, I was

informed I was over my limit. Since I pay my card off every month and had an \$18,000 limit, I thought someone had stolen my number and was buying things with it.

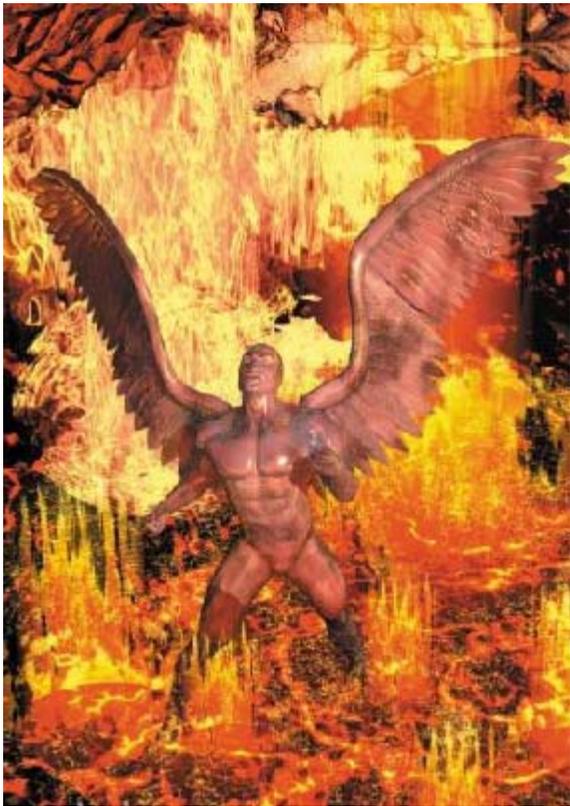


As it turned out my credit card company reduced my credit limit down to what my current balance was (which was just a couple purchases). They explained to me since I was late on my payment they decided to do a review of my credit history. As a result of this review, they closed down two other accounts and brought the credit limit on the third card down to its current balance (I had four accounts with them). As a result of these accounts being closed, several payments started to bounce. I was getting phone calls from all sorts of concerned companies, plus the credit card company was charging me with multiple “over credit limit” fines. The letters they sent notifying me of the closed accounts arrived about 10 days after they closed my accounts.

I told them I didn’t understand why they did this to me because I had a perfect credit history. I asked them to explain why an \$85 payment that was 5 days late would cause this to happen. When she looked into my file, she found I had a perfect credit history and couldn’t understand why this had happened. She immediately opened all of my accounts and after a few weeks I was able to take care of the “over credit limit” fines.

Who would ever have thought a *single* late payment could cause such a large problem? The lesson to be learned from this is we should never assume that something simple and small couldn’t come to the attention of others. Don’t harbor secret sins or indiscretions. They can pop up and haunt you at the most inappropriate times.

## To Con a Con



### Chapter: 1.09

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In the previous chapter, *Downing a Duck*, we saw how the demonic forces slowly and patently try to entangle us in some crippling sin. Satan and his forces are very clever with their deceptions. One thing I have always wondered about is if any demon has ever tried to trick Satan? Has any demon ever tried to overthrow Satan by running a con-game on him? Of course, the Bible doesn't say, but I do know of one person who thinks he can con Satan.

There is a prisoner where I work who is a Satan worshiper. One day he was talking about what's going to happen to him when he dies, and he astonished everyone by saying he was not going to go to Hell. When he was asked about the contradiction, he said, "Yes, it is true I sold my soul to

Satan in order to get some special favors from him. I have obtained power and possessions from being a Satanist. I am, however, going to play a trick on him. Shortly before I die, I'm going to renege on my deal with Satan and terminate my contract with him."

What ignorance and arrogance! Lucifer is considered to be the most powerful being ever created. How naïve can a person be to put himself on the same playing field as this powerful being. We usually think of Satan as a powerful person, such as a large, dominating human. However, I believe he is probably far more powerful than a million, or even a trillion suns. It is hard enough for a mobster to leave the Mafia and live to talk about it. What chance does a puny human have against the most powerful being ever created?

Although I don't think Satan would allow someone to cheat him on a contract, I think it is even more ridiculous to think a human could outwit the greatest deceiver? Satan has been practicing deception for thousands of years and has perfected it down to a science.

We look at this prisoner and shake our heads in amazement. We wonder how could his thinking have become so warped. Yet, amazingly, we do the same thing with God. We often try to fool God. We see how our spiritual life is lacking, so we try to impress God with outward Christian service. We assume He would see all of these great things we are doing and won't realize these activities are only superficial.

At one time or another, we all have tried to obtain the favor of God with our actions. We sometimes think if we can convince others of our spirituality, God may follow their opinion. Think about the times that we try to impress others by the amount of scripture we have memorized or the great words of wisdom we have learned. Often we display these attributes to show others the depth of our faith.

God knows our heart and He is not fooled by our diversions. The good news is we don't need to

impress God. God's acceptance of us is not based on our actions and Christian service. God has accepted us (Christians) because of the blood of Jesus.

We sometimes confuse "earning God's favor" with gaining eternal rewards. It is true God will reward us in Heaven because we were obedient to him on Earth. It is not true, however, that we can make God happier with us by doing good works. God will not "like" you any more than what He does right now. He loved us before we were repentant and He fully accepts us because of Jesus' atonement. Perform your good works because you love God, not because you are trying to win His favor.

## Life in the Fast Lane



### Chapter: 1.10

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The laptop I recently purchased came with a fun motorcycle game. Of course, being a good steward of all of the resources I have been given, I felt obligated to play the game (well, something like that). After a few days, I got to the point where I was in first place before I finished the first of four laps. Since being in first place was no long a challenge, I challenged myself by trying to beat my previous times. That also became boring, so I lost interest in the game.

A few weeks later I discovered a “stunt/booster” feature. I found if I pressed a certain button my front wheel would pop up and I would accelerate faster than normal for about three seconds. I thought this was great; I could really increase my

times. The only problem with this feature is when you are riding with the front tire in the air, you only have one third of your steering (which is a real drag when you’re going around sharp corners).

As I experimented with this new feature, I found myself continually overshooting the curves. So I decided that the logical solution was to use this feature only on the straight parts of the road. Although this may sound simple, I found this to be difficult to do. I kept on thinking, “Just a little bit longer would be okay.” As a result, I have *never* beaten my best time using the extra boost.

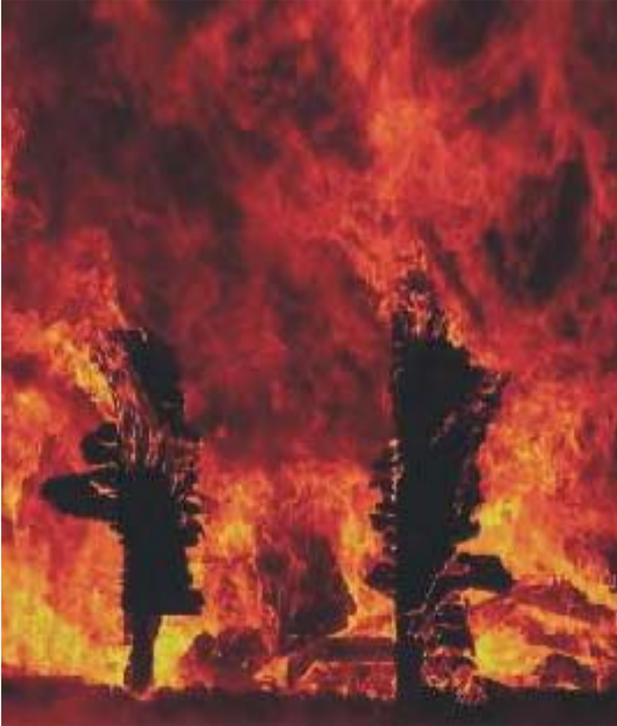
This phenomenon is similar to the life of many Christians. Instead of maintaining a consistent steady spiritual growth, some Christians accelerate forward at excessive speeds only to be sidetracked by various obstacles. As a result, their spiritual lives have accomplished far less than a person who was more consistent than he was aggressive.

Carefully and prayerfully choose the outreaches you want to pursue and then pace yourself. Don’t allow yourself to be sidetracked because you are in too much of a hurry. Resist the temptation of doing more than you can reasonably handle.

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## Rising out of the Ashes



### Chapter: 2.01

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Whispers of smoke rose up as Cindy walked through the remains of her house. The fire, last night, completely destroyed her home. As she kicked a charred picture frame, she realized that these smoking embers are symbolic of what her life had become.

This past year, everything had fallen apart in Cindy's life. A misunderstanding with her boss caused her to lose her job. Her two-year relationship with her boyfriend had ended. Her car was destroyed when a drunk ran a stop sign. Now, her house has burned down.

The frustrations and pressures seem to be overwhelming. She asks herself, "How can I overcome

this? Not only is there no light at the end of the tunnel, the tunnel seems to be collapsing all around me."

Have you ever felt this way? Have you ever felt that your life has turned into such a mess that all you have left are ashes? Most likely, as a Christian, you're probably familiar with the verses that talk about God being close to those in trouble. However, the old comfort of, "All things working together for the good" (Rom 8:28) may seem rather shallow. You ask yourself, "How can God create something good out of my life when all I have left are ashes?"

Many people don't realize if you mix ashes in oil and then put the mixture into a salt brine, you'll get a "scum" that floats to the surface. If you squeeze the scum together, you will end up with a bar of soap. What originally appeared to be a worthless waste product is actually a beneficial healing product.

Think about this concept for a moment. If you mix the ashes of your ruined dreams along with the anointing oil of God into the salt of your tears, you will end up with a useful substance. The "scum" you see floating in your life is not a worthless byproduct of a life-gone-bad. It is actually something that is very useful. God can take the remains of your destroyed dreams and turn them into something that can help cleanse those around you. God can use the lessons you have learned from your experiences to help heal dirty and wounded hearts.

Many of the problems we encounter are outside our control. We do, however, bring some problems on ourselves. Sometimes it is our sin that has caused our world to collapse. Does God rebuild our lives into something special even if it is our sins that has caused the destruction?

You may say, "Okay, I can see how God can take a life that is hurting and turn it into a shining example of God's love and power. I can't see, however, how God can salvage the testimony of a Christian

who has allowed his life to be completely destroyed by sin. Once a Christian life has made a total mockery of the gospel and has alienated both Christians and non-Christians, what is left for him?"

That is a very good question; what is left for him? Unfortunately, we treat the repentance of a Christian and a non-Christian differently. If a person makes a total mess of his life and *then* becomes a Christian, we hold him up as a shining example of what God can do. If, however, a Christian falls into the same despicable sin and then repents, we usually try to hide him in a corner somewhere. He has become an embarrassment to us.

There is a double standard in the Christian community. While I think there are some practical considerations that require us to treat fallen Christians differently, I think a critical and judgmental spirit motivates most of our reactions to these Christians. The unfortunate reality for these fallen Christians is most ministries will not want to employ them. So, what is left for these people? Will the scars of their terrible sins prevent them from ever being used of God again? Sin always produces scars, and as a result, there is no way for things to *completely* return to the way they were before.

To illustrate, let's say you are a youth minister at your church and have fallen into deep sin. It has been discovered you have been having sexual relations with several of the young girls in your youth group. In fact, some of the girls are as young as eight years old. Many things will probably happen all at once. You will lose your job and the ministry of your church is set back many years. Your wife leaves you and your transgressions make national news.

After several years in prison, you finally turn your life around. Your repentance is genuine, and you have taken multiple steps to correct your deviant behavior. Your walk with God is closer than it has ever been. Your humility before God is profound.

After you get out of prison, you try to pick up the pieces only to find there aren't any pieces to pick

up. Your family and all of your Christian friends want nothing to do with you. Your former pastor says it wouldn't be a good idea for you to be actively involved in your former church. In fact, he prefers you attend a different church. Most parents have said they don't want you to be near their children. Despite your burden to serve God, no one wants your help.

You understand their rejection, but this does little to ease your pain. You ask yourself, "What type of service is left for me?" You still have a burden to serve God, but no one will give you an opportunity. You think about the people who have been saved in prison and now have growing ministries. You think about the unfairness and you struggle to overcome the bitterness.

So, what do you do? I guess you could crawl into a hole somewhere and live out the rest of your life in shameful isolation. You could change your name and move to another state and start working in some distant church. Assuming they don't do a background check, it still wouldn't do you any good. God will not bless a ministry based on a lie. So, we go back to the original question, what do you do?

Rom. 5:20,21 says where sin abounds, grace abounds even more. Are these just hollow words that sound good in a sermon, or does God take special care of his fallen children? If this is true, the youth pastor should have received a great deal of extra grace.

God has provided, through nature, a beautiful illustration of His grace. Long ago in a forest there once stood a mighty tree. It was the tallest and most beautiful tree in the whole forest. It provided shade and shelter for a large variety of animals. One day the world came crashing in on the life of the tree (quite literally; an earthquake swallowed up the whole area). Now, the tree has no practical purpose and is basically worthless. To add insult to injury, conditions were just right to cause the tree to turn into coal. This mighty tree is now a dirty, messy substance, something that is undesirable to



be around. To make matters worse, this tree was then put under incredible pressure. Amazingly, this destroyed tree, this filthy mess, has turned into a diamond.

The tree was designed for a specific purpose, but it could no longer function as a tree. Its original purpose and function had been completely destroyed. There was no turning back. Yet, this tree can still be useful. Even though it can no longer be used as it was intended, it now has a *new* function. Being a beautiful diamond, it can be used for something very special, such as a jewel on a king's crown.

Likewise, a Christian who has completely destroyed his testimony and ministry still has hope. He probably will never be able to be involved in the

type of ministry he was involved in before. He can, however, be used in other types of service. It may not be a high profile position. It may not even appear glamorous to him or anyone else. Yet, in God's eyes, these remaining years may be even more valuable and productive than his previous years in his other ministry.

Isn't it miraculous to see how God can take a dark filthy mess and turn it into something beautiful and valuable? What do you think He can do with the mess you've made in your life? If you have fallen deep into sin, God can still make your life valuable and useful. You'll still have to live with the terrible scars of your sins, but these scars will be a living testimony of God's love and grace. Truly where sin abounds, grace does much more abound.

## Shooting Your Wounded



### Chapter: 2.02

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As the crew of the whaling boat begins reeling in the whale they had just harpooned, they spotted a couple shark fins. They know if they don't quickly hoist the whale out of the water, they will be inundated with sharks. Soon enough, dozens of sharks were frothing the water. With their eyes rolled back, the sharks began taking bites out of the whale.

The whaling crew desperately tries to save their catch. They begin beating the sharks off with paddles and hooking rods. Although they are able to injure several sharks, they still lost 1/3 of the whale. The ironic thing was, during this feeding frenzy, the sharks started attacking the other injured sharks.

Unfortunately, this savage behavior is typical of many Christians. It has been said, "The Christian army is the only army that kills its wounded." Instead of trying to help and provide spiritual first aid to a fallen brother or sister, many Christians attack them.

Don't misunderstand me. I am deeply troubled and angered when a Christian's lifestyle makes a

mockery of God and becomes a stumbling block to many non-Christians. The fall of several TV evangelists (mid 1980's) and Christian singers (mid 1990's) are excellent examples. Their hypocritical lifestyles and moral failures have greatly damaged the cause of Christ. There is no doubt in my mind many people have been turned off to the gospel message because of what has happened. As a result, I believe many people are going to Hell because of their behavior.

I was also saddened by the response of other Christians to these incidents. Obviously, we should never tolerate sin. Yet, I saw a marked absence of compassion and sympathy for these fallen brothers and sisters. It reminds me of the story of the Good Samaritan where the priest crossed over to the opposite side of the road when he saw an Israelite who had been beaten and robbed (Luke 10:30-37).



How compassionate do you consider yourself? How many times have you prayed for a fallen brother you have openly criticized? It is my opinion, if you have not fervently prayed for the fallen Christian, you should probably keep your criticisms to yourself. Praying for a fallen brother not only provides him the needed spiritual support, it also helps align your attitude with God's attitude.

Recently I heard about an interesting "compassion test" done at a seminary. The students had to write a report about compassion and the Good Samaritan. The morning the report was due, the teacher had a friend dress up like a person who had been beaten and robbed. He had ripped clothing, fake

blood, etc. The teacher had the victim lie near the pathway where most of the students would walk to class. Surprisingly, all of these future pastors and missionaries walked past this person and offered no help. Obviously, there is a big difference between *knowing* what a Christian should do and actually *doing* it.

It is the condescending attitude of some Christians that saddens me the most. We are quick to point the finger at others when they make mistakes, but we seldom see our own glaring faults. It is almost as if some people don't realize we are all made out of the same cookie dough and are just as capable of doing the same thing. During the 1980's, one TV evangelist was very critical of another TV evangelist who had just publicly admitted his moral failure. In fact, he called the fallen evangelist the "cancer of Christianity." Ironically, while he was criticizing the fallen evangelist for moral failure, he was having secret meetings with a prostitute. Shortly afterwards, he was forced to step down because his moral failure was revealed.

While we all may be appalled by his behavior, we shouldn't be too quick to condemn him. None of us are even close to being perfect. It just happened his faults were publicized and ours are not. How loyal would your friends be if your secret sins were published on the front page of a newspaper? Worse yet, what would happen if your thought life were published? We have no business worrying about the speck in our brother's eye when we have a pole stuck in our own eye (Mt. 7:3-5). We are all vulnerable to spiritual and moral failure. Remember, King David (a man after God's own heart) and King Solomon (the wisest man in the world) both suffered severe moral failure.

It is easy to miss the point Jesus was making when the woman caught in adultery was brought to Him (John 8:3-11). We tend to think Jesus was trying to put the Pharisees in their place. Actually, He was talking to all of us about our condescending attitudes. The Pharisees were not the only ones who were extremely judgmental about other people's failures. The Pharisees were not concerned about

the woman's welfare and usually we are not concerned about the welfare of the fallen Christian. I think the point Jesus was trying to make was, "Be less concerned about their failures and be more concerned about their recovery and spiritual wellbeing."

We are more concerned about other people's misbehavior than our own. An incident that recently took place in my neighborhood provides an excellent example of this. Several neighbors signed a petition demanding to have our streets patrolled for speeders. I found it comical when three of the people who signed the petition received speeding tickets as a result. It was even more comical, however, that these three people had the audacity to try to convince the officer not to give them tickets because they were the ones who signed the petition.

I would like to point out there is a difference between forgiving a person and trusting and respecting him. Trust and respect is something that has to be earned. Many people assume if you forgive a person, you must put things back to the way they were. Not only is this untrue, it is often unwise. There are always consequences for our sins.

Although prudence may require you to be more cautious in your dealings with a fallen brother, you still should have love and compassion for him. While it is easier to love a repentant brother, our love and compassion should not be dependent on the person's repentance. Remember, it was while we were yet sinners (and unrepentant) that Christ died for us. Look at my chapter, *Rising out of the Ashes*, for more information on how we should treat a fallen brother.

*Hallmark Hall of Fame* has a movie called *Harvest of Fire*. It is a story of an FBI agent sent to a small Amish community to investigate the burning of several Amish barns. At first it was thought an outsider (or "English") was the arsonist. Since the Amish act and dress very different from the rest of the community, they are often mistreated. Most people thought solving this case was just a

simple matter of finding which outsider was responsible.

I already knew a great deal about the Amish people, but this movie gave me new insights into *why* they maintain their “old fashioned” ways. Although I still do not agree with their structure of leadership and obsession with simplicity, I have a whole new appreciation and respect for these people. I now can see *why* they feel it is important to maintain this unique lifestyle, a lifestyle we find so peculiar.



Each Amish community has an Elder who provides guidelines that must be followed. Although most Christians try to live their lives within the constraints of what the Bible says is morally right and wrong, the Amish carry it a step further. They have an *additional* set of guidelines. They realize the Bible does not mandate these guidelines, but they feel these guidelines are important in maintaining a healthy community. As a result, each Elder has the responsibility to establish a lifestyle (or flavor) he feels is best for his community. This is why some communities use electric tools for construction while others will only use gasoline powered tools or no power tools at all.

An example of one of these “flavors” is the shape of

the barn’s roof. The Amish community in this movie was only allowed to have arched roofs, not peaked roofs. One of the Amish farmers, however, felt a peaked roof would be much better. Since he refused to follow the Elder’s counsel, he was “shunned.” Although most of us probably feel this is excessive punishment for this violation, obedience is a central component of the Amish culture.

As it turned out, it was this farmer’s son who was burning the barns. He was angry over the treatment of his father. Considering the “community effort” involved in Amish barn raisings, burning a neighbor’s barn is a slap against the whole community. When the father found out it was his own son who was setting the fires, he realized what his “pride” had done. As a result of his father’s repentance, the boy turned himself in to the Elders and subsequently to the police.

At this point you’re probably wondering why I am sharing this story. When the boy and his father were being led from the police station to the courthouse, they were approached by one of the victims. As a show of support for their repentant brothers, they asked if they can accompany them. As the camera pans back, it reveals the whole Amish community following behind to show their support. I defy anyone to watch this movie and not develop some tears at the end. Today’s church would be much different if we Christians could only show this same type of compassion and forgiveness. When we have to rebuke a person for a sin, it should always be for the purpose of restoration.

During the Revolutionary War, some American commanders realized it was better to only wound the British soldiers instead of trying to kill them. This strategy would take three British soldiers out of service because two healthy British soldiers would stop fighting and carry their fallen comrade to get medical attention. This special care is what you would expect from those who are concerned about the welfare of their comrades. While diverting so much attention to the wounded soldiers may not be the most efficient military strategy, it does tell you a great deal about the character of these people.

Do we tend to the needs of our fallen brothers and sisters? What does our treatment of our fallen brother and sisters tell others about the Christian Army? What legacy are we leaving behind? Sobering questions aren't they?



The U.S. military has several elite military units, often referred to as the Special Forces. The Army Rangers is one of these units and has a history that goes back to the Revolutionary War. There are three main reasons why these elite fighting groups are so effective in devastating a superior force. First, only the best of the best make it into these units. Second, these units are highly trained. Third, they are trained to work together as a body.

The military has realized that a group of soldiers that work together as a single body is incredibly difficult to stop. This unity makes it possible for these small teams to be able to defeat overwhelming odds. This unity is essential to the success of these units.

To force these soldiers to think of themselves as a body, they are required to do everything together as a unit. They are given assignments that can only be accomplished if everyone works together as a team. These assignments are setup so that any disunity will result in failure. Not only are they trained to rely on their fellow soldiers to accomplish their mission, they are taught to think of their fellow soldier's

welfare as much as they think of their own.

When one of these soldiers is wounded, the whole body (unit) is wounded. When one soldier is incapacitated, the others will care for him. In their training they are taught, "You go in together, you stick together, and you come out together. If you can't come out together, don't bother coming out."

While it is easy for us to feel compassion for a wounded military soldier, it is much more difficult for us to feel compassion for a wounded Christian soldier. The reason for this is a fallen Christian soldier usually does not *appear* helpless and in need. Instead of being humbled and *broken* by their sin, a wounded Christian soldier often comes across as being proud, arrogant, or rebellious. Despite their lack of humility, these fallen Christians are still casualties of Satan's devices; they have been taken out of the fight. Often these brothers and sisters don't even realize Satan has neutralized them.

It is easy to come to the aid of a brother who realizes he needs help. It is much more difficult to come to the aid of a proud arrogant brother. Nevertheless, he still needs our help. Chances are he will not be open to any verbal help, so we must provide the needed support via fervent prayer.

It is important to understand that supporting our falling brother does not mean ignoring his sins. It is also important to understand that our goal must be restoration, not punishment. This may be very difficult to do if the brother has deeply hurt us. Nevertheless, we must care for him as though we were caring for ourselves.

The Army Ranger's creed is, "Never shall I fail my comrades ... I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy." Wow, if the Christian Army would only treat their brothers and sisters the same way. If the Christian Army would follow this creed, the Christian landscape would be quite different.

## The Discouraged Heart



### Chapter: 2.03

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Mrs. Hanover was discouraged and frustrated. Years of prayers for her husband's salvation were in vain. He was killed in a car accident and now he was in Hell for eternity. Not only did she lose the love of her life, she had the haunting knowledge that he will be eternally separated from God. The burden of this knowledge weighed heavily on Mrs. Hanover.

Mrs. Hanover became frustrated and disillusioned with God and Christianity. Doubts crept in about God's faithfulness and love. She felt betrayed. Discouraged, she stopped living for the Lord.

It is easy to become discouraged when it appears that God does not care and is not listening. It is

hard to send up consistent prayers when it appears they are going no higher than the ceiling. Mrs. Hanover responded to her discouragement the same way many of us do.

Five years later, Roger Sims approached Mrs. Hanover and told her an amazing story. He had been hitchhiking when Mr. Hanover had picked him up. As they began to talk, Roger started to share his faith in Jesus Christ. The message was so compelling that Mr. Hanover pulled over to the side of the road and accepted Jesus as his Savior. Later on that day Mr. Hanover was killed in a car accident. (Source: *Power for Living*, Jan. 30, 2000, and *More Precious Than Silver*, by Joni Eareckson Toda.)

This story makes you wonder how often God hides His answers from us. It makes you wonder if many of our "unanswered" prayers have been answered after all. We may be greatly surprised when we get to Heaven and find out everything God had actually done for us. We will probably wish we had been more consistent and faithful in our prayers.

Why does God hide some of His answers from us? Your guess is as good as mine. It seems like He could have saved Mrs. Hanover a great deal of sorrow and discouragement if He had revealed the exciting news to her much earlier.

We know from the Bible that God is not a mean or sadistic person. We know that He loves us and cares for us. Since He is genuinely interested in our welfare, I have to believe He has a special reason for His silence. Unfortunately, we will probably never know the reason until we enter eternity.

There are two lessons we can learn from this story. First, the problems we face may not be as bleak as they appear. God may have some surprises in store for you. Second, you should be obedient to God regardless of what's happening around you. Your actions should be based on God's promises instead of how things appear to you.

The original Star Trek pilot (*The Cage*) provides us

a good example of how appearances can be deceptive. In this original episode, Captain Christopher Pike (not Captain James T. Kirk) was the Captain of the USS Enterprise. He had been captured and held captive on planet Talos 4 by the Talosians. Captain Pike made several escape attempts, but failed every time. He even tried blowing a hole in the wall of his cage with a phaser.



It wasn't until later that Captain Pike discovered that things were not as they appeared. The Talosians were using illusions to make him think that his escape attempts were ineffective. They used illusions to make him disregard what he knew to be true. When the Talosians stopped using illusions, Captain Pike saw that his phaser did blow a hole in the wall of his cage.



I believe that this is similar to what's happening in our lives. Sometimes God wants us to trust Him so He doesn't reveal everything to us. Sometime Satan wants to discourage us so he creates an illusion to hide the truth from us. Therefore, the

next time appearances seem to contradict the promises of God, follow God's promises. Be obedient to what you know to be true and ignore misleading perceptions.

### Interesting Side Note about Star Trek

Many people are unaware that the network rejected Star Trek's original pilot episode. They said that the pilot (*The Cage*) was too "cranial." The network asked that another pilot episode be written. A new pilot (*Where no Man Has Gone Before*) was written and, as they say, the rest is history.

*The Cage* wasn't aired for many years. In fact, many people didn't even know about this lost pilot episode until *Menagerie 1* and *Menagerie 2* were aired. *Menagerie 1* and *Menagerie 2* took scenes from *The Cage* and blended it into their storyline.

## The Overwhelmed



### Chapter: 2.04

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Mary was 77 years old and living by herself in a mobile home. She was in desperate trouble and had no one to turn to. She was caught in a financial trap in which she couldn't escape. Although her health was starting to fail, she had to continue working. She had no choice; her monthly bills were higher than her social security checks.

To make matters worse, a careless driver smashed into her car, totaling it. Since she needed a car to get to work, she had to buy another car. An unscrupulous salesman took advantage of this elderly woman and sold her a car for \$4,000. This car, which was worth less than \$1,000, had multiple mechanical problems that cost her another \$3,000. Even with these repairs, the car was still unreliable.

Since she didn't have money for all this, she had to put \$5,000 on her credit card. The 24% interest on this card made it impossible for her to pay off her debts.

Compounding her problems, her credit card number was apparently stolen and sold on the black market. Her account was being charged with a large number of fraudulent charges. Just as she would get these charges taken off of her account, she would get hit with some new charges.

She called the credit card company about her problem and asked them to cancel the old card and give her a new one. Even after she was given a new card, she was still getting hit by fraudulent charges. The credit card company failed to cancel her old number. Finally she canceled both cards altogether and moved the loan to a credit union. A month later she discovered that the credit card company still had not closed her account and she had two more charges on it. Even though she eventually got her money back, these problems added to her frustration and burden.

Confusing phone bills only made things worse. As it turned out she was paying \$10 a month for "phone rental" on two phones. The phone company charged her the equivalent of about \$3,400 for 28 years of phone rental. To make matters worse, instead of giving her a new phone every couple years, she had the same old rotary phone the whole time. When the phone company was questioned about this they said, "No one forced her to rent these phones."

Government bureaucracy added its own share of frustration. Somehow the title for the mobile home got lost. Normally, a lost title isn't a big deal; you pay your \$20 and get a new copy. However, the Secretary of State said that they only keep records of these titles for 25 years. Since her title was 28 years old, they had no record of her mobile home. Even though she had a photocopy of the title (made by a realtor a couple weeks earlier) and proof of purchase, etc., they said they would not give her a replacement title.

They said she would have to go to court to get a provisional title. On top of the court cost, she would have to post a \$2,000 bond (which would be held by the State for five years). Mary couldn't even afford her current situation, let alone these new expenses. This made it completely impossible for her to sell her trailer and move into more affordable housing. Fortunately, the State eventually reconsidered and issued her a replacement title based on her photocopy and proof of purchase.

Mary had no earthly person to turn to. Her son and grandkids could not help. Some were in no position to help and others deliberately took advantage of her. In fact, some of them contributed to her problems by abusing her kindness and generosity.

I'll give you an example. Recently, Mary told some relatives that when she moves, they could have her freezer. Instead of being grateful that Mary didn't sell the freezer to help pay her own bills, they selfishly abused her generosity. Shortly after making the offer, they called to tell her that they were coming over to pick up the freezer. She explained to them that they could have it *after* she moved. "Besides," she said, "I still have food in it."

They responded by saying, "That's okay, we'll take the food too."

Mary heard of a government-housing program for low-income seniors. Their rent was based on the person's income (30%) and the government paid the rest. Although the apartments were beautiful and in a great location, she knew she could never move there. She knew it could take months to sell her trailer in the recession and she couldn't afford two housing payments. She also knew she was physically unable to move all of her belongings herself.

She felt desperate, trapped, and overwhelmed. Finally, one day, she realized something had to change. She didn't know what it would be or how it could be done, but things were becoming hopeless. She turned to God and asked Him to supply a solution. She knew she was asking for a miracle on

the same scale of Moses parting the Red Sea.

Unknown to Mary, God started to answer her prayers 50 years earlier. Through her obedience and godly living, she led a young married couple to the Lord. They in turn led a godly life and led their children to the Lord. 50 years later (as a result of her prayers), God started to put a tremendous burden on one of these children (James). He started to become very concerned about the dilemma his "spiritual grandmother" was facing.

James shared his burden with his wife (Ruth) and together they tried to figure out a way to help her. They asked Mary over for dinner. After they ate, they showed her a car they had just purchased. As James was taking a picture of Mary and Ruth standing in front of the car, he said, "Oh, by the way, Mary, this is your car."

They helped out with a variety of problems. For example, they took care of her credit card problem and got her a low interest loan. They also helped her sign up for the government housing and paid her lot rent (\$315/month) while they tried to sell the trailer. The trailer didn't sell quickly because of the recession so they bought the trailer from her so she could pay off her \$5,000 loan. Helping Mary sell her trailer cost James and Ruth about \$2,000.

James and Ruth moved all of Mary's stuff to her new apartment and helped clean out her trailer. Ruth even spent 15 evenings over at Mary's new apartment helping her sort through 77 years of accumulation. Several members of James' family also spent a great deal of time packing, unpacking, and cleaning. They organized a garage sale as well. A house warming party was held for Mary and she was supplied with many new items. Several people even chipped in and bought her new pieces of furniture.

James and Ruth didn't know about Mary's prayers. They didn't know they were following God's prompting. At first, they thought it was their own idea. When God put the burden in their hearts He also implanted the *desire* to help. This desire was

so strong that they were eager to help. It wasn't a burden or inconvenience, but a pleasure.

Proverbs 21:1 says, "The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases." If God wants something done, He'll motivate the people to get the job done (just like He did with Pharaoh, Exodus 7:3). James admits that he passionately hates helping people move. There are few things he hates more. Yet, when God prompted James to help, He also put the desire there. It wasn't a burden, but a pleasure. Although James worked hard on this project, his wife worked even harder. Ruth sacrificed a great deal to help Mary; so did James' family.

It is obvious that this situation was a special intervention of the Lord. It would never have taken place without God stirring the hearts of all of these people. The very fact that these people *wanted* to make these sacrifices shows the awesome power of God.



*Moses parting the Red Sea*

Although some people have thought that James and Ruth were very thoughtful and generous to help Mary, James and Ruth don't see it that way. They say that they don't deserve credit or praise for something that was a joy to do. They say it's like being praised for going to someone's house and eating a Thanksgiving dinner with them. There was no sacrifice involved. "Besides," they said, "If God

moved our hearts to perform these deeds, how much credit can we actually claim."

There are a couple things we can learn from this situation. First, no problem is too difficult for God. The next time you are faced with an impossible situation, think about Mary. Remember, if God wants something done, He can work out the details. He can move the hearts of men and women to accomplish His task.

Second, there is the incredible power in prayer. God's special intervention was a result of Mary's prayers. Mary remained faithful to God despite the impossible circumstances. She could have, like many people, become bitter and discouraged. Instead, she faithfully committed her problems to God and asked Him to resolve them.

It is my opinion God allowed her situation to become "hopeless" in order to demonstrate His mighty power to others. I think He wanted the world to see His ability to resolve intricate problems. We sometimes think (albeit mistakenly) that pushing back the Red Sea with brute force didn't take much skill. We sometimes think God is so busy handling the "big" problems that He doesn't have time to concern Himself with complicated logistical and bureaucratic problems. Mary's situation demonstrated that God pays as much attention to the small details as He does to the large ones.

## Picking up the Pieces



Picture of Ding Teuling

### Chapter: 2.05

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Carl Steele (known all over the world for his chalk drawings) picks up the chalk and starts drawing on an empty canvas. At first a small log cabin begins to take form. Gradually a beautiful lake appears in the background. One of Carl Steele's trademarks was his ability to talk about God as he draws these beautiful pictures.

Everyone at Maranatha Bible Conference is enthralled by Carl Steele's presentation. His work is mesmerizing. Suddenly, Carl Steele takes a piece of black chalk and puts a big black line through the picture (from the top all the way down to the bottom). If that wasn't enough damage, he put a couple more black lines through the picture.

After destroying his beautiful picture, Carl Steele stops and faces the audience. Most people are horrified by what he has done. They can't believe he ruined such a beautiful picture. Carl Steele's pictures are valuable and many people are imagining how these black lines could be removed without ruining the picture.

After pausing for about five seconds, Carl Steele begins speaking to the audience. "Has this ever happened to you? Is this picture symbolic of your life? Was your life as beautiful as this picture? Your family, job, and spiritual life were all developing beautifully. All of these elusive pieces to a happy life were finally coming together.

Suddenly, tragedy strikes. A dark blemish is ripped across your life. Maybe this blemish was something unavoidable like a devastating car accident. Maybe you were a victim of a violent crime. Maybe it was something you brought on yourselves, like committing a terrible sin."

Carl Steele pauses, and then continues. "The beautiful picture of our life now has an ugly black blemish on it. It is totally ruined; there is no way of repairing it. We try to erase the blemish, but it's too large. Our attempts to erase the mark only spreads the blemish even further."

After letting this sink in for a few seconds, Carl Steele turns around and starts drawing again. After a couple of minutes, the audience begins to see something they recognize. The black marks have become the trunks to some pine trees. Carl Steele is taking these terrible blemishes and is turning them into pine trees. Upon completion, the trees look like they actually belong with the drawing. In fact, it is now hard to imagine this picture without the trees.

Carl Steele turns to the audience again and says, "This is what can happen to your destroyed life when you turn it over to God. He can take a mess and turn it into something beautiful, something more beautiful than what it was before. It doesn't matter if the blemish was a problem you created or a problem that was outside your control; God can still

make it beautiful.”

Carl Steele continues, “As we saw from this demonstration, we can never go back to the way things were before. Things have changed forever. However, if we give God full control, the change will be for the better.”

I think we all can learn from Carl Steele’s presentation. It provides hope for the hopeless, relief for the overwhelmed. The next time your life is ruined by an ugly blemish, give it to God. Let Him turn this ugly blemish into a beautiful signature of His handiwork.

Another example of God taking a mess and turning it into something beautiful is the death of Jesus on the cross. What do you think the disciples felt when Jesus was taken from them and murdered? They had been with Him for three years and suddenly everything had fallen apart. Their hopes and dreams were destroyed. There was no way that this catastrophic event could be undone. Yet, God took this horrible situation and made it into something spectacular.

There are no tragedies too great for God. There are no wounds that God can’t heal. There are no blemishes beyond God’s miraculous touch. There are no shattered lives that God can’t repair.

## “I’ve Fallen and Can’t get Up”

(hope for those who have fallen)



### Chapter: 2.06

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“I’ve fallen and can’t get up.” Most of us have found that old commercial humorous. It’s not as comical, however, when it is referring to our spiritual life. Unfortunately, most Christians, at one time or another, have felt this way. We have fallen down spiritually and can’t see any way of getting back up. The feeling God has grown tired of our continual failures only compounds this problem.

I have found it important to be reminded of God’s “grace” (unmerited favor) every now and then. We usually think grace only pertains to salvation (God not giving sinners what they so richly deserve), but it also applies to the Christian who has stumbled. God does not give His fallen children what they so richly deserve.

When a Christian stumbles, he feels defeated and views himself as a loser. He feels like he has disappointed God by his inability to maintain a consistent Christian walk. This is especially true if he has failed in a particular area numerous times. A person who has failed many times feels like he deserves to be in the predicament he is in. He feels like he has no right to ask God for help.

In my section *Understanding Salvation*, I have a chapter about grace (*Grace: Unmerited Favor*). Although it was written in the context of salvation, it is very applicable for Christians who are struggling. It is important for these Christians to see that the same helping hand that pulled them up out of the mire of sin will also pull them up out of their current problem. Therefore, the remainder of this chapter is a repeat of my other chapter on grace.

### A Moving Example of God’s Grace

The boy stands defiantly with his head cocked back and hands clenched. “Go ahead. Give it to me; I can take it.”

The principal looks down at the young rebel. “How many times have you been here?”

The child sneers rebelliously, “Apparently, not enough.”

The principal gives the boy a strange look and says, “You have been punished each time, have you not?”

“Yeah, I’ve been punished; if that’s what you want to call it.” He throws out his small chest and says, “Go ahead, I can take whatever you can dish out; I always have.”

Carefully studying the boy’s face, the principal says, “Are there any thoughts of punishment when you break these rules?”

“Nope; I do whatever I want. Ain’t nothing you people gonna do to stop me neither.”

The principal looks over at the teacher who is sitting nearby and asks, “What did he do this time?”

“Fighting. He took little Tommy and shoved his face into the sandbox.”

The principal turns to look at the boy and asks, “Why? What did little Tommy do to you?”

“Nothin’, I didn’t like the way he was lookin at me; just like I don’t like the way you’re lookin at me now! In fact, if I thought I could do it, I’d shove your face into something.”

The teacher stiffens and starts to rise, but a quick look from the principal stops him. He contemplates the child for a moment and then quietly says, “Today, my young student, is the day you will learn about grace.”

“Grace? Isn’t that what you old people do before you eat a meal? I don’t need any of your stinkin’ grace.”

“Oh, but you do,” says the principal. After studying the boy’s face, he whispers, “Oh yes, you truly do need grace.” The boy glared as the principal continued. “Grace, in its short definition, is unmerited favor. You can’t earn grace, my child. Grace is a gift and it’s always freely given. Grace means you will not be getting what you so richly deserve.”

The boy looks puzzled. “Your not gonna whup me? You just gonna let me walk?”

The principal looks down at the unyielding child and says, “Yes, I am going to let you walk.”

The boy studies the face of the principal and says, “No punishment at all? You’re not going to punish me even though I socked Tommy and shoved his face into the sandbox?”

“Oh, there has to be punishment. What you did

was wrong and there will always be consequences for our actions. There will be punishment. Grace is not an excuse for doing wrong.”

“I knew it,” sneers the boy. Holding out his hands he says, “Let’s get on with it.”

The principal nods toward the teacher and says, “Bring me the belt.” The teacher presents the belt to the principal. He carefully folds it in two and hands it back to the teacher. He looks at the child and says, “I want you to count the blows.” The principal slides out from behind his desk and walks over to the child.

The child stands defiantly with his hands outstretched. The principal gently moves the child’s expectant hands down to his sides. Turning to the teacher, the principal stretches out his own hands and quietly says, “Begin.”

The belt slaps against the principal’s outstretched hands. Crack! The young boy jumps. Shock registers across his face, “One” he whispers. Crack! “Two.” His voice raises an octave. Crack! “Three.” He is unable to believe this. Crack! “Four.” Big tears well up in the eyes of the young rebel. “Okay, stop! That’s enough. Stop!” Crack! The belt continues to come down on the principal’s swollen hands. Crack! The child flinches with each blow. Tears start streaming down the child’s face. Crack! Crack! “No, please,” the former rebel begs. “Stop. I’m the one who did it. I’m the one who deserves the punishment. Stop! Please stop,” the boy sobs. Still the blows come. Crack! Crack!

Finally it is over. The principal, with sweat glistening across his forehead, turns to the former rebel and kneels down. Carefully cradling the child’s face with his swollen hands, the principal softly says, “This, my boy, is grace.”

This story is an excellent example of God’s grace (unmerited favor). Just as the boy received the opposite of what he deserved, we too can receive the opposite of what we deserve.

Although some people feel that an Almighty God can “forgive and forget” our sins, He can’t. His holy and righteous nature demands He properly deal with our sins. Every transgression has to be punished. There are always consequences for our actions.

Fortunately for us, God stepped forward and was punished in our place. He bore the stripes we deserved. He was bruised and pierced in our place. God’s grace (unmerited favor) means we did not get what we so richly deserved.

## Secrets to Resisting Temptations



### Chapter: 2.07

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There are times that resisting temptation seems like a hopeless cause. Its grip and seduction seems totally overwhelming. Resisting certain temptations seems as futile as trying to hold back the tide.

Fortunately, there can be victory over our temptations. The temptations of Jesus can provide us some powerful help in overcoming our own temptations. Some people feel the reason Jesus did not yield to His temptations is because He did not have a sin nature. Adam and Eve didn't have sin natures either, yet they still sinned.

I believe there is another reason Jesus didn't yield to His temptation. I believe Jesus didn't sin because He understood *how* to resist temptations. I

believe the same tools that gave Him the ability to resist temptation can help you resist temptation. Obviously, because of our sin nature, we are not going to be able to live sinless lives. We should, however, be able to live lives of consistency and victory.

The remainder of this chapter is taken from another chapter called *Could Jesus have sinned?* Originally, this chapter was written to address the theological argument of whether Jesus could have sinned. However, the practical applications from that discussion are so great I included it in this section (*The Christian Who has Stumbled*).

### Could Jesus have Sinned?

Could Jesus have sinned during His stay here on Earth? Christians have been debating this subject for almost two thousand years. The question of Jesus sinning seems to be one of those theological questions that can never be answered. This question appears to be one of those self-contradicting questions like, "Could God create a rock so large that He couldn't lift it?" or "If God is all powerful, couldn't He make a round square?"

Regardless of how you answer the question, you run into some profound implications. If Jesus couldn't have sinned, you have to wonder if He was really tempted? How can a person truly be tempted if there is no possibility of yielding? The Bible clearly says that Jesus was tempted (Hebrew 2:18; 4:15, Matthew 4:1). Therefore, either Jesus was tempted or the Bible is wrong.

On the other hand, if Jesus could have sinned, then our fate (and even God's fate) was realistically in jeopardy. If Jesus (who is part of the Godhead) had actually sinned, then *everything* would have been ruined for eternity. God's holy and righteous nature would have been tainted. God's system of justice would have had to be abolished. God would no longer be sinless, nor could He reasonably expect perfection from us. Either God would

have had to condemn Himself to Hell for eternity or He would have had to release everyone from Hell. You have to wonder if God would have put all this at risk if there was a realistic 50/50 chance that He would fail?

So, what's the answer? For what it's worth, I'll give you my opinion on this subject. I believe that when Jesus was tempted He had a real *choice* in His response. I believe that when He was tempted, He felt the same frustrations and pressures that we do. I believe He had a realistic choice to yield to His temptation. I believe that the temptations Jesus faced had the same potential of being overwhelming as they are to us. I believe that as a result, He could say to us, "I know what you are feeling; I went through the same thing."

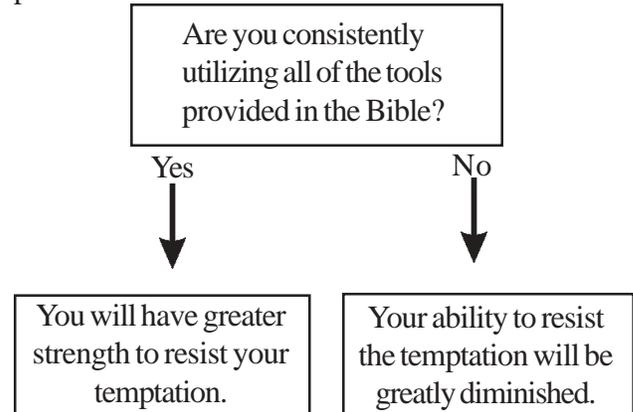
On the other hand, I don't believe there was a realistic *possibility* of Jesus ever yielding to the temptation. I realize that this sounds like a bunch of double talk, but please hear me out. Not only do I think I can solve this riddle, I believe you'll find that what I have to say may actually help you deal with your temptations and struggles. I believe you can glean some powerful principles of victorious living from this discussion.

In the first section of this book I talked about how we can have victory in our Christian lives. I pointed out that following certain basic principles can help us have victory over our *future* temptations. I also pointed out that the reason we have difficulties overcoming temptations is because we are inconsistent in following God's principles.

Herein lies the key to our victory: We should consistently utilize the tools that give us the strength to be victorious. Consistent victory is not solely a result of what you do *at the time* of the temptation. Rather, it is greatly influenced by what you do long before you are faced with the temptation. The chapter *Guard your Thoughts* covers this in more detail.

Being victorious over temptation is actually a two-part process. First, there is the choice you make at

the actual time of the temptation. Second, there is the preparation done before you are tempted. It is our failures in the preparation stage that make it more difficult for us to resist our temptations. Preparing ahead of time provides us the tools and strength to help us overcome the temptations. The following flow chart should help you visualize the process.



As you can see, proper preparation is the key to our success. To help you understand its importance, let's look at the following scenario: There are two houses that are identical in construction. Both houses (like all houses) face the realistic possibility of catching fire and burning down. One house has a sophisticated fire alarm and sprinkler system and the other house does not. If both houses are exposed to the same source of fire, one will burn down and the other will not.

This illustration is like to our temptations to sin. Two people can be exposed to the same type of temptation and yet respond quite differently. The person who utilizes the Biblical tools will have more strength to resist the temptation. The person who has not taken advantage of these tools will have difficulty resisting the temptation.

Let's go back to our original question of, "Could Jesus have sinned?" I believe that if Jesus did not utilize these tools (before He was tempted) He probably would have sinned. I don't believe He would have had the strength to resist His temptation. The victory Jesus experienced was a direct result of His utilization of the resources available to

Him.

So, instead of asking, “Could Jesus have sinned,” we should be asking, “Was there a realistic possibility of Jesus not utilizing these resources?” I don’t believe there was a possibility that Jesus would have disregarded these valuable tools. I believe Jesus (being part of the Godhead) understood the necessity of utilizing these important tools. I believe Jesus saw the value of being prepared.

Some people say that since Jesus did not have a sin nature, He couldn’t have sinned. While it is true that Jesus didn’t have a sin nature, neither did Adam and Eve. Yet, both of them failed. The difference is Jesus *understood* the process that keeps a person from sinning. Being part of the Godhead, Jesus didn’t have to wonder how to be victorious. He knew how to overcome temptation.

I think Jesus had His temptations recorded in the Bible in order to show us how to be victorious over sin. I think He wanted us to realize that we can’t always avoid temptation, but we can have control over it.

While I believe it is possible to have consistent victory in our Christian lives, I do not believe we can live lives of “sinless perfection.” My chapter *Can We Live Sinless Lives* covers this in more detail.

What are these tools that will help us resist temptation? Following are a few of the tools:

- Maintain an intimate relationship with God
- Bathe yourself in the Word of God
- Commit every area of your life to God
- Get others to pray for you
- Guard your thought life

Maintain an intimate relationship with God. Having an intimate relationship with God is different from “spending time in prayer.” For many Christians, “prayer” is a quick trip to God to commit certain problems and issues to Him. Fellowship, on the other hand, is the friendship and relationship you develop with God.

You develop a personal relationship with God the same way you would develop a personal relationship with someone here on Earth. You talk to them continually and share with them your feelings, desires, dreams, etc. This fellowship with God will provide you tremendous spiritual strength.

Bathe yourself in the Word of God. This is an often-neglected resource. Even Jesus realized the importance of using the Word of God. He consistently used scripture when He was defending Himself against the temptations in the wilderness (Mark 9:14-29). I think it’s very important to follow Jesus’ example in resisting temptation. If you don’t consistently study the Word of God, there is no way you can use it as a tool.

Commit every area of your life to God. Some people have said that since God is aware of all of our needs, there isn’t any reason to pray for them. This isn’t true. Although God knows about our needs, He still wants us to ask Him for help. More important, when we commit something to God, we are actually giving Him full control (or ownership) over it. The section *The Incredible Power of Prayer* covers this in more detail. In Matthew 17:21, the disciples were having problems casting out certain demons. Jesus told them that some situations are so difficult to resolve that they can only be resolved by prayer and fasting.

Get others to pray for you. Getting others to pray for you is important. It’s not just missionaries who need to raise prayer support. The section mentioned above talks about the importance of raising prayer support for yourself.

Guard your thought life. Simply put, the more you dwell on a sinful thought, the greater are your

chances of falling into its temptation. There is a very direct correlation between the two. For example, if you continually fantasize about having sexual encounters outside your marriage relationship, you will find it very difficult to resist an adulterous temptation when the occasion arises.

## The Tablecloth -(leaving our past sins behind us)



### Chapter: 2.09

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Focusing on our past sins and failures can overwhelm us. This is one of the most destructive tools of Satan. With it, he steals our joy and spiritual strength. Many Christians find it hard to “forgive and forget” their own sins and shortcomings. Whether it is a single major failure, or an accumulation of many small failures, the result is still the same. We find it difficult to resist future sins when we have had such an unsuccessful past.

We must learn to completely clean our slate with God and feel fully forgiven after each sin. Picture having some special guests over for dinner. Your best china and tablecloth are out. As the dinner starts, everyone is very careful not to spill anything on the beautiful tablecloth. Inevitably though,

someone makes the first spill. This person, of course, feels bad and great effort is made not to do it again. As the meal continues and more stains appear, the guests are less cautious about being sloppy. By the end of the week, the tablecloth is so soiled that no one really cares if they are the next one to spill. The consensus has become, “What difference does one more stain make?”

We do the same thing in our Christian lives. After our first failure, we are still resolved to resist temptation. However, after a few more failures, our resolve starts to weaken. After many failures, we start thinking, “What’s the use of resisting, I’m going to fail in the near future anyhow. What difference will one more sin make?” Eventually, we are overwhelmed. We still try to “resist,” but our efforts are feeble and superficial.

Many Christians have failed so many times they just don’t see the point in trying anymore. They have failed so many times they feel there’s no benefit in resisting their current temptation. As a result, they throw up their hands and go with the flow.

If, on the other hand, a Christian has been victorious for a period of time, he is much more resolved to resist his temptations. If a Christian has a clean slate, he is much more motivated to keep the slate clean. He doesn’t want to ruin a good record. A basketball team that has won the last 100 games will try harder than a team that has lost the last 100 games.

Since having a “clean slate” is obviously important, how do sinners maintain a clean slate? How do people with a fallen sin nature maintain a winning streak? The answer is we can’t. We are sinners, which means we *will* sin. The answer to our dilemma is not an absence of sin. Rather, the answer is in the way you view your past sins.

Simply asking God to forgive you does not automatically mean you have been able to put your failures behind you. The fact that God views your failures as being completely resolved doesn’t mean you automatically see it that way. It is your frame of

mind that is causing you the problem in this area.

When you sin, you are the author and owner of the sin. However, when you confess your sins to God, they now belong to Him. Unfortunately, you often try to hang on to the ownership. Every sin you “own” gets added to your running count. As a result, these sins *accumulate*. Even though these sins have been forgiven, they still remain on your list of failures. You will never be completely free of these sins as long as you maintain ownership.

This list of failures is what overwhelms you. The larger the list, the more you view yourself as a “failure.” The larger the list, the less motivated you are to resist temptations.

The thing to do is give God full ownership of your past failures. If God owns your past failures, you literally have no right to bring them up again. You have no right to maintain a list of failures. The only person who has a right to bring them up is the owner (God). Since He considers the matter settled, you have a clean slate.

In summary, commit all of your failures to God and give Him full ownership over them. Once God becomes the owner, these failures no longer belong to you. You literally have no right to hold these failures against yourself. To do so, is basically stealing from God. As a result of all this, you now have a clean slate with God.

## Guard Your Thoughts



### Chapter: 2.10

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Last year lightning struck a tree next to our garage causing \$8,500 in damage. The interesting thing about the lightning strike was the fact that when the lightning traveled down the tree to the ground, it followed the tree's root right under our garage. This shattered a cement border and cracked a slab of cement. It then traveled through our electrical wiring and took out our phone and several electrical items.

Before the lightning strike, you couldn't see the root hiding just below the surface. The root, hiding six inches below the surface, provided a very easy pathway for the lightning to follow. It was hidden from view, but it was waiting for just the right set of

circumstances.

Our thought lives are like this root. It provides a pathway for sin to travel. If your thought life is a mess, you have created a solid pathway for sin. If your thought life is under control, sin will have a hard time gaining control.



Sexual sins are a good example of this. A person who continually dwells on sexual fantasies and looks at pornographic material will have a hard time resisting sexual sins. All it takes is the right set of circumstances and the person will probably succumb to temptation.

I personally believe this is what happened to King David and Bathsheba. Although the Bible does not shed any light directly on the cause of King David's demise, I believe King David had previously laid the groundwork with his thought life. I believe King David allowed his thought life to wander over a period of time and paved the way for future temptations. Then, when he was on the rooftop and saw Bathsheba bathing, he had a hard time resisting temptation. I personally believe that had King David controlled his thought life in the months preceding the incident, there would not have been this incident.

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## Standing up for “Principle”-1: Wasted Energy

(part 1 of 4 parts)



### Chapter: 3.01

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“Look at how that guy is driving. He’s right on the tail of that other car. Some people are so rude and impatient.” Bart is experiencing a new phenomenon called road rage. “OK, pal,” Bart said. “I’m going to show you what it feels like to have someone ride your tail.” With that, Bart pulls within two feet of the rude driver’s bumper.

The rude driver’s car slows down and then speeds up, but Bart stays right on his tail. About seven miles later, the rude driver pulls off to the side of the road. Bart stubbornly pulls off the road behind him and pops open his trunk.

Bart keeps his headlights shining on the car in front as two men get out. Blinded by the headlights, the

two men hear, “Hold it right there. Don’t move.” Moments later, Bart shoots and kills one of the men with the compound bow he had in his trunk. Bart, a former church Elder, was sent to prison for murder.



In a TV interview, a defiant Bart said he shot the man in order to defend his wife (who had since divorced him). He said it was a matter of principle and he was simply standing up for his rights. During the interview Bart was asked, “If you had a chance to do it all over again, would you handle it differently?” Stubbornly, Bart said he would not apologize for defending his wife. He considers himself a political prisoner because he was imprisoned for standing up for his rights.

Can you see a little bit of Bart inside of you? Have you ever stubbornly fought over a “principle?” If you carefully study the history books, you will find there has been a tremendous amount of death and destruction resulting from reckless fights over principles. There are times when it is worth fighting over principles and there are times when it is not. Knowing how to determine the difference will save you a great deal of grief and loss.

When you look at the grand scheme of things, most fights over principles are not worth the high cost it extracts. Yet, there are certain times when it is important for you to stand up and fight for what is right. How, then, do you determine the appropriate time to fight? Unfortunately, there are no easy answers to this question. There are, however, some basic guidelines that can direct you. When you are considering engaging in a fight, you should ask what the ultimate impact would be on you. The areas you should consider are:

- 1) What impact will this conflict have on your

resources?

- 2) What impact will this conflict have on your attitude and emotional well-being?
- 3) Will engaging in the confrontation help focus your desire to follow God's will or will it be a distraction?

Most people do not consider the impact a confrontation will have on them. All confrontations cost you something. Even if you are totally in the "right," the price of engaging in the fight may be higher than the issue is worth. Someone once said, "Choose your battles carefully. A bulldog can beat a skunk anytime, but it's just not worth it."

My former boss wanted his new lawn to be perfect so he had it hydro-seeded (a paste consisting of grass seed and fertilizer). The company told him that having his lawn seeded a day or two before it rained would provide the seed a good watering. "Don't worry about the seeds washing away," he was told, "We guarantee to replace it if it does." So, watching the weather forecast, he had his lawn sprayed a couple days before it was going to rain. Unfortunately, the rainstorm washed the seeds away.

When he called the seeding company he was told the guarantee does not cover "Acts of God." Dumbfounded, my former boss said, "This was not a tornado, it was only a rainstorm. What good is your guarantee if it doesn't cover this." The seeding company said they would be willing to re-seed it for half of the original price. Outraged they would not stand by their guarantee, he sued them. When his wife told him it would cost him much more to sue them than it would to re-seed the lawn, he said, "It was a matter of principle."

To his surprise, the courts ruled against him. Part of the ruling required him to pay the seeding company's legal cost. So, besides not having a lawn, he now had to pay them \$2,000, plus his own legal costs. As he was writing out the check, his wife asked him if his principles were worth the

\$2,000? Begrudgingly, he had to admit the fight really wasn't worth it.

Financial loss is not the only impact conflicts have on our resources. There are many other areas that suffer loss. In fact, losses in these areas are usually more destructive than the loss of money. Confrontations consume time, physical energy, and creative energy.

Think about the last major confrontation in which you were involved. Try to add up the total amount of time you had spent on this project, including all of you time you spent thinking about it. Most likely, it was probably dozens of hours. These are hours that had to be pulled from your family or spiritual life.

Conflicts, of course, are usually very emotionally draining. The longer it carries on, the more it saps your energy. Usually after a long day of work, our energy reserves are low. Even without conflicts, most of us barely have enough energy for our mates, kids, etc. How many times have our mates or kids asked us to do something with them, only to have us say, "Oh, I'm too tired for that." If you consume a great deal of energy on a fight, what will you have left for your family or your spiritual life?

Engaging in a fight not only consumes a great deal of time and energy, it also consumes creative energy. Unfortunately, most of us do not have large reserves of surplus creative energy. It is the creative energy that prompts us to do those special unique things for our mate and children. For example, I did many creative things for Janet before we got married. Janet found her "promise ring" inside a box of Cracker Jacks. When Janet opened up her fortune cookie at a Chinese restaurant, she found the message "Janet, I love you, Mike." (This was the first time I had told her I loved her.) When Janet got near the end of her meal at a fancy restaurant, she found the following words printed on the plates, "Janet, will you marry me? Mike." A few weeks later I asked her to make some brownies. As she cracked open an egg, she found her engagement ring. (It took me 10 hours to prepare

the egg.)

Shortly before we got married, I started working for the Deputy Director of Corrections. While I was working for him, I created a large number of computer projects for the Department. Unfortunately I consumed most of my creative energy on these computer projects. After we were married, I had very little creative energy for these special expressions of love. I also had little creative energy for the many missionary projects I used to work on.

The reason I bring this up is to show how limited our resources are. This is one reason I have chosen not to pursue an executive management position. My years of working in the Deputy Director's office have shown me the hidden costs associated with some of these positions. Don't get me wrong; I am not criticizing those in these positions. There are some great Christians in these positions who have done a good job keeping their families first. Unfortunately, this seems to be the exception rather than the rule.

I have seen many families destroyed because people have drained all of their resources fighting a violation. After the fight they didn't have anything left for their families. Usually, a person is not aware he is not providing the necessary resources for his family and spiritual life. This "starvation" is usually a slow and gradual process. Fighting for "principles" is a silent killer, much in the same way that cholesterol is a silent killer. Often, by the time you realize you have a cholesterol problem, a lot of damage has been done. Likewise, you may not fully realize the *true* cost of a battle until it is too late.

If you are like most people, you get paid every two weeks. Since many people have never learned to budget their money, they start running low on money near the end of the second week. What do you think would happen if these people only got paid once a year? Most likely, they would spend the money too quickly and not have any money left near the end of the year. If they did spend the money too fast, something will suffer. The money *will* come from somewhere. In this situation, there

will probably be some hungry and cold family members.

Likewise, you only have X amount of time, energy, and creativity. Since most of it is already spoken for, you will have very little "surplus" resources left. Therefore, if you don't carefully limit the number of battles you undertake, you will rob your family and spiritual life of its needed resources.

## Standing up for “Principle”-2: A Destroyed Attitude

(part 2 of 4 parts)



### Chapter: 3.02

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Another casualty of fighting over principles is our attitude. Think back to a time in your life where you had to take a stand on something that was going to be difficult. Remember how you had to “psych” yourself up to take on the challenge? I have had to face many serious and difficult situations in my life (both working in the prison and elsewhere). In these situations, I had to prepare myself mentally to undertake the challenge. Mentally, I would anchor my feet, square my shoulders, and put my fists up and say, “Come on, it’s go time!”

Prolonged exposure to this posture will spoil your attitude. When you psych yourself up for a battle, it is difficult to return to the normal mode when you are not in the battle. Your home life usually suffers during these times of “war.” You are usually less patient and understanding with your family. Your fuse is short and you find yourself exploding at little things. If you do not take special precautions, you will become more critical and judgmental of others.

Ephesians 4:26 says, “In your anger, do not sin.” There are times when certain injustices *should* make you angry. The problem is, however, it is

easy to overreact or be careless when you are angry. Picture driving a car down a street at 5 mph. At this slow speed you have a large margin for error. You could make many mistakes without going off the road or doing any serious damage. Now picture yourself driving down the same road at 200 mph. It wouldn’t take much of a mistake to cause you to crash into a tree. This principle applies to our emotions. When you are emotionally calm, you are less likely to do something that is incredible stupid. However, the more emotional or angry you are, the less margin of error you have. If you are very angry, you could say or do something that could have severe consequences. While it is true you could do or say the exact same thing when you are calm, there is far less possibility of it happening.

When our emotions are running high, our judgment can become distorted. Hitler’s bombing of England is a good example of this. During WWII, two German bombers went off course and bombed a residential area of London. Churchill thought this bombing of civilians was intentional, so he ordered the English bombers to bomb civilian targets in Germany. Hitler, enraged by this, ordered all of his bombers to target civilian targets.

Ironically, this mishap may have saved England from falling to the Germans. At the time the original German bombers missed their targets, England’s military was almost destroyed. However, when Hitler stopped bombing military targets and started bombing civilian targets, the military had a chance to rebuild itself. Hitler’s anger caused him to lose sight of his objectives and he exercised poor judgment. (Source: *Time Magazine*, Sept. 4, 1989, page 30)

When you are fighting a violation, try to keep your anger under control as much as possible. Your fight over a violation may be fully justified, and yet, you could still be “wrong” because of the *way* you fight the violation. The other person may have sinned first, but if you sin in the way you handle the violation, you are just as much “in the wrong” in God’s eyes.

I try to make it a practice not to fight a violation (even if I am completely justified in doing it) if I cannot do it in a calm and controlled manner. As mentioned in other chapters, our primary goal should be to honor God with our thoughts, words, and actions. This takes a much higher priority than righting the wrong.

Since there are many more “righteous battles” than what you have time and energy, it is important to choose your battles carefully. An unfortunate fact of life is we will continually have people infringing on our rights. When civilian doctors are drafted into the military during times of war, they are told of the *Two Rules of War*. “Rule number one is young men will die needlessly. Rule number two is doctors can’t change rule number one.” Likewise, we are faced with the *Two Rules of Life*. “Rule number one is people will always violate your rights. Rule number two is you can’t change rule number one.”

If you think back on some of your past arguments, you will find most of them were about minor and insignificant issues. It is easy to argue over insignificant issues. What would be your reaction, if, after buying a pack of gum at the store, the clerk rounded your change up to the next dollar. So, for a 50-cent purchase, you only received \$4 back from your \$5 bill. Candid Camera did a show on this scenario (9/4/98). It was very interesting looking at people’s expressions. Some people, of course, got very upset, but one guy seemed to take it in stride. So, afterwards when they asked him about losing his 50 cents, he said, “I don’t sweat the little things.” He went on to say, “I don’t let anyone rent space in my head.” My question for you is, how much space in your head are you renting out to others?

## Standing up for “Principle”-3: When Should You Fight?

(part 3 of 4 parts)



### Chapter: 3.03

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When determining whether you should fight for a principle, you must consider your motivation. What is the *real* reason you want to pursue it? I think if we are honest with ourselves, we would have to admit our motivation is often pride. Our egos have been bruised and we want to get back at the offender. Our human nature has a hard time accepting the fact that our offender will go unpunished. It grinds us to think the offender is getting away with his abuse. If this is your motivation, don't pursue it. In most situations, if you clear your head of the *emotions*, you'll find there is usually very little substance worth fighting over.

The first thing you should do if your rights have been violated is to clear your head of the emotions.

It is very dangerous to prepare your response when your emotions are running high. Usually, the more you dwell on an offense, the angrier you will become. Therefore, *if possible*, you should not allow yourself to think about the situation for a week or two. After you calm down, you should be more capable of preparing a response based on facts and not feelings. Once your emotions are under control, you should go over the following checklist.

- 1) *Is there any actual damage?* A bruised ego does not constitute actual damage.
- 2) *Is there a need to defend myself?* Is there any disciplinary or legal action being taken against you?
- 3) *How important is the actual issue in question?* In the grand scheme of things, will this violation have a profound effect on civilization?
- 4) *Is any action necessary to prevent this from happening again?* This is an important question. Was this situation simply an isolated incident or will this happen again if you don't do something to stop it?
- 5) *Realistically, what will my actions really accomplish?* You must be realistic about what you expect to accomplish. An unfortunate fact of life is the courts and grievance systems seldom provide the relief you are looking for.
- 6) *What would it cost to pursue it?* This is another important question. This is one area most people do not carefully calculate. Most people don't consider the hidden cost on your time, emotions, and creativity.

All things considered, *defense* should be the primary consideration when determining a response. You should defend yourself against punitive action being taken against you, and you should defend yourself against future violations.

There are a couple rules you should keep in mind when you are going to confront someone. First, for

the sake of efficiency, don't invest more time, money, and hassle than necessary to obtain your goal. For example, if you were a businessman, you would not build a part for \$50 at one factory when you could build the exact same part for \$20 someplace else. Someone once said, "Don't bite when a growl will do."

Second, always try to leave yourself the ability to increase the pressure further, if needed. You want to be able to take further steps in case they try to retaliate. Having them know you could do more against them is usually enough to keep them from retaliating. An effective way of doing this is to *fire a shot across their bow*. If a military ship wants to get the attention of a ship in violation, they would fire a cannon ball or missile across the bow of the ship. This warning shot does not harm the other ship, but it definitely gets their attention. It lets them know you desire a peaceful solution, but are willing and ready to take action, if necessary.

Third, if you feel it's necessary to aggressively pursue a problem, be very careful about boxing the offender into a corner with no way of escape. If you have ever backed a raccoon or an angry dog into a corner, you know exactly what I'm talking about. If there is no way of escape, except through you, the animal will try going through you. If the animal has no other option and feels like it has nothing to lose, it will attack you viciously.



Chad dove to the ground as bullets raced over his head. "We're being overrun!" Chad yelled to his captain. "There's no way out. They've got us surrounded." Grabbing the radio, the captain radioed in another air strike. The first air strike,

which struck 100 yards away, didn't stop the Vietcong's advancement. These American troops were clearly outnumbered and were quickly losing ground. It was obvious death was eminent. The captain decided if he and his men aren't going to live, neither would the Vietcong. Therefore, he called in a massive air strike on his own position.

As gruesome as this may sound, this scenario took place many times in the Vietnam War. "Desperate times call for desperate measures." The point is this; if you push a person to a point where he feels he has nothing to lose, he may self-destruct, taking you with him.

As I mentioned before, I believe defense is a good reason to "fight for a principle." Sometimes you have to take a stand to keep people from walking all over you. It is sad to see how some people allowed others to use them as floor mats. I believe if God intended for us to be used as floor mats, we would have been born with the word "Welcome" printed on our foreheads.

Nevertheless, it takes great wisdom to know *when* to take a stand and *how* you are to do it. If you do take a stand, your goal should not be to "put the offender in his place." As tempting as it is, your goal is not to punish them for their transgression. You just want to keep it from happening again.

"Do you want corn?" the prisoner food server asked Jack. "Yea," Jack responded. A spoon full of corn was placed on his plate. Jack moved down the serving line and was asked, "Do you want potatoes?" Again, Jack said, "Yea." Dale, another prisoner food server, scooped up a large pile of potatoes and splattered it all over Jack's plate and shirt. Dale smiled and gave Jack a knowing smirk.

Jack had just arrived at the prison the previous day, and he understood he was being shown the pecking order in that system. Prisoner Dale had just put Jack in a very difficult position. If Jack reached over and punched Dale, he would have been locked up. Since this incident took place over 50 years ago, Jack would have been thrown into the

hole for several months. Yet, if he did nothing, he would have sent the message he will not stand up for himself.

Jack leaned forward with a firm, confident, but unthreatening smile and said, "Try that again." This was a brilliant move. Without fighting, Jack had clearly conveyed to Dale he was not going to allow others to walk all over him.

Most aggressors know their threats will usually go unchallenged, so it is easy for them to make threats. In this situation, however, Dale (the food server) is now faced with certain retaliation. He has to either bite the bullet or back down. Dale decided it was best to back down. I have found this tactic to be incredibly effective in resolving many confrontations. The object of this approach is to "keep the ball in their court." Put them into a situation where they have to make the next move. Force them to make the tough decision of "going to war."

Many years ago I had a boss who had a unique way of controlling his employees. He knew how to put people off balance in order to gain the psychological advantage in a situation. For example, when he would call you into his office for a "talk," he would look you square in the eyes with a mean stare. This would continue until you looked away. For whatever reason, being the first person to "look away" creates some type of pecking order. Since my former boss was a weight lifter and wore his muscle shirt for these "talks," many of his employees were intimidated and "put in their place" psychologically.

One day I had the illustrious privilege of being called into his office. When I walked in, I was greeted with his stare and muscle shirt. When I sat down he was still staring at me. To throw him off balance, I had decided I was going to have him look away first. Instead of staring back at him (which would have only inflamed the situation), I did something he did not expect. With a smile on my face and a non-threatening look in my eyes, I kept constant eye contact with him. I did not look at him in a way that was challenging, rather I looked at him

as if I was eagerly waiting to hear what he was going to say. As a result, he looked away first, which threw him completely off balance.

## Standing up for “Principle”-4: Focus on Your Objective

(part 4 of 4 parts)



### Chapter: 3.04

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It is important to stay focused on what you want to accomplish in life. Don't think "winning" the scrimmage is necessarily the end you are seeking. Focus on your primary goal and don't worry if it "appears" to others you have lost the scrimmage. Saddam Hussein (the ruthless dictator of Iraq) has clearly mastered this concept. For years the United States and Hussein have played a cat-and-mouse game. The scenario was predictable, if not comical. First, Hussein would refuse to cooperate with the United Nation's mandate of letting inspectors look for weapons of mass destruction. Next, the U.S. would deploy an expensive military buildup and threaten retaliation if he didn't cooperate. After a few weeks, when military buildup was complete, Hussein would "back down."

Hussein's strategy was quite simple. Whenever the U.N. inspectors came close to discovering vital documents and equipment he had hidden, Hussein would announce he is no longer going to cooperate with the inspectors. After several weeks Hussein is "forced" to back down and cooperate. Although it appeared the United Nations had won, it was actually Hussein who had won. During the weeks the U.N. inspectors have been denied access, Iraq was busy moving and hiding the vital information and equipment.

In reality, I don't think Hussein cares if the American newspapers say he was forced to back down. He accomplished his goal of protecting his weapons research. The so-called "embarrassment" of being forced to back down was a small price to pay to protect his interest. Although I think Hussein would have been pleased if the United States chose not to force him to comply with the UN resolutions, I don't believe he expected the United Nations to let him off the hook that easily.

Most of you, at one time or another, have had a run-in with a bully. You probably have found that running away from the bully only attracts future confrontations with him and others. However, if you don't back down, you usually discourage future confrontations from others in the future.

It is important to understand, however, there is a big difference between *not backing down* and *aggressively pursuing a fight*. Standing firm means you put the ball in their court (much like Jack did in the previous chapter) and force them to make the next move. Sometimes this results in an all-out fight, but usually your peaceful solution will make him think twice before he tries something like that again.

Doing this is difficult because our old nature cries out for justice. We may say to ourselves, "He has no right doing that to me. If I don't retaliate, he will get away with it." While this may be true, so what! If you have discouraged this behavior against you in the future, you were successful. Cut your losses and get on with your life. You have to learn to count the cost and determine if something is worth

the fight. You have to ask yourself if the end result is worth the cost? Besides, since God will still deal with them, they have not “gotten away with it.”

I have recently had to contemplate such a decision. When I was getting my road paved, the county had to first put in a storm drain. In order to tie into the main drain, I had to sign an easement (30’ by 285’) to allow the drainpipe to run across the edge of my property.



It was very exciting to see all of the construction going on. Besides the county road workers, there were some minimum-security prisoners helping them (without my foreknowledge and approval). A couple days later a Correction Officer approached me and said he noticed I was taking pictures of the construction. He said he didn’t know if any of my pictures have prisoners in it, but the Department of Correction has a policy against it. He didn’t say anything more about it and I didn’t take any more pictures.

About a week later I was called to the Warden’s office where I work. He shut the door and began to question me about taking pictures of prisoners at the construction site. The Correction Officer had reported me to his Warden, who in turn wrote my Warden. The other Warden wanted me to be

questioned and he also wanted me to be ordered to surrender the film. I explained to my Warden it was a mute point because the film was ruined when the camera door popped open. (I’m sure he had a hard time believing it, but it was actually true.) I went on to explain it was none of the other Warden’s business what I do on my own private property and personal time as long as I was not breaking the law.

Later on that day I started getting very angry. The other Warden was way out of line for three reasons. First, if I am off duty and am not breaking the law, I can take a picture of anything on my property I want. In such cases that Warden has no authority over me. He had opened himself up to a lawsuit for violating my civil liberties. I don’t think there is a jury that would rule against me taking pictures of my property in this situation.

Second, he tried making a non-work related issue a work-related issue. If he was unhappy with me taking pictures, he should have contacted me the same way he would have contacted any other person taking pictures. The fact I worked in a prison has no bearing on this situation. My neighbors had also taken pictures and he did not ask them to surrender their film. It’s a violation of Fair Labor laws to contact my employer about a non-work related issue and have me questioned about it on company time.

Third, the fact he wanted my employer to demand I surrender the film meant he wanted me to be disciplined for a non-work-related issue. He was trying to make my work environment hostile. He had opened himself up to a *Hostile Work Environment* complaint.

Before I show you how I determined my response, I want to tell you about another thing that made this situation even more irritating. The same week of this incident I saw a broadcast about a married couple who discovered a video of their sexual intimacy on the Internet. As it turned out, a neighbor in their apartment building had video taped them having sex, going to the bathroom, etc. He

then made these videos available on the Internet. This type of secret videotaping is called *splice* or *voyeur*. When the couple went to the police, they were told even though their state has “Peeping Tom” laws, there are no laws against their neighbor taping them from *his own* apartment. What a contrast to what was happening to me.

As with most problems in life, there are multiple solutions. Some solutions produce beneficial results while other solutions produce undesirable results. The reason I’m including this incident in my book is because I wanted to demonstrate the process of determining your response. The first thing I did was go down my checklist.

- 1) *Is there any actual damage?* No.
- 2) *Is there a need to defend myself?* I wasn’t being disciplined so there is no need to defend myself.
- 3) *How important is the actual issue in question?* Although some civil liberty people could make a solid argument about the importance of this issue, this issue is not that important to me.
- 4) *Is any action necessary to prevent this from happening again?* Something needs to be done to let these Wardens know they have crossed over the line and this action will not be tolerated in the future.
- 5) *Realistically, what would my actions actually accomplish?* Apart from embarrassing these Wardens, there wasn’t much I could really expect from our grievance or legal system.
- 6) *What would it cost to pursue it?* Although it would cost me a couple thousand dollars for legal expenses, the largest liability would be the possible problems at work. Those who understand the politics involved in these types of law enforcement agencies know what I’m talking about. A fear of retaliation should not stop you from doing what needs to be done, but this cost should be included in your calculations.

*Item #4* was the only thing that applied to this situation. It was clear something needed to be done to prevent future violations. I had a choice; either I could bite or I could growl. Either I could do only what was needed to get their attention or I could hit them with everything at once. As I mentioned earlier, if possible, don’t play all of your cards at once. Leave yourself some options in case they try to retaliate. Considering all of the above, I decided to get the job done with a growl.

In order to get their attention, I submitted an FOIA (Freedom Of Information Act) of the documents relating to this issue. The Wardens did not want to give these documents up, and had originally balked at my request. However, since they were legally bound to provide these damaging documents, they finally gave them up. Requesting these documents was my way of firing a warning shot across their bow. I let them know they crossed the line without having to attack them. It also left me room to apply more pressure if they tried to retaliate. These documents were very incriminating and they knew I could cause them serious trouble.

In summary, make defense your primary reason for responding to a violation. Don’t concern yourself with trying to pay a person back for wronging you; let God deal with that. Carefully count the cost of the battle. Keep a clear vision of what you want to accomplish with your life and don’t let these violations become a distraction.

## Forgiving Your Offender



### Chapter: 3.05

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The number of Christian workers who have become spiritually disabled as a result of bitterness and anger is increasing daily. This is especially true among missionaries on the foreign field. The pressures, living conditions and close company are perfect breeding grounds for dissension and discord.

It doesn't matter if you're right or wrong in a conflict. If you hold resentment, bitterness or anger toward the other party, you are sinning. More important, however, you are crippling yourself spiritually and rendering yourself ineffective.

I can't emphasize the importance of not allowing bitterness and anger to build up. I have seen many

missionaries leave the ministry because of marital problems or conflicts with their fellow workers. Churches and even missions have had massive splits because of unresolved disagreements. The Bible is full of examples of how anger affects our prayers and service. In Matthew 5:22-25, God says He does not want you to bring Him gifts (or service) if you are holding something against your brother. In Peter 3:7, God warns if you do not treat your wife with consideration and respect, your prayers will be hindered.

All of us have to deal with forgiveness from time to time. This is just a part of life. While most conflicts are relatively small, occasionally we are faced with more challenging conflicts. I have often wondered how I would deal with a major violation, such as a family member being raped or murdered. When I read about how lives were utterly shattered by the Nazis during WW II, I have to admit most of the violations against me seem small.

Although the problems you've encountered may pale in comparison to some of the world's most violent atrocities, it still does not diminish the impact it has on your life. If a particular event is the worst thing that has ever happened to you, the impact may seem devastating. In such cases, the pain you feel may seem worse than with someone who is accustomed to pain.

"Small" offenses should never be left unattended. If they are, bitterness can arise and ulcerate into a deep spiritual infection. Small violations are just as capable of destroying a Christian's spiritual walk as major ones. The "little foxes" referred to in Songs of Solomon 2:15 highlight how the little issues can be just as problematic as large ones.

I'm a Correction Officer at a prison and, as you would expect, I've had my share of abuse. Although I don't appreciate it, I realize it comes with the territory and I deal with it accordingly. Having to deal with forgiveness at work has helped me to deal with it outside of work. I must admit the problems I have encountered are small compared to the experiences of some, but I have been victim-

ized. For example, my house has been burglarized twice. My locker at the gym was broken into twice. I had \$2,400 stolen from me. I was jumped and beaten by two guys trying to steal my motorcycle, and I had a double murderer threaten to kill me.

Although none of these incidents caused me to be consumed with bitterness or unforgiving anger, I had an incident which did cause me to wrestle with forgiveness. A while back someone grievously wronged me, and I was really hurt and offended by what happened. Although the offense itself was quite serious and painful, what hurt me more was a friend had done it. The feeling of betrayal was intense.

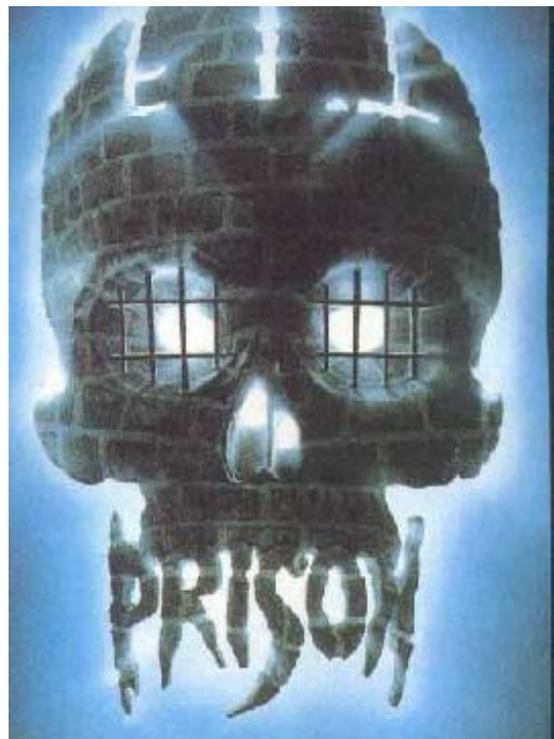
Emotional wounds, like physical wounds, take time to heal. The wider and deeper the wound, the longer it will take to heal. While the wound is healing, you must constantly guard against infection setting in. In fact, in some situations, infections are often more of a concern than the wound itself. This is because infections can spread quickly and ravage a healthy body. It is important to note that once an infection sets in, the healing process of the actual wound slows down or stops. The “infection” in emotional wounds is *bitterness* and *anger*.

Before we cover the steps necessary to speed the healing process of the actual emotional wound, let us first look at how to keep the infections from starting. Rule number one is never dwell on the incident! Dwelling is different than constructive thought. Constructive thought is carefully evaluating the situation to determine what responses are appropriate. Dwelling is rehashing the incident and *feeling* the pain over and over again. Dwelling stirs up very powerful emotions. Every negative emotion you allow to grow becomes one more hurdle you have to cross before you can start the healing process.

Divorce counselors are people who try to help you *emotionally* get over your divorce. They try to get you to fall “out of love” with your former mate. Dwelling on the wrong someone has done you is so

powerful, many divorce counselors use it in their therapy. To help their patient get over the love they have for their former mate, they have them dwell on all of the bad their former mate has done. Eventually, hate and anger replace the love, and they are no longer “in love.” Of course, this type of therapy does more harm than good. It does, however, show the damaging power of dwelling on past offenses.

“Mental imaging” is rehearsing an event over and over in your mind. It is so powerful many sports and martial arts use it in their preparations. In these activities, the person mentally rehearses the moves they want to make over and over again. Although imaging is not a substitute for physical practice, it has proven to be a valuable tool for conditioning. Incidentally, this is one reason why fantasizing about sexual encounters is so dangerous. This mental rehearsal makes you vulnerable to responding incorrectly when sexual temptations arise.



*Anger and bitterness hurts you more than your violator; it poisons your attitude and imprisons your spirit.*

There is another reason why you should not dwell on an incident. Each person has a limited amount of energy to deal with things they encounter during the day. Bitterness and anger consumes a great deal of energy. If you continually dwell on an incident and stir up those emotions, you won't have any energy left to deal with the wound itself. In my case, I knew I had to watch my response very carefully. My situation involved many issues and, as a result, I had to deal with a great deal of stress as well as the emotional hurt.

The first couple weeks after a person has been offended, they are particularly vulnerable to bitterness and anger because the emotions are so strong and often overwhelming. Therefore, I determined not to dwell on the incident *at all* for the first two weeks. I can honestly say I was not bitter or angry for the first two weeks. Of course, the following months were a roller-coaster ride of emotions. Once I was able to get past the original flood of emotions, I knew I still had to deal with the wound. Ignoring or suppressing the hurt will not make it go away. In fact, the only thing suppressing does is temporarily remove the problem from your view. Sooner or later, all of that suppressed hurt and anger will rise up and overpower you.

Refusing to dwell on an offense keeps the wound from getting infected. The wound, however, is still there. Something must be done to start the healing process. The first step in healing a wound is to seek God and ask Him to work in your life. True forgiveness has to come from Him. This may seem too simple, but it is often overlooked.

The next step is to pray for your offender. The Bible clearly commands us to pray for our enemies. I started praying for the friend who wronged me. I did not pray that he would see the errors of his ways, but rather I asked God to bless him and make him prosper. I must confess that this was really tough. As I prayed out of obedience, I found my attitude beginning to change. There were times when I actually meant the prayers. Praying for him was therapeutic. The healing process began. I found you cannot earnestly pray that God would

bless a person and still remain angry and bitter. The two cannot coexist.

The third step is to address the issue head on. You must relinquish all rights to the offense. As believers, God has instructed us to commit our possessions, body and life to God. All of these things actually become the property of God and we are only stewards of them. If something happens to them outside our control, we are not to fret. We must do the same thing to the offenses that have been done to us. We must commit all rights and control to God. We are to view it as though the offense was actually done to God, not us.

There are two advantages to viewing an offense this way. First, God is much more capable of correcting a wrong deed than you or I. Second, doing this means you have relinquished all *rights* to dwell on the incident. You have no right to hold a grudge. The offense was no longer done to you, but to God. Since dwelling causes the emotional wounds to become infected, this part is very important.

When we truly give all rights of an offense to God, we can actually start viewing it as a bystander. For example, if I hear of something happening to a stranger, I may feel saddened, but it does not affect me personally. My emotional response is quite different than if it had happened to me. Likewise, when we are only stewards of this life, the offenses against us are not as personal.

I wish I could say the wound I sustained healed quickly. It didn't. For months, I went through a roller-coaster ride of emotions. I caught myself thinking about the incident several times a day. This surprised and disappointed me. My personality is not one that holds a grudge. Once an issue has been resolved, I am usually able to put it behind me and move on. Yet, this betrayal plagued me.

In a sense I am glad it didn't heal quickly. It made me much more compassionate toward those who are struggling to forgive a violation. It helped me realize some wounds run deep and take time to heal. It is not necessarily a reflection of the

person's "spirituality."

In Corrie Ten Boom's book *Tramp for the Lord*, she has a chapter called *The Blacks and Whites of Forgiveness* (chapter 33). She says even though she has survived the German concentration camps and has been able to forgive the abusive guards, she still finds forgiveness for new incidents difficult. She mentioned an incident with an American that took her years to truly forgive. It is encouraging to see I am not alone in my struggles. Even the "spiritual giants" struggle with these issues.

One day when I was thinking about what was done to me, I thought about what was done to Christ. He was wronged and betrayed more than anyone else in the world. If anyone had the right to complain or hold a grudge, He was the one. Yet, He did not. We should follow His example.

As I thought about this, I was startled by a realization. It was so simplistic, but the thought had never occurred to me before. We all know Jesus died for the sins of the world. But, what I failed to realize was the *actual* sin my friend had committed against me was one of the sins Jesus was punished for. That *specific* sin was already paid for and forgiven by God. The offense no longer has an outstanding debt. It has been dealt with and I must act on that fact.

In summary, the basic steps of forgiveness are:

- 1) Guard your heart immediately after an incident. For two weeks, do not allow yourself to dwell on the incident at all!
- 2) Seek God's help and ask Him to heal your wounds.
- 3) Start praying for the well-being of the offender.
- 4) As much as possible, don't dwell on the incident.
- 5) Relinquish all right of the offense to God.

- 6) Realize Jesus had more right than anyone to hold a grudge, but He still forgave. We must do no less.
- 7) Realize the actual offense against you was specifically paid for on the cross. It has been dealt with and we must act on that fact.

The following paragraphs are for those who are *already* consumed with bitterness and anger from a past offense. The emotions of these people are like a run-away train that can't be stopped. They know they need help, but what can they do?

For months or years the emotional infection has run unrestricted throughout your body. The anger is so overwhelming you are not even able to take the first simple step of praying for the offender. For you, professional Christian counseling is recommended. However, a couple things can be done in the interim.

The first thing you need to do is stop fueling the fire. You should make a commitment not to think about the offense *at all* for two weeks. This will allow some of the emotions to subside. During this time you should be honest with God. Tell Him you lack the desire to do what is right and ask Him to give you the desire to work on it. Also, you should ask Him to raise up others to pray for you. After the two weeks you may have enough energy to start dealing with the problem.

## Johnny Lingo's Eight-Cow Wife

(based partially on a story from *Reader's Digest*)



### Chapter 3.06

BibleHelp.org

My trip to the Kiniwata Island in the Pacific was a memorable one. Although the island was beautiful and I had an enjoyable time, the thing I remember most about my trip was the fact “Johnny Lingo gave eight cows for his wife.” I’m reminded of it every time I see a woman belittle her husband or a wife wither under her husband’s scorn. I want to say to them, “You should know *why* Johnny Lingo gave eight cows for his wife.”

Johnny Lingo is known throughout the islands for his skills, intelligence, and savvy. If you hire him as a guide, he will show you the best fishing spots and the best places to get pearls. Johnny is also one of the sharpest traders in the islands. He can get you the best possible deals. The people of Kiniwata all speak highly of Johnny Lingo. Yet, when they speak of him, they always smile just a little mockingly.

A couple days after my arrival to Kiniwata, I went

to the manager of the guesthouse to see who he thought would be a good fishing guide. “Johnny Lingo,” said the manager. “He’s the best around. When you go shopping, let him do the bargaining. Johnny knows how to make a deal.”

“Johnny Lingo!” hooted a nearby boy. The boy rocked with laughter as he said, “Yea, Johnny can make a deal alright!”

“What’s going on?” I demanded.

“Everybody tells me to get in touch with Johnny Lingo and then they start laughing. Please, let me in on the joke.”

“Oh, the people like to laugh,” the manager said, shrugging. “Johnny’s the brightest and strongest young man in the islands. He’s also the richest for his age.”

“But . . .” I protested. “. . . if he’s all you say he is, why does everyone laugh at him behind his back?”

“Well, there is one thing. Five months ago, at fall festival, Johnny came to Kiniwata and found himself a wife. He gave her father eight cows!”

I knew enough about island customs to be impressed. A dowry of two or three cows would net a fair wife and four or five cows would net a very nice wife.

“Wow!” I said. “Eight cows! She must have beauty that takes your breath away.”

“She’s not ugly, . . .” he conceded with a little smile, “. . . but calling her ‘plain’ would definitely be a compliment. Sam Karoo, her father, was afraid he wouldn’t be able to marry her off. Instead of being stuck with her, he got eight cows for her. Isn’t that extraordinary? This price has never been paid before.”

“Yet, you called Johnny’s wife ‘plain?’”

“I said it would be a compliment to call her plain.

She was skinny and she walked with her shoulders hunched and her head ducked. She was scared of her own shadow.”

“Well,” I said, “I guess there’s just no accounting for love.”

“True enough.” agreed the man. “That’s why the villagers grin when they talk about Johnny. They get special satisfaction from the fact the sharpest trader in the islands was bested by dull old Sam Karoo.”

“But how?”

“No one knows and everyone wonders. All of the cousins urged Sam to ask for three cows and hold out for two until he was sure Johnny would pay only one. To their surprise Johnny came to Sam Karoo and said, ‘Father of Sarita, I offer eight cows for your daughter.’”

“Eight cows.” I murmured. “I’d like to meet this Johnny Lingo.”

I wanted fish and pearls, so the next afternoon I went to the island of Nurabandi. As I asked directions to Johnny’s house, I noticed Johnny’s neighbors were also amused at the mention of his name. When I met the slim, serious young man I could see immediately why everyone respected his skills. However, this only reinforced my confusion over him.

As we sat in his house, he asked me, “You come here from Kiniwata?”

“Yes.”

“They speak of me on that island?”

“Yes. They say you can provide me anything I need. They say you’re intelligent, resourceful, and the sharpest trader in the islands.”

He smiled gently. “My wife is from Kiniwata.”

“Yes, I know.”

“They speak of her?”

“A little.”

“What do they say?”

“Why, just . . . .” The question caught me off balance. “They told me you were married at festival time.”

“Nothing more?” The curve of his eyebrows told me he knew there had to be more.

“They also say the marriage settlement was eight cows.” I paused. “They wonder why.”

“They ask that?” His eyes lighted with pleasure. “Everyone in Kiniwata knows about the eight cows?”

I nodded.

“And in Nurabandi, everyone knows it too?” His chest expanded with satisfaction. “Always and forever, when they speak of marriage settlements, it will be remembered that Johnny Lingo paid eight cows for Sarita.”

So that’s the answer, I thought: Vanity.



Just then Sarita entered the room to place flowers on the table. She stood still for a moment to smile at her husband and then left. She was the most beautiful woman I have ever seen. The lift of her shoulders, the tilt of her chin, and the sparkle in her

eyes all spelled self-confidence and pride. Not an arrogant and haughty pride, but a confident inner beauty that radiated in her every movement.

I turned back to Johnny and found him looking at me.

“You admire her?” he murmured.

“She . . . she’s gorgeous.” I said. “Obviously, this is not the one everyone is talking about. She can’t be the Sarita you married on Kiniwata.”

“There’s only one Sarita. Perhaps, she doesn’t look the way you expected.”

“She doesn’t. I heard she was homely. They all make fun of you because you let yourself be cheated by Sam Karoo.”

“You think eight cows was too many?” A smile slid over his lips.

“No, but how can she be so different from the way they described her?”

Johnny said, “Think about how it must make a girl feel to know her husband paid a very low dowry for her? It must be insulting to her to know he places such little value on her. Think about how she must feel when the other women boast about the high prices their husbands paid for them. It must be embarrassing for her. I would not let this happen to my Sarita.”

“So, you paid eight cows just to make your wife happy?”

“Well, of course I wanted Sarita to be happy, but there’s more to it than that. You say she is different from what you expected. This is true. Many things can change a woman. There are things that happen on the inside and things that happen on the outside. However, the thing that matters most is how she views herself. In Kiniwata, Sarita believed she was worth nothing. As a result, that’s the value she projected. Now, she knows she is worth more than

any other woman in the islands. It shows, doesn’t it?”

“Then you wanted . . .”

“I wanted to marry Sarita. She is the only woman I love.”

“But . . .” I was close to understanding.

“But,” he finished softly, “I wanted an eight-cow wife.”

The above story was based partially on an article found in *Reader’s Digest* (February, 1988). The original work was copyrighted by Patricia McGerr in 1965.

Before I proposed to my wife, I asked her father for permission to marry her. After he said yes, I presented him 10 ceramic cows, which I had made for the occasion. I then told him about “Johnny Lingo’s Eight Cow Wife.” I wanted Janet to know that I valued her higher than any other women around. Look at the chapter *Meet the Author* for other unique things I did during our engagement.

The reason I included this chapter in my book is because many marital problems could be eliminated if we followed the principles described in the story. If you are having marital problems, you should reevaluate your treatment of your mate. Think about your words and actions (both public and private). Do your words and actions make your mate feel he/she is worth eight cows or just one cow? Don’t make the mistake of causing your spouse to feel like he/she is worth only one cow. If you do, they will probably start acting like a one cow wife/husband.

This principle can also be applied to the way you treat others. Many problems can be eliminated at work and church if we only treated others with more respect. Think about the value you put on people. As a general rule, people respond according to the value you place on them.

## Church Splits



### Chapter: 3.07

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*Littleboy* was released by the bomber *Enola Gay* and plummeted toward Earth. When *Littleboy* dropped to the predetermined height of 2,000 feet, the altimeter clicked, setting off a chain reaction. The atoms from a few pounds of Uranium-235 split and produced an explosion equal to 26 million pounds of TNT (13 kilotons). Instantly, Hiroshima, Japan was destroyed. Three days later *Fatman* was dropped over Nagasaki. Within days, the

bloody fighting of WWII was over.

When atoms split (fission), they release a tremendous amount of energy that is capable of great destruction. Church splits are very similar. When a church splits, it can be very destructive to its members and the surrounding community. Splits have left many church members bitter and disillusioned and have caused many non-Christians to think that Christianity is a farce.

Although it is a sad commentary on the Christian community, there is the unfortunate need to include this chapter in this book. Since most Christians will experience at least one church split in their lifetime (sometimes two or three), it is important that you know how to *properly* respond to this type of problem. There are two reasons for this. First, turbulent times in a church can seriously disillusion you and hinder your spiritual growth. Second, responding incorrectly to church problems can actually cause a church split. The previous chapter, *It's a Matter of principle*, provides some guidelines on how to handle basic problems with people. This chapter will provide you with more specific guidelines in dealing with church problems.

Church problems are difficult enough for mature Christians to handle, but they can be devastating to new Christians. Serious church problems can suck your breath away. You see a side of “Christianity” that you never knew existed. It can rock your faith to the core and can even cause you to doubt your faith. It can make you wonder if Christianity is truly of God or just another man-made religion.

Christians, of all people, should be able to get along with others better than anyone else. We have the Bible and the Holy Spirit to guide us and give us wisdom. We have a “new nature” that allows us to overcome our “old nature.” We have the examples of Jesus to show us how to love and forgive. If we can't get along, what hope do we have to offer the world?

When a young Christian sees intense discord within his church, he starts to wonder about everything he

has been taught. He begins to wonder if Christianity is really the answer to his problems. If Christianity can't handle these simple problems, how can it handle the enormous problem of delivering us from the penalty of sin?

Many of the Christians who have been deeply hurt by church splits have stopped being involved in their church. They are reluctant to get involved again for fear of being hurt again. They are hesitant to invest time and money only to be "betrayed" again.

Although we may know in our head that our Christian service should be motivated only by our desire to serve God, our hearts often have difficulty with this. Our hearts have been wounded and if we don't let the Great Healer heal our hearts, we will not be able to trust again. See the chapters *The Great Healer* and *Forgiveness* for more information.



When church problems arise, it is important to respond correctly. Every Christian has a moral obligation to be actively involved in their church, even in times of church turmoil. The best type of involvement, in times of church turmoil, is usually prayer. Bathe your church and its problem in

prayer.

I cannot overemphasize the importance of bathing a church problem in prayer. I believe this is more important than anything else you can do. It is even more important than your "preparations" to save your church. If you feel God is leading you to take a more active role in a church problem, bathe yourself in prayer. Ask others to pray for you. You will need all of the prayer you can get.

Be courteous and polite at all times. Never deliberately ignore someone or act rude. Keep your emotions under control and never respond in anger. When you speak, maintain a calm composure and never raise your voice in anger. Although your speech may be full of passion, there should never be even a hint of anger or contempt. Of course, it should go without saying, never swear or resort to name-calling. I was at a church (during a split) when a woman got up and started hitting the person besides her with her purse.

I have seen situations at church where one group would not talk to another group. They acted like this other group was not even there. I have also seen other situations where one group would be rude and obnoxious to the other group. Christians should never exhibit this type of behavior.

The sad thing about most church splits is the damage they cause. Very little good usually comes out of church "wars." The "good" that does come out of winning a church war is usually outweighed by the price it extracts. If it is at all possible, try to resolve the problem without going to "war." Refer to the chapter *There are no Winners in War* for more information.

Most Christians involved in church conflicts feel they are "in the right." Just because you *think* you are right does not mean you are right. There are a large variety of views, doctrines, and opinions within Christianity. Obviously, not all of these "sides" can be correct. Chances are, the person you are fighting against probably thinks he is "right."

Let's say, for the sake of argument, that you are completely correct in the position you have taken in a church conflict. You still should be careful about going to "war." Just because your cause is righteous does not mean your methods of resolving the problem are correct. You may be completely "right" in your position and still be completely wrong in the way you behave and treat others.

The life of Job is a good example of this. Although Job was a righteous man, some terrible things happened to him. Yet, he trusted and praised God. He responded to his troubles much better than most of us would have. Although this man had done so many things correctly, he still made one mistake. Near the end of his ordeal, he dared to ask God why this was happening to him.

God spent about four chapters (Job 38 to 41) explaining to Job why it was wrong for him to question God. This situation shows how you could be completely in the right and still not handle the situation correctly. Job's life should be an example of why we should carefully examine *all* of our actions.

There are four basic rules you should follow if your church is going through a turbulent time. First, make sure your primary goal is to glorify God with your thoughts, words, and actions. Second, always keep your emotions under complete control. Third, bathe yourself and the problem with prayer. Fourth, *never* "take sides." If most church members would operate under these guidelines, we would have very few church splits.

In the chapter *Finding the Elusive Will of God*, I point out that our primary goal in life is to bring glory to God. We are to glorify God with our words, thoughts, and actions. Unfortunately, during times of church conflict this can be very difficult to do. It is hard enough to respond correctly when a non-Christian mistreats you, but you feel betrayed when a fellow Christian mistreats you. You may think to yourself, "I expected this type of behavior from non-Christians, but a Christian should have known better."

It is important to understand that it doesn't matter if others have acted inappropriately; you are still accountable for your actions. When you stand before God, He is not going to ask you what they have done to provoke you. He is only going to ask you about your actions. He will deal with them in His own time.

About 50 years ago my parents were at a church that went through a difficult time. After all the dust settled, the congregation voted to have the pastor leave. Although the pastor stopped preaching at the church, he refused to leave the parsonage. As a result, the police had to be brought in to have him evicted. Although it was necessary to evict the pastor, what kind of testimony did this provide the non-Christian community? It was basically a no-win situation.

Keeping your emotions under control is very important. We have all seen how problems can be inflamed simply by responding too emotionally to them. You should never be unkind even if others are rude and inconsiderate to you. Prov. 15:1 says, "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up wrath." Prov. 26:20 says, "Without wood the fires goes out; without gossip a quarrel dies down."

"Taking sides" during times of church turmoil is one of the quickest ways to split a church. You should never "side" with anyone but God. Look at the chapter "*Taking Sides in a Conflict*" for more information about this. Taking sides in a conflict will polarize a church and a polarized church can be divided easily. If all church members would line themselves up with God instead of each other, it would be difficult to split the church.

There are many reasons why churches go through times of turmoil. Sometimes the issues are important and involve the spiritual soundness of the church. Most of the time, however, the turmoil is over petty and insignificant issues. Many churches have split over issues as simple as the choice of a hymnbook or the color of the carpet.

There is a church in Louisiana whose roof is green on one side and red on the other. This was done because some members of the church adamantly wanted green and other members adamantly wanted red. The disagreement was so intense that the church was going to split because of it. Fortunately, a compromise was reached and the church did not split. Unfortunately, the red and green roof is a monument to the surrounding community of the disunity within the body of Christ.

Many of these church problems are, in reality, not the church's real problem. They are only a symptom of a much deeper problem. The color of the shingles was not the issue that was tearing the church apart. It may have been the issue that sparked the turmoil, but the church was ready to blow up anyhow. Usually, the underlining problems are very complex and have been developing for many years.

If a church is experiencing significant problems over "superficial" issues, the church should seek outside help. The church obviously has some deep-rooted problems that need professional help. Unfortunately, just as married couples are reluctant to seek outside help, most churches are too. Bringing in outside help is an admission that they can't handle their own problems. Since churches feel they should be helping others, they don't want to admit they need help.

It is my desire that nobody reading this chapter will ever have to experience a church split. It is also my desire that if you do have church problems, they can be eliminated because of the content of these chapters. Remember, if Christians are unable to get along with each other, what hope can we offer the world?

## There are no Winners in War



*The famous (or infamous) picture of a soldier kissing a total stranger.  
(VJ Day, Times Square, New York, August 14, 1945  
Alfred Eisenstaedt/LIFE Copyright© Time, Inc.)*

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The cries of joy were deafening as people gathered in the streets. People ran around hugging and kissing strangers. In a sense, the news was totally unexpected. Japan had just surrendered. *VJ Day*, as it is now called, produced great celebration. Everyone was relieved that we would not have to endure a bloody invasion of Japan. We would not have to sacrifice 200,000 more men to end the war.

During the war, millions of lives were put on hold. Now that the war is over, people could start living their lives again. “The misery is behind us,” they would say. “We have won the war.” In reality, though, there are no winners in war; only losers. Even the “winners” are actually losers. Both sides

in any conflict suffer losses. The question is not who won the most, but who lost the least.

The “winners” of WWII suffered staggering losses. Even the U.S., which did not have its own homeland ravaged by the war, suffered great losses. Besides the \$360 billion price tag (\$3,578 billion in today’s dollars), there were 292,131 Americans killed (not to mention the 115,185 “non-battle deaths”). There were also 670,846 Americans wounded. This, of course, does not take into account the emotional toll of shattered lives and marriages.

Yes, we “won” because we survived the war declared on us by Japan and Germany. Yes, we “won” because we saved the world from plummeting into a very dark and desperate era. Yes, we “won” because we saved over 100 million people from certain death and several hundred million people from oppression and torture. If Japan and Germany had not been defeated, the losses to America (and the rest of the world) would have been far more substantial. So, in comparison, we did “win.”

Don’t get me wrong; I’m not an anti-war protestor. I feel there is a definite need for a strong national defense. I feel it is important for our country to be able to defend herself. I also believe that there is the unfortunate need for the U.S. to defend the oppressed and defenseless of the world. Although I don’t like the U.S. being the guardian of the world, there is a moral obligation to protect the defenseless when there is wholesale genocide and torture taking place. Of course, history has shown us there is a right way and a wrong way to intervene in foreign problems.

The reason I bring this up is because we all have our own private “wars.” These wars may be with our mates, parents, neighbors, co-workers, fellow church members, etc. Although some wars are unavoidable, most can and should be avoided. So many of these wars are fought over petty, insignificant issues.

Just as there are no true winners in military wars, there are no true winners in relationship wars. Both sides in any relationship war will suffer losses. A person may have “won” in a relationship war, but at what cost? The damage he may have done to his marriage or friendship may be far greater than the value of the issue he fought for. It is so easy to lose more than you gain.

It is important to “count the cost” before you engage in a war (Lk. 14:25-33). Corrections Officers have to consider this principle when dealing with aggressive and unmanageable prisoners. Subduing violent and angry prisoners can be very dangerous. It is not uncommon for officers to sustain serious knee or back injuries in “takedowns.” As a result, most prison systems only use these takedowns when nothing else works. Although some prisoners view the reluctance to use force as a weakness, who cares? The officers get the job done and they do it without seriously altering a fellow officer’s life.

Although wars can be very costly, there is another dark side to it. It is called the *Third Party Take-over*. When two powerful countries engage in all-out war against each other, they usually deplete most of their resources. Their defenses are substantially weakened, and they are now vulnerable to attacks from even weak nations. As a result, a neighboring country can easily walk in and take over both countries. In essence, everything the two countries had fought for was in vain. They would have been better off to have “counted the cost” and found a resolution with which they could live.

Sometimes this happens in our personal lives. It is easy to become so consumed and distracted by our own private wars that we become vulnerable to Satan’s attacks. Satan sits back and lets *us* do his work for him. After *we* deplete our defenses, he steps in.

The next time a conflict arises, carefully consider all of your options. See if you can resolve the problem without going to “war.” Look at your projected losses and count the cost to see if it is really worth going to war.

## Taking Sides in a Conflict



### Chapter: 3.10

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The war had been going on for over 100 years and neither side was willing to give up. No, this is not the infamous 100 Year War between England and France. This war is between the Bigenders (also called Big-endians) and the Littlenders. No one remembers what started the war or why they are still fighting, but the one thing they know is the other side is their enemy and needs to be destroyed.

Bigenders and Littlenders got their names from the way they crack open their eggs. Bigenders crack open their eggs on the big end and Littlenders crack open their eggs on the little end.

The war originally started a long time ago when the Emperor's great, great grandfather was a little boy.

One day while he was eating an egg for breakfast, he cut his finger when breaking it open on the larger end. His Father, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Emperor, published a law, commanding everybody to break open their eggs at the small end. The penalty for violating this law was beheading. The Lilliputs were a people who didn't like being told what to do, so many of them defied the order. Over 11,000 people suffered death rather than break open their eggs at the small end. The persecution got so bad that the rebels eventually moved to a nearby island (Blefuscu).

This story, of course, is taken from *Gulliver's Travels*. Jonathan Swift wrote this book in 1726 to make a commentary of how ridiculous some things had become in England. In the first part of the book, he was trying to show how stupid some of the wars were. As he pointed out, it is easy to lose sight of why we are fighting. It is easy to make the side you are on more important than the real issue.

Whenever problems and conflicts arise, our natural reaction is to side with a particular position. While it is true that there are many occasions where it is important to take a stand on an *issue*, it is usually unwise to side with one certain group. Even if a particular "side" fully supports your issue, you should fight for the issue, not the side.

If you think about it, both sides in a conflict often have a great deal in common. You will often find that the "other side" has many values consistent with your own. It is usually only a few issues that you oppose. If you allow yourself to take sides in a conflict, you will probably end up siding against a group that you don't *totally* oppose. Of course, once you take sides, your opposition to the other side will increase.

During the American Civil War, brothers fought against brothers. Family members that were once united tried to destroy each other. Former friends tried to kill each other simply because their former friend was on the "wrong" side. "Taking sides" eliminated the common ground that these people once shared. Look at the chapter *There are no Winners in Wars* for more information on the

dangers of wars.

Although it is important not to take sides in secular conflict, it is even more important not to take sides in church conflicts. Taking sides in a church problem is a quick way to bring about a church split. Taking sides polarizes the church, making it vulnerable to Satan's attacks. You should never make a church problem an us-against-them situation. Doing this creates hurt feelings and resentment. Some of these feelings can last for years. It has been 140 years since the Civil War, and we can still feel the resentment in some parts of our country. Conflicts can create long-lasting divisions.

You should never "side" with anyone but God. The story of Joshua's conquest of the Promised Land emphasizes this point. In Joshua 5:13-15, a warrior with a sword approached Joshua. When Joshua asked him whose side he was on, the Commander of the Lord's Army said that He was on neither side, but was on God's side. In the history of mankind there have been only a few conflicts where the "correct side" had been so obvious. Yet, even in this situation, God made it a point to show that there are no "correct sides" here on Earth.

As Christians, we are called to be defenders of truth, the gospel, and what is right. We are not called to be defenders of a person, a position, or an organization. Your loyalty should always be to God, not to a person or organization.

I bring this issue up because some of the problems we have within the Christian community are a result of blind loyalty. Many Christians commit themselves to a person, position or an organization, instead of being committed to God, the truth, and what is right.

The problem with being committed to a person instead of God is that people are fallible; we make mistakes. Even great Christians can fail and do things that are seriously wrong. If you are committed to a person instead of the truth, there is a possibility that you may end up defending the person's actions. This can lead to serious problems

if another Christian sees the person's sins and tries to help correct the problem. This opposition between you and the other person can produce an "us against them" mentality, which often results in divisions.

The impeachment trial of President Clinton is a good example of this. Although both parties were looking at the same facts, the Republicans wanted Clinton impeached and the Democrats didn't. Without making a commentary on whether Clinton should have been impeached, it is indisputable that party affiliation played a major part in the impeachment vote. Many of the politicians voted in a way that would enhance their party's power instead of voting purely on the facts. In my opinion, decisions should never be based on allegiances, but on the merits of the issue itself. Unfortunately, this same type of blind allegiance is very prominent in churches and Christian ministries.

It is important to understand that I see a big difference between *defending* a person and *supporting* him. Supporting a person means caring for his welfare and providing him aid and help. It also means being honest enough to confront him about his sins. Defending a person (in this context) involves blind loyalty and defense of (or covering up) his actions even when you know he is wrong. I want to point out, though, even if you feel a person is in the wrong, you still should provide aid if he is in need. The chapter *Shooting your Wounded* talks about how we should not abandon a person who has fallen.

Unfortunately, I have seen many situations where a prominent Christian does something seriously wrong only to have the other leaders in the organization cover up the mistake and deny any wrongdoing. The other leaders do this because they feel that exposure of this sin would damage the ministry and its outreach. While it is true that it is usually better to handle problems internally and quietly, you should *never* deny or protect wrongdoing. This is the reason why it is important to be defenders of the truth instead of a defender of a person.

Most of us have seen enough war films or news reports to know how destructive wars can be. The goal of each side is to completely destroy their enemy's military. That's the problem with Christian wars (conflicts within a church). If you take sides, you create an us-against-them attitude. In order for your side to win, you try to destroy the other side. Unfortunately, I've seen this tragedy happen too many times. It has been said, "You don't truly win by making the other side lose."

When you stop and think about it, the people you are fighting against in church wars usually are not unsaved "evil" people. They are usually your brothers and sisters in Christ. These are God's children and He loves them just as much as He loves you. He cares for them just as much as He cares for you. He's concerned about their welfare just as much as He cares about your welfare. Do you think God is honored and pleased that you are trying to destroy His children? Even if you are in the "right," you should be careful how you fight the battle. You should be fighting the problem, not the people. Your goal should be restoration, not obliteration.

The side we are on is not nearly as important to God as the way we *behave*. We don't get eternal rewards for being on the correct side; we get them for honoring God with our actions. Our behavior and actions are more important to God than the side we are on. See the chapter *Being Stuck on the "Wrong" Side* for more information.

Let's go back to our original topic of taking sides in conflicts. God calls you to honor Him with your thoughts, words, and actions. We should only take sides with God and with God alone. Regardless of what the future brings us, we should conduct ourselves in a way that is glorifying and honoring to God.

## Being Stuck on the “Wrong” Side of a Conflict



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In the previous chapter we looked at how we should avoid taking sides in a conflict. Unfortunately, there are some situations (usually in our employment), where we don't have a choice as to the “side” we are on. There are certain occupations that automatically put people on a certain side of an issue.

A few years ago, a high-ranking U.S. Marshal wanted me to become a U.S. Marshal. There were many reasons why I didn't become one, but the main reason was the use of U.S. Marshals to keep the doors open at abortion clinics. Clearing a pathway to help people kill their babies would be repugnant enough in itself, but I would have had great difficulty enforcing some of the *new* laws

designed to silence Pro-Life demonstrators.

Although the U.S. Marshals usually conduct themselves professionally, many local police agencies deliberately try to hurt *passive* demonstrators at abortion clinics. Many of these passive demonstrators have had their arms broken by police using intimidation tactics. I would have great difficulty observing this without intervening. I don't think I would have been able to keep my job with the U.S. Marshals for very long if I arrested some of these abusive policemen.



The military is another occupation where the “side” is already determined for you. Just like there were many Christians in the U.S. military before WWII, there were many Christians in the German military. After Hitler came to power and declared war against its neighboring countries (and eventually the U.S.), these German Christians were on the “wrong side.” (I didn't say “wrong side” because they declared war against America, but because of the atrocities Germany was committing.) During the course of the war, many of these German soldiers realized what was going on and wanted out. Unfortunately, there was no escape for them.

I believe God was not nearly as concerned about

them being in the German Army as He was with how they *acted* in the German Army. These soldiers had to make some tough decisions. They had to decide which orders they could follow and which ones they couldn't. Although some soldiers suffered greatly for opposing heinous orders, most were intimidated into following them. They allowed themselves to be forced into doing some terrible things to innocent victims. I believe God's evaluation of their life will be based more on their actions than on the "side" they were on.

*Focus on the Family* has a dramatized audio book about a man (Dietrich Bonhoeffer) who faced this decision in Nazi German. The audio book, *Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Freedom*, is a powerful and exciting true story. There is much we can learn from Dietrich Bonhoeffer's life. At the end of the chapter there is some information about how to get these books and tapes on Dietrich Bonhoeffer.

The reason I bring this up is because I believe the Christian soldiers in the American military may have to make some tough decisions in a few years. As our country's leadership becomes more morally decayed, they may involve our military in some unethical activities.

As I mentioned in other chapters, I am not an anti-war protestor. I believe in the need for a strong military. I believe in the unfortunate necessity of helping protect the unprotected around the world. I believe military intervention is necessary when there is clear evidence of wholesale torture and murder. I believe there is a need to stop people (like Hitler, Saddam Hussein, and Osama bin Laden) from bringing massive terror to the world. I don't believe, however, we should go to war simply for the purpose of taking land from some other country or because someone insults us.

I am concerned about the moral conscience of some of our leadership and the direction they are taking our country. A few years ago I didn't think we would ever be in our current position. We now live in a country that thinks murdering unborn children is simply an issue of "choice." We now live

in a country that believes it is okay to kill a baby while it is actually being born; as long as its head has not come out (partial birth abortion).

Our country has become so warped in its thinking that those who voice their objections to these murders are called "intolerant bigots." We have civil liberty groups who vehemently oppose any type of restriction of free speech, regardless of how vulgar or offensive it may be. Yet, these same groups have lobbied hard to get laws passed that severely limit free speech of Pro-Life demonstrators. If murdering the most innocent and vulnerable citizens of our country can be simply passed off as a *choice* of convenience, how far away do you really think we are from making choices of convenience with the elderly and infirmed?

We assume our Constitution would never allow this to happen. Remember, it was our *free* and *enlightened* country that said it was "legal" and "constitutional" to enslave, torture, and murder people (black slaves). They rationalized this contradiction by saying slaves were only property; not humans with rights. In fact, America (which prided itself for its revolutionary idea of liberty and justice for all) clung onto slavery long after Europe abolished it. America's founding and governing principles were completely and blatantly ignored.

Not only did America enslave people, it actually passed laws to severely limit voices of opposition. For example, the state of Georgia passed a law (July 1831) calling for the death penalty of anyone publishing material that could incite slave insurrection. The Federal government made it illegal to mail abolitionist (anti-slavery) material through the U.S. mail. From 1846 to 1849, the House of Representatives had procedural rules that prohibited the House from discussing issues involving abolition. It also prohibited the public from petitioning the government for changes on this issue.

Nazi Germany is another example of how quickly a government can turn sour. Germany had a Constitution that guaranteed its citizens certain rights and liberties. However, it didn't take long before these

rights were completely ignored.

Many people are unaware that before Germany went to war (and several years before Germany began systematically killing the Jews -June 1941), Hitler killed the handicapped and mentally ill (Operation T4). The T4 program was a *choice* of convenience for Germany to limit its financial liability during a time of hyperinflation.

Their economy was in shambles because of the staggering costs of WWI (about \$100 billion). Besides paying off their war debts, Germany had to pay about \$30 billion in war reparations (a penalty for “starting” WWI). Hitler felt it was necessary to eliminate what he called the “useless eaters.” Over 75,000 “useless eaters” were killed through the T4 program so the rest of Germany could have a better future.

I believe if Hitler encountered substantial nationwide opposition to his T4 program, he probably would not have implemented his “Final Solution” (the extermination of the Jews). I believe if Hitler saw the German people would not tolerate murdering innocent people (regardless of the “benefits”), Germany could have been spared the stigma of the Holocaust that haunts them to this day.

Many Germans had said, “I personally think it’s wrong to kill the handicapped, but it is legal. If something is the law, you should accept it and not make a big fuss about it.” Unfortunately, I have heard the same thing from Americans concerning abortion. “I personally believe abortion is wrong, but it has been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Those Pro-Life protesters should really keep their opinions to themselves.”

I have a friend (who is black) who made the above statement. I said to him, “Well, slavery was legal and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court. Are you saying it was wrong for people to openly and aggressively oppose it? Do you feel it was wrong for my ancestors to fight and die to end this practice?” Of course, there wasn’t anything for my him to say.

Since 1973, over 42 million American babies have been murdered in the name of “choice.” Americans are killing fellow Americans simply because they selfishly want to make their own life better. Are the people who support abortion that much different from the citizens of Nazi Germany? Are the people who perform abortions that much different from the commanding officers at the death camps? Are the mothers who have these abortions that much different from the German SS that poured gas pellets into the gas chambers?

The Nazi Germans rationalized killing Jews by saying Jews were an inferior race. They said the Jews had no rights because they were just “one step above animals.” Pro-abortion people say the unborn baby is not human and is not entitled to any rights of protection. The courts have reduced the legal status of the unborn child down to personal property of the mother.

I don’t know what bothers me more: The murder of innocent and defenseless children or the *mindset* of the people who think this is *normal* and acceptable. I can see how some people may mistakenly think (through flawed logic) a 16-cell embryo is not a living human being. I can’t, however, understand how a person can say a baby who is 90% out of the womb (partial birth abortion) is less human than a baby who is one minute old.

What do you think that America’s leaders will do when Social Security can no longer afford the medical costs of our sick elderly? Will they too be considered “useless eaters,” needing to be eliminated? If people are willing to accept murdering babies as a choice of convenience, would murdering our sick elderly really be that far-fetched?

I am very concerned about these abortion advocates because I wonder what other ruthless behavior they will consider normal? Who else will they need to eliminate to make *their* world a better place? Think about it, if the United States started purging the world of the undesirables (such as what Nazi Germany did), what country would be able to stand up to our military and nuclear arsenal? If

United States' leadership turns sour, they would probably be unstoppable. To me, that is a terrifying thought. I love my country, but I hate her sins.

### **A Special Note to the German People**

There are three things I would like to say to the German people who may be reading this chapter. First, I do not hold anything against the German race; some of my ancestors were Germans. Second, I do not hold present day Germany responsible for what was done in the past. That would be as wrong as holding me responsible for the slavery that took place in my country. Third, as I mentioned already, Americans are in no position to criticize Nazi Germany. Our abortion clinics have murdered far more people than the German death camps. The reason I bring this up is because I'm sure you are tired of being reminded of the past. However, the lessons learned from that experience should not be forgotten. Although the blemish created by the Nazis will probably last a long time, I'm afraid the blemish created by our American abortionists will probably last even longer.

For those interested, I have created a chapter on abortion. It is short, but to the point. I think you will find it interesting and very unique. It may show you some things you never thought about before. The chapter *Summary of Pro-Choice* can be found in the Introduction of this book.

The audio book on Dietrich Bonhoeffer can be purchased from Christian Books Distributors. The audio book is called: *Bonhoeffer: The Cost of Freedom*

<http://www.Christianbook.com>

# Summary of Pro-Choice

- It's legal.
- It's "Constitutional."
- It's been upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court.
- People still protest it despite its obvious legality.
- The media has instituted a self-imposed "blackout" of the opposition.
- The U.S. Mail has banned the mailing of certain opposition literature.
- Compared to other controversial "free speech" issues, Congress and the courts have greatly stifled the voices of opposition.
- It's an issue of "choice."
- It's a "privacy issue" that concerns no one else.
- It's not human life protected by the law (thus it can be terminated).
- Those who oppose it are "troublemaking intolerant bigots."
- I have a right to do this. I would be deprived of my Constitutional rights of "liberty and justice" if I am restricted in this area.

Some familiar? It should; it's talking about American slavery. These are the things people have said about slavery before it was finally abolish. Slaveholders actually felt that their Constitutional rights to "liberty and justice" would be violated if they were told they couldn't violate the liberty and justice of a black person.

Now, 150 years later, we wonder how these people couldn't see the obvious contradictions of such statements. Yet, we are doing the exact same thing with abortion. We are told that the unborn child is the personal property of the women and she has the right to do whatever she wants with it.

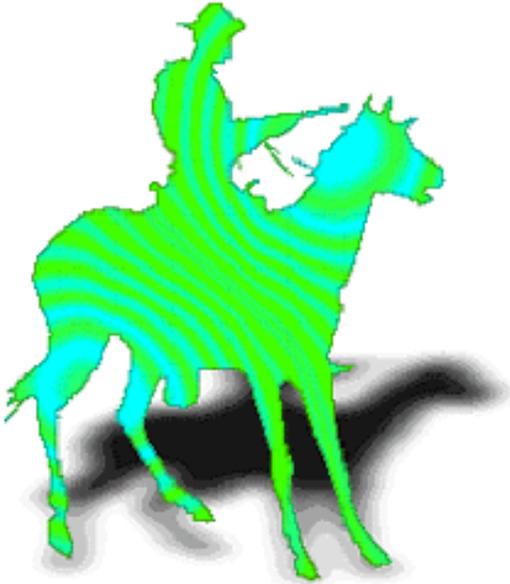
Treating human life as property is wrong in any century. America's treatment of the unborn child is just as deplorable and despicable as America's past treatment of slaves. There is no difference. If you feel slavery is wrong, you have to say abortion is wrong. The parallels between abortion and slavery are too great to ignore. Either our Constitution supports both or opposes both. Either we abolish abortion or we have to legalize slavery. Americans need to decide, once and for all, if human life can be treated as property.

**Printable version of this poster.** The information on this page can also be printed in a "flyer" format. This format would be ideal for things like church bulletins, flyers at rallies etc. I strongly encourage the free distribution of this material. The only thing I ask is you keep the copyright information on it. To download the flyer version, go to: [BibleHelp.org/prochoice](http://BibleHelp.org/prochoice)

## Section 4: Fear, Death, and the Fear of Death

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## Fear, the Predator of our Peace



### Chapter: 4.01

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Black Bart, his name stirred terror in the hearts of those who heard it. His name had become synonymous with the dangers of the frontier. Of the 29 stagecoaches he robbed (1875 - 1883), he never fired a shot. He didn't have to; just the presence of this hooded bandit paralyzed his victims.

Who was this vicious criminal? As it turned out, the dreaded Black Bart was a mild-mannered druggist from Decatur, Illinois, named Charles E. Boles. He was so afraid of horses he rode his buggy to and from the robberies. It was a good thing he never *needed* to fire a shot; he never loaded his gun. (Paul Harvey, *The Rest of the Story*, Bantam 1977, p117)

In reality, Black Bart was a paper tiger. There was no valid reason to fear him. Although he had the *appearance* of someone who was dangerous, he

was harmless. Do you know anyone like that in your life? Is the accuser of your heart walking around with an empty gun? Are you being terrorized by a paper tiger?

What do you fear? What do you find terrifying? There is nothing wrong with fear, in and of itself. It is one of our many emotions and it serves a purpose. In terrifying circumstances, it provides us with adrenaline that strengthens us. Fear alerts us to danger and hopefully causes us to think twice before doing something stupid.

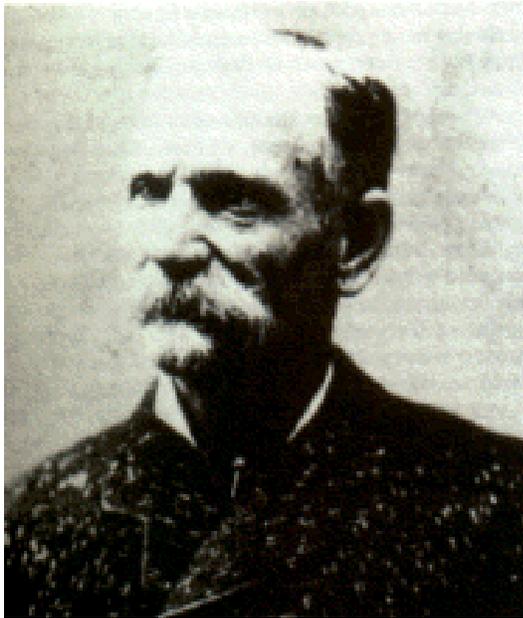
Although fear is a legitimate emotion that serves a purpose, it can also be very disruptive. As we saw with Black Bart, fear caused people to surrender needlessly. Fear can distort your judgment and thinking. It can paralyze and even result in death. This is why a six-foot tall person can fall out of a boat into five feet of water and drown. In this situation, the victim does not realize he can touch bottom and starts to panic. As a result, he thrashes around and eventually consumes all of his energy and sinks.

Are you embarrassed by your fears? I think most of us are secretly ashamed of what frightens us. We often condemn ourselves for not being a stronger person. Unfortunately, fear is seldom rational or logical. The only thing predictable about fear is its unpredictability. You can have a cop who is not afraid to mix it with violent criminals, but is terrified of spiders. You can have a timid five-year old girl who's afraid of the dark, but is completely at ease playing with spiders. Life is full of its comical ironies.

Do you ever find yourself admiring someone else's courage, wishing you were more like them? Let me set the record straight. A lack of fear is not courage. Courage is doing what is right despite the fears raging within your heart. A person who says he is never afraid is either a liar or a fool. Heroes are usually ordinary people, like you and me, terrified by the impending danger. The only difference is, they *choose* to do what is right despite the danger. These people get their strength by utilizing

the energy of their fear. They make fear work for them, instead of against them.

Many forms of martial arts utilize this technique. Instead of trying to fight against the force of the aggressor, you use his own force against him. For example, when an aggressor moves toward you, you don't try to stop him because this would take too much energy. Instead, you move to the side and deflect him, using *his* momentum to make him move away from you. This is why a small person can defend himself against a large, powerful person.



*Black Bart*

It isn't the presence or absence of fear that defines who you are. It is the way you respond to the fears you have. Granted, it would be nice not to be plagued and bothered by irrational fears. The bottom line is this: Fears may encompass you, but they should never *control* you.

The biggest problem of fear is it can prevent you from accomplishing what needs to be done. It can rob you of the joys, blessings, and rewards that would be yours if you followed God's leading. More tragically, it may mean people are needlessly

going to Hell because of your inactivity.

Maybe a person is refusing to be a missionary because he is afraid of snakes. Maybe a person is refusing to go into the ministry because he is afraid of speaking in front of people. Maybe a person doesn't witness because he is afraid of what others might think.

"Fear of failing" is probably the most common fear. Has the fear of failure kept you from pursuing your dreams? Has the fear of falling short ever kept you from even trying? Remember, if you don't do something because you are afraid of failing, you have failed already.

The military conducted a study to determine what scares us the most. They found we are frightened more by the *unknown* than by any other tangible object or event. They found people would rather face a known adversary of great strength than an adversary of unknown origin and danger. When you know what your adversary is, you can at least try to prepare a defense. There is no adequate defense for the unknown.

The reason why the unknown terrifies us so much is we usually assume the worst. We play head games with ourselves. For example, if we have an unusual pain, we might think it is cancer. If we have a sudden loss of motor skills, we think it might be Multiple Sclerosis.

Our minds have an incredible ability to fill in blanks. Since so much of life is unknown, there are a lot of blanks that need to be filled in. Unfortunately, our minds often do a poor job filling in the blanks. For example, think about a major endeavor you would like to pursue. Chances are there were many unknown variables. If you are not careful, you will start imagining the worst about these unknowns and begin to convince yourself not to pursue this endeavor.

Fear is the predator of our peace. There is no way you can live a victorious life if you are frightened and intimidated by paper tigers. Ultimately, gaining

control over fear is a matter of *choice*. Gaining victory over your fear does not mean you are no longer frightened, it only means you are no longer controlled by it.

Many of you reading this book have lost a loved one. This loss is usually accompanied by a certain amount of grief and sorrow. If the one who died had Christ as his Savior, his death is only a temporary loss. However, for those who do not have this blessed hope, the death of a loved one can be incredibly bitter. If the dying person has no hope, his last few days or hours can be a terrifying experience. The next chapter, *Fear of Death*, deals with overcoming the fear of death.

Don't let your fears rob your heart of its peace. The fantastic video series for kids, *Veggie Tales*, has a song called "*God is bigger than the Boogie Man*." Yes, God is bigger than your greatest fear. Remember, Immanuel means "God with us," and He is with us even when we are facing our greatest fears.

## Fear of Death



### Chapter: 4.02

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The fear of death is a universal phenomenon. No matter where you go in the world, you will always find large numbers of people who are afraid of dying. The reason for fearing death is obvious: Death is the greatest mystery of all.

As mentioned in the previous chapter (*Fear, the Predator of our Peace*), fear of the *unknown* is incredibly powerful. Since death is considered the biggest “unknown” of all, many people, including some Christians, find death terrifying.

Death is surrounded by so many unknown variables. What will it feel like when you die? What will be waiting for us when we reach the other side of the veil of death? Will the afterlife be as chaotic

and painful as this life? Since we have never died before, we don’t know what to expect.

Death, like taxes, is unavoidable. There is no way to escape its grip. It doesn’t matter if you are rich, powerful, or influential; you will still die. Death is no respecter of persons.

Another reason many people find death so terrifying is the fact we have to face it alone. Even if you are surrounded by hundreds of people when you die, you must still pass through death by yourself. This prospect is very unnerving for many people.

Although passing into a vast unknown by yourself can be frightful, the thought of standing before God Almighty can be downright terrifying. God has installed in all of us a conscience with a knowledge of right and wrong. People inherently know they will have to stand before God someday and give an account for their actions. This can be a terrifying prospect for some people.

Some people deal with the issue of their mortality by becoming consumed and obsessed with the subject of death. Others, however, simply ignore the subject completely. Since there are plenty of distractions out there, ignoring death can be easy. The only time these people think about death is when they become seriously ill, someone close to them dies, or there is a major calamity. After the World Trade Center attack, for example, there was a large number of people searching the Internet for websites dealing with the subject of death.

Neither approach (being obsessed with death or ignoring it) is appropriate. Being obsessed with death is obviously unhealthy and ignoring death can have tremendous eternal consequences. A balanced approach is needed. A person needs to appropriately deal with the issues of death and then move on. The three main fears a person needs to address are:

- The fear of standing before God Almighty
- The fear of the unknown (being able to face the great mystery of death)

· The fear of facing death alone

Jonathan Edward's historic sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" dealt with the consequences of facing God Almighty unprepared. Jonathan Edward pointed out that a person *should* be terrified of the prospects of standing before God Almighty if he has not appropriately taken care of his sin problem. Fortunately, God has provided us a solution. The section *Understanding Salvation* explains how a person can make peace with God.

Although making peace with God eliminates the fear of meeting God, it doesn't eliminate the mystery of death itself. Death is still an unknown commodity. We still don't know any of the specifics of what will happen at the time of our death. Yet, we can now have the confidence that things will be okay. We can have the confidence that the God who cares for us will work out all of the details.

Of course, simply knowing intellectually that we shouldn't fear the unknown doesn't mean we will automatically have peace. We must learn to trust God. We must act upon the promises of God set forth in the Bible. The previous chapter (*Fear, the Predator of our Peace*) deals with this issue.



*Even though I walk through the valley of death, there still is no need to fear.*

Even though we know God will work out the details, it would still be nice if we didn't have to face death alone. We are social creatures and being "alone" during such a monumental time can cause apprehension and panic. In reality, a Christian does not die alone. The name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14) means "God with us." Therefore, just as God is with us before we die, He will be with us during and after our death. The next chapter (*Victory Over the Sting of Death*) provides an excellent example of God's sufficiency and presence during the death of a Christian.

What is death like for the Christian? Is the dying process always peaceful or are there occasions when the Christian has doubts and fears? It varies, of course, from person to person. As Christians, we have the assurance our sins have been forgiven and that God the Father, will fully accept us because of Jesus Christ. Yet, this does not *automatically* mean dying will be peaceful. We often have feelings contrary to what we know to be true. For example, there are people who are afraid of flying even though they realize it is one of the safest forms of transportation. Fear is not always rational.

Although much of death is shrouded in mystery, it does not need to cause the Christian undue anxiety. Ultimately, the Christian's frame-of-mind will determine the level of peace or anxiety. This is illustrated in John Bunyan's book *Pilgrim's Progress*. This book describes the journey of a person seeking God and the struggles he encounters after becoming a Christian. At the beginning of the book, the name of the main character is "Pilgrim." Later on, after he finds Christ, he is called "Christian." Each person Pilgrim encounters on his journey has a name that describes his or her personality, such as Mr. Obstinate, Mr. Worldly, Pliable, Wiseman, and Evangelist.

At the end of Christian and Hopeful's journey, they come upon a wide river separating them from their final destination, the Celestial City. Since the river looks deep and dangerous, Christian is reluctant to

cross. When he asks if there is some other way to get across, he is told, “Yes, but only Enoch and Elijah were permitted to cross that way.” The river, of course, is symbolic of death.

Christian is apprehensive about the prospects of crossing this river. When he asks, “Is it the same depth all the way across?” he is told, “It is deeper or shallower *as you believe in the King.*” As Christian and Hopeful begin to cross the river, the water starts flowing over Christian’s head. Out of fear Christian cries out, “I can’t touch the bottom. The water is going over my head. I’m going to drown.” Hopeful yells back, “I’m able to touch the bottom, Christian. The river isn’t that deep. Hold on and I’ll come over to help you.” Terrified, Christian yells back, “No, save yourself. The sorrows of death are all around me. I wasn’t a good pilgrim. I’ve sinned much before I started my journey, and I’ve sinned much afterwards.”

Hopeful reminds him to think on the King. Then, Christian remembers what the King said, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you” (Isaiah 43:2). All of a sudden, Christian is able to touch the bottom. The process of crossing over to the other side is no longer terrifying.

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### Interesting Side Note on John Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*

Here’s an interesting side note about John Bunyan’s book *Pilgrim’s Progress*. About 400 years ago John Bunyan was in prison for preaching the gospel. One night, while in prison, he had a very vivid dream. John Bunyan wrote the dream down and the book, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, was born. John Bunyan was reluctant to publish this book because he felt that “fiction” books had no place in Christian literature. After strong encouragement from his friends, John Bunyan published *Pilgrim’s Progress*.

Surprisingly, the book he almost discarded became his crowning achievement. Even after 400 years, *Pilgrim’s Progress* is still very popular. In fact, John Bunyan is known more for *Pilgrim’s Progress* than anything else he accomplished.

There is a lesson we can learn from John Bunyan’s experience. We should listen carefully to what God has to say and be obedient to what He asks. Even if it seems like His request would be a waste of time, we should still be obedient. You’ll never know what area of your life will be used of God to help others.

For those interested, a dramatized audio version of *Pilgrim’s Progress* and its sequel (*Christiana*) is available from Christian Book Distributor. *Christiana* is about Pilgrim’s wife and her journey after she became a Christian. These productions are very well done and cost around \$25 each. Each set has six 80 minute tapes.

*Pilgrim’s Progress Part 1: Christian*  
(ISBN 790128000X)

*Pilgrim’s Progress Part 2: Christiana*  
(ISBN 7901280077)

Christian Books Distributors:  
<http://www.Christianbook.com>

## Victory over the Sting of Death



*Robert Bronson at the beginning of WWII*

### Chapter: 4.03

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I was pulled out of my sleep by the ringing phone. I looked at the clock and wondered if this was “the call.” Like many people, a call in the middle of the night causes the mind to race through the list of possible problems. Since we have no children, the health of my elderly parents was on the top of my list. Every off-hour call makes we wonder if this is going to be *the call* bearing the bad news.

Over the years we have had more than our fair share of phone calls in the middle of the night. Most of these calls were made by people who had been drinking and dialed the wrong number. Although the carelessness of these people really aggravated me, I was always relieved that these calls did not concern my parents.

Although today’s call was not in the middle of the night, it was early in the morning. As I recognized my mother’s voice my heart began to race. Her voice, however, was calm and nonchalant, so I figured it must not be a serious concern. She then said that dad was sick and was taken to the hospital.

My dad “doesn’t do sickness.” He is one of those

fortunate people who seldom ever gets sick. He can even do crazy things like walk barefoot in the snow and not get sick. So, the fact he was sick enough to go to the hospital meant it was something serious. After a large number of tests, a bone marrow biopsy revealed he had Acute Myelomonocytic Leukemia. Over 85% of his bone marrow was cancerous. Acute Myelomonocytic Leukemia, we were told, appears suddenly and progresses very quickly. Four weeks later my father was dead.

The death of a loved one is always difficult and this is especially true when the family has had a close and loving relationship. Since our family was very close, the passing of our father created quite a vacuum. He was a great father and friend and we miss his friendship tremendously.

Although it hurt having dad die, I learned much from this experience. I’ve learned that the death of the believer is truly different from the death of the unbeliever. I saw that the sorrow we experience is different from the bitter sorrow of those who “have no hope” (1 Thes. 4:13).

Intellectually, of course, I knew that the passing of a believer was supposed to be different from that of an unbeliever. I knew we didn’t “lose” a believer when he died, but were only temporarily separated from him. This was a head-knowledge, however, not a heart-knowledge. I had never personally experienced this *blessed hope*.

When dad died, we didn’t experience the bitter sorrow and anguish often associated with death. We cried, of course, but there wasn’t the desperation or hopelessness. There was actually a peace amidst our tears. There was a special comfort and quietness flowing with our tears. I found it amazing. It was difficult, of course, not being able to be with our father, but it wasn’t a bitter departure.

I have seen tears of futility and desperation. I have observed the passing of unbelievers and seen the hopelessness that it causes. I have seen the gut-wrenching anguish and agony of family members

grieving for a loved one who has died.

1 Cor. 15:55 says “O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?” Our family can now testify that this verse is true. The sting of death has truly been removed from the believer. Death doesn’t need to have power and control over us.

Death is a tormentor of both the surviving and the dying. It can be a dreadful experience for the surviving family members, and it can be a terrifying experience for the person dying. Watching an unbeliever die can leave you with haunting memories.

In the movie *Peter Pan*, Captain Hook and Peter Pan discussed how death was the “last great adventure.” For most people, however, death is not an adventure, but a terror. There are three main reasons why death is so terrifying to most people: 1) They are afraid of having their sins judged by an Almighty Holy God, 2) They are afraid of the unknown, and 3) They are afraid of the intense pain and suffering sometimes associated with death.

God has placed a moral conscience in the heart of every person. This conscience does not tell a person how to get saved, but it tells him that there are some basic rights and wrongs. It lets him know when he has done wrong, and it produces a feeling of guilt when a violation has occurred. Everyone inherently knows that there is a basic moral code that needs to be followed, and they also know when they have violated this code.

God has also placed a knowledge of Himself and of eternal life in the heart of every person. This is why you can go anywhere in the world (even into the remotest jungle) and find a religion that includes God and eternal life. People know inherently that when they die they will pass into eternity and stand before their Creator. They know they will have to give an account of their actions to God Almighty. They find the prospect of being “weighed in the scales and found wanting” a terrifying thought.

For the unbeliever, the fear of being judged by an

Almighty God is a valid fear. We are all sinners and our righteous God expects complete perfection. We have a significant sin problem and unless a person has a solution that legitimately resolves this problem, the person will be punished. Jonathan Edwards’s sermon, *Sinners in the Hand of an Angry God*, gained worldwide recognition and is still talked about today. Edwards clearly pointed out that it would be a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God.

The believer in Jesus Christ has a legitimate solution to his sin problem. Jesus was punished in his place and as a result, he does not have to fear the wrath of a Righteous and Holy God. He will never have to face judgment for his sins. The believer has the peace and assurance of knowing that death brings eternal life, not eternal damnation.

Although the believer has peace concerning the sin problem, there are still the two other reasons why death can be terrifying. The fear of the unknown is a powerful fear and can be overwhelming. Extensive studies have shown that we would rather face a known adversary (even if it is fierce and dangerous) than face an unknown adversary. There is no way of preparing yourself or creating a defense when you don’t know what you are up against.

Death is the greatest unknown of all; nothing else even comes close. Although the Bible has given us a partial description of what lies beyond the vale of death, we have never personally seen or experienced it. None of our acquaintances have ever died and come back to tell us about it. It is very easy (even for a believer) to dread this dark vale and be apprehensive about dying.

The thing that compounds this fear is the fact we have to face it alone. It doesn’t matter how many friends you have or how many people are with you when you die, you must still pass through the vale of death by yourself. This can be very disconcerting. We are social creatures and we don’t like to face intense adversities by ourselves. This is even true for people who are “loners.”

I like to travel and there have been a few times when I have gotten lost in the wrong parts of Los Angeles, Washington D.C., and Chicago. You know you're in trouble when all of the buildings are boarded up and the only cars you see are stripped out and sitting on blocks. As scary as this was, it would be even more terrifying if I were in the same situation in a bad part of Russia. Not knowing the language and culture would make things far more difficult and dangerous.

I'm sure this will sound crazy, but it would be a tremendous relief to me if my wife Janet were there with me. There probably wouldn't be much she could do to help in this type of situation, but it would be a great comfort not to have to face this problem alone.

God promises to be with us as we face our most difficult times. He will even be with us when we enter the dark shadows of death and pass into eternity. The believer doesn't die alone. God said, "I will never leave thee or forsake thee" (Heb. 13:5, Josh. 1:5). In my chapter, *Fear, the Predator of our Peace*, (especially the last couple pages) I talked about how we can either control fear or let it control us. We can either trust God's promises and reap the rewards or we can ignore His promises and suffer the consequences. The choice is up to us.

The third thing that makes death so terrifying is the possibility of intense pain and suffering. I think most people would probably prefer to die painlessly in their sleep. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen. Many great Christians have died very cruel and painful deaths.

As a Christian draws closer to a possible painful death, he often wonders how he will respond to the pain and agony. He wonders if he will be able to endure the pain. He wonders if he will ruin his Christian testimony and betray his Lord by the way he responds to his pain and misery.

As I mentioned before, God promises to be with us even in our darkest hour. He doesn't promise to

eliminate the pain and misery, but He promises to be there with us and help us get through the problem. It's important to remember that God does not usually provide us this strength, courage, and grace until we actually need it. He normally provides it on an "as needed" basis.

It's kind of like what happens when you ride a bus. A bus ticket is not usually purchased weeks in advance; you normally purchase it just before you get on. Therefore, don't be discouraged if you don't think you have the courage and strength to handle an upcoming problem. God will provide it when you need it; *if you ask Him*.

Two weeks before my dad died he became very apprehensive about the prospect of dying a painful death. Cancer is, of course, a dreaded disease and dad didn't know what was in store for him. The only thing he knew was his body was not producing enough new blood cells. This lack of blood production meant his body was not getting the oxygen and nutrients it needed. He knew his vital organs would eventually start shutting down and he didn't know how painful that would be.

Although I was never told what dad's specific concerns were, I know that people in this type of situation often wonder, "If my organs are suffocating, will I *feel* like I'm suffocating too?" There is, of course, the more chilling thought, "If the muscles that make me breathe get weaker from the lack of oxygen, will I end up gasping for air in my final days?"

My mom listened patiently and helplessly as dad expressed his fears. She knew something was bothering him because this was the first time he had ever expressed these concerns. The next morning he got up and told my mom that everything was going to be all right. He made the simple comment, "Someone told me last night that '*Jesus is sufficient*.'" He never mentioned his special encounter again and he never exhibited any more signs of fear or apprehension.

Since no one else was in the house besides my

mom, you may be wondering who was this mysterious visitor? Your guess is as good as mine. I can only speculate. I will say this, though; dad was not given to exaggerations or to fabricating stories. The fact that he only mentioned it once (to reassure my mom) indicates to me that he wasn't trying to sensationalize or draw attention to the encounter. Did God send a special messenger to reassure my dad in his time of need? I think He did. However, since I don't have any proof to substantiate my speculation, I'll let you draw your own conclusion.

A couple days before my dad died, he said, "Tell everyone that it is true; when you walk in the shadow of death, you really don't have to be afraid." Dad exhibited an extraordinary amount of peace his last few days. His life was a testimony that Psalms 23:4 is true. His life showed that even when death is so close to you (a believer) that its shadow is touching you, there is no need to be afraid; God is with you. You may not see Him, but He is still there.

Death cannot encompass a believer with darkness; it can only cast a shadow on him. Think about it, there cannot be a shadow without a source of light. Therefore, the existence of the shadow actually proves the existence of the light. Death can only temporarily block the light; it cannot eliminate it. So, when death starts to darken your world, remember that the light it's trying to block is still waiting for you.

Although God promises to be with the believer in their darkest hours, peace is not automatic. Peace only comes when the believer claims God's promises. We must *choose*, by the act of our will, to put our trust in Him. If we don't make this choice, we won't be able to draw on God's strength and we are opening ourselves up to be controlled by fear.

If you are an unbeliever and your sins have not been forgiven, you really do have a reason to be afraid and concerned. Death is a real threat and you must face it alone. I want to point out, however, that I did not write this chapter to scare people into becoming a Christian. I wrote this chapter to show believers

that fear does not need to have dominion over us.

If you are an unbeliever, please don't become a Christian out of fear. Your motivation of becoming a Christian should be to reunite yourself with your Creator who loves you. Your motivation should be to find a solution to the sin problem that is separating you from God; to experience the life God intended you to have. If this is your desire, please read Section 9 (*Understanding Salvation*) on my website. You should also read chapters 8.03 to 8.08 in Section 8. If you would like to share this chapter about death with a friend, it can be found at [BibleHelp.org/death.htm](http://BibleHelp.org/death.htm).



In Memory of Robert C. Bronson  
1920 – 2001

Beloved Husband – Father - Grandfather  
No man could Love more  
No man could be more Loved  
By His Love  
He showed us how to live  
By His Faith  
He shows us how to die  
(by Dan Bronson)

Several places in my book I've talked about the unique ways in which God answered prayers. I've talked about how people in need have prayed for a specific amount of money and then received that exact amount. In most of these cases the people sending the money were totally unaware of these needs. Mom and dad have been instrumental in many of these situations.

After dad's death, I took over the finances for my mom and I discovered something spectacular. Mom and dad, of course, have been in retirement for a couple of decades and like many senior citizens their income was very limited. Yet, I have discovered they gave (and still give) more to missions every year than most two-income working families.

I'm sure my mom would prefer that I didn't tell others about their personal giving, but I feel it is necessary to let others know about it. I don't bring this up to show how great my parents were, but to show the faithfulness of our awesome God. Although I think they gave more than they could realistically afford, God honored their sacrifices and provided for all of their needs. Our God is truly an Awesome God!

## World's Mortality Rate



### Chapter: 4.04

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Obviously, it is impossible to know exactly how many people are going to die this coming year. We do know, however, the number of people who have died this past year. Based on this information, statisticians have calculated the “mortality rate” for the world. The world’s mortality rate for the year 2003 was .883 percent. This means that 1 out of every 113 people in the world died last year. On average, 1.78 people die every second. Based on this rate, here is how the numbers add up.

1.78	per second
107	per minute
6,390	per hour
153 thousand	per day
56.0 million	per year
3.9 billion	per average lifetime (70 years)

The mortality rate has been consistently hovering around .9% for the past several years. Therefore, barring a major worldwide calamity (such as another world war) we can expect a similar mortality rate for this coming year.

The counter above is only an *estimate* and an *average* of the number of people who will die every second. Obviously, there will be some seconds when nobody dies and other seconds where thousands will die. For example, about 80,000 people were killed almost instantly when the atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima. China has had two devastating earthquakes that killed 830,000 people (Jan. 24, 1556) and 200,000 people (Dec.16, 1920).

I realize some people may think it is morbid counting out the number of people who have died. I am not being insensitive nor am I making sport of people’s death. My father died a few months ago, so I am fully aware of what it is like to lose a loved one. In fact, it was his death that inspired me to create this counter. Death does not have to be a gut-wrenching experience. There is victory over the sting of death. If you would like to learn more about this, go to the chapter *Victory Over the Sting of Death*.

**1 out of every 113 people in the world will die this year.**

Many people are shocked when they first see the world’s mortality rate. They find this number disconcerting. Surprisingly, this number would *normally* be worse (about 1 out of 66). The current number is being skewed by the disproportionately large number of newborn babies being added to our population.

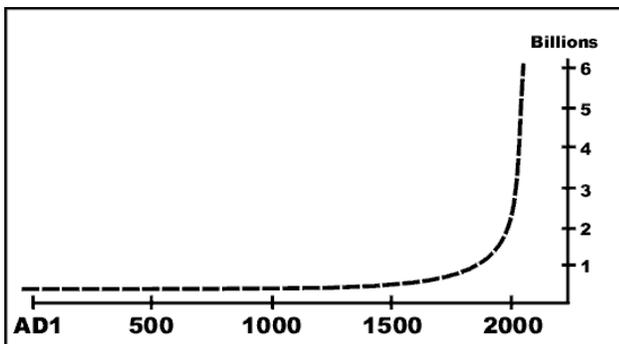
To illustrate this phenomenon, I’m going to present a very simple population to study. Let’s say that

our world only has 80 people. This population is so well rounded, that there is only one person per age bracket (one 1-year old, one 2-year old, all the way up to one 80-year old). Let's say that there are no premature deaths in this society and everyone dies at the age of 80. Every year a baby is born and every year an 80-year old person dies. This would mean that the mortality rate is 1 out of every 80 people.

Let's take the same population and make a change. Instead of one baby being born this year, there were 32 babies born. Since a *disproportionate* number of babies was added to this population, the mortality rate will now be 1 out of 111 people. Of course, in 80 years the mortality rate would be 32 out of 111 people (about 1 out of 4).

This is similar to what is happening in our world. The number of surviving newborns is disproportionately larger than the existing population. In fact, our population had doubled from 3 billion to 6 billion in only 40 years (1959 to 1999). The graph below shows the tremendous growth in our world's population.

### World's Population Growth (AD1 - 2000)



### Date Population

AD1	200 million
500	200 million
1000	200 million
1650	500 million
1850	1.0 billion
1930	2.0 billion
1950	2.5 billion
1960	3.0 billion
1970	3.7 billion
1980	4.5 billion
1990	5.2 billion
2000	6.1 billion
2004	6.3 billion

Advances in medicine, large scale automated food production, and reliable transportation has enabled our world to support many more people. Our previous population limits are no longer there. Our once hostile world has been made much more "friendly."

Let's go back to our original population of 80 people. If we were to add in the premature deaths such as diseases, auto accidents, crime, and war, the mortality rate would be worse. For example, the life expectancy for the average American is 72 years instead of 80. In undeveloped parts of the world the life expectancy is as low as 35 years. The average life expectancy for the world's population is 66 years. (*Population Reference Bureau*, <http://www.prb.org>) Therefore, if we didn't have such a disproportionate number of newborns being added to our population, we would probably have a mortality rate of 1 out of every 66 people.

### How the figures were derived

The death rate (for my counter) was calculated by multiplying the current world's population (6.339 billion) by the mortality rate (.883%). This showed me that 56.0 million people will probably die this year. This number was divided by the number of seconds in a year (31,536,000). This showed me that on an average, 1.78 people will die every second. The table below shows the world's

mortality rate for the past 50 years.

### World's mortality rate

Years	MortalityRate %	Ratio
1950 - 1954	1.97	1 out of <b>51</b>
1955 - 1959	1.74	1 out of <b>57</b>
1960 - 1964	1.56	1 out of <b>64</b>
1965 - 1969	1.34	1 out of <b>74</b>
1970 - 1974	1.16	1 out of <b>86</b>
1975 - 1979	1.09	1 out of <b>91</b>
1980 - 1984	1.03	1 out of <b>97</b>
1985 - 1989	.96	1 out of <b>104</b>
1990 - 1994	.94	1 out of <b>106</b>
1995 - 1999	.90	1 out of <b>111</b>
2000 - 2004	.88	1 out of <b>113</b>

(Source: United Nations Population Division, "World Population Prospects")

The world's mortality rate can be obtained from a large variety of sources. If you would like to look at the mortality rates of a specific country, you can go to the *CIA World Facts Book* on the Internet. The address is below:

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html>

To find the current world's population:  
<http://www.census.gov/main/www/popclock.html>.

# Death Counter



# 10,578

To get a better comprehension of the world's mortality rate, you sometimes need to see the numbers accumulate. I've created a separate *Death Counter* window to run on its own in the background. Start it and let it run for hours, days, or even weeks. To open this counter, go to:

<http://www.biblehelp.org/mortality.htm>

## Breakdown of the World's Deaths

### Chapter: 4.05

(Section 4: Fear, Death, and the Fear of Death)

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The previous page showed you how fast people are dying. The chart below shows you how they died. This chart is actually a “Real-Time” counter that allows you to see the numbers accumulate as time goes by. Go to my web page [BibleHelp.org/breakdeaths.htm](http://BibleHelp.org/breakdeaths.htm) to see the chart in operation. The chart shown below is what the counter looked like after 8.8 hours.

Realtime Death counter: Deaths within the last 31,853 seconds	
57122	<b>All causes</b>
11047	<b>Infectious and parasitic diseases</b>
1660	Tuberculosis
169	Syphilis
2894	AIDS
2021	Diarrhoeal diseases
1331	Childhood-cluster diseases
752	Measles
284	Tetanus
175	Meningitis
81	Hepatitis B
46	Hepatitis C
1135	Malaria
4	Leprosy
21	Dengue
3987	<b>Respiratory infections</b>
144	Maternal hemorrhage
77	Maternal sepsis
43	Obstructed labor
59	Abortion
1358	Low birth weight
696	Birth asphyxia and birth trauma
260	Protein-energy malnutrition
28	Vitamin A deficiency
139	Iron-deficiency anemia
7186	<b>Cancers</b>
329	Mouth and oropharynx cancers
442	Esophagus cancer
858	Stomach cancer
329	Mouth and oropharynx cancers
442	Esophagus cancer
621	Colon and rectum cancers
622	Liver cancer
227	Pancreas cancer
1225	Trachea, bronchus, lung cancers
66	Melanoma and other skin cancers
483	Breast cancer
261	Cervix uteri cancer
271	Prostate cancer
262	Leukemia
904	Diabetes mellitus
12	Unipolar depressive disorders
23	Schizophrenia
109	Epilepsy
87	Alcohol use disorders
371	Alzheimer and other dementias
92	Parkinson disease
15	Multiple sclerosis
69	Drug use disorders
16752	<b>Cardiovascular diseases</b>
341	Rheumatic heart disease
882	Hyper-tensive heart disease
7253	Ischaemic heart disease
5509	Cerebrovascular disease
378	Inflammatory heart diseases
2387	Other cardiovascular diseases
2699	Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
227	Asthma
264	Peptic ulcer disease
804	Cirrhosis of the liver
1206	Road traffic accidents
346	Poisonings
388	Falls
312	Fires
406	Drowning
882	Other unintentional injuries
857	Self-inflicted injuries
505	Violence
231	War

## Mortality Rates of American Wars –Part 1

(Part 1 of 3 parts)



### Chapter: 4.06

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For the ease of reading, I have divided this subject into three chapters. The three chapters cover:

- Some interesting history of these wars
- Graphs of the mortality rates of American wars
- Statistics used to make the graphs

During the Civil War, General Sherman made the profound statement, “War is Hell.” Anyone who has actually fought in combat understands that this was probably the most understated comment of the century. There is no “glory” in war. Even when war is totally necessary and we are fighting to defend our country (like in WW2), war is still ugly,

sickening, and repugnant.

There are no winners in war, only losers. The “winners” in a war are not determined by who won the battles, but by who lost the least. Even the “winners” suffered tremendous losses. Look at my chapter *There are No winners in War* for more information about this.

Most wars are senseless, stupid and avoidable. They are a shameful waste of precious human life. If you read my chapter *There are No winners in War*, you will see that I am not an “antiwar protestor.” I believe in a strong military and national defense. History has repeatedly shown us that any country with a weak defense is inviting aggression. I also believe in the unfortunate need to defend the defenseless (when there is solid evidence that wholesale murder and torture is taking place in another country).

General Patton made the historic statement, “I hear a lot of c\*\*\* about what a glorious thing it is to die for your country. It isn’t glorious; it’s stupid. You don’t go into battle to die for your country, you go into battle to make the other b\*\*\*\*\* die for his country.”

When we read about death statistics, we usually forget that each soldier killed is a life just like yours and mine. We also forget that every time a soldier is killed, about 12 other people’s lives are profoundly affected. Unfortunately, a key ingredient of winning a war is killing someone else’s father, brother, or husband before he kills you.

The first three graphs (in the next chapter) provide an interesting look at former American wars. As you can see, simply looking at the raw numbers of soldiers killed (graph 1) does not tell the whole story. Graph 2 shows that certain wars have destroyed large portions of our military. Graph 3 compares the number of soldiers killed to the total U.S. population

Another way of comparing the lethality of a war is to look at the average number of soldiers killed

each day (graph 4). This number of course, is only an average. In WW2, for example, the majority of our soldiers were killed in the last year of the war.

There is some guesswork in the creation of these graphs. Determining the beginning and end of a war is not as simple as you would think. Usually, a war is “triggered” by an event, yet it may be days, weeks, or even months before the country decides to go to war. Following are some examples of this problem:

- When did the Civil War actually start? South Carolina seceded from the Union on December 20, 1860. Yet, war “officially” began on April 12, 1861 when the Confederates fired on Fort Sumter.

- Does war start the day a country is attacked or when Congress “declares war.” Pearl Harbor was attacked on December 7, 1941, but Congress didn’t declare war until the next day. (It should be noted that Congress never “declared war” on Korea or Vietnam.)

- While some wars erupt quickly, others brew slowly. When a war takes several years to escalate, how do you determine the starting date? Long before the Vietnam War “started,” President Truman sent 35 military advisors to Vietnam. By 1963, the numbers increased to 1,500.

On August 2, 1964, a U.S. destroyer was “attacked” in the Gulf of Tonkin. (Records now indicate that parts of the attack were fabricated in order to give us a “Pearl Harbor.”) As a result of the attack, the *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* was passed. The *Gulf of Tonkin Resolution* is considered the official beginning of the Vietnam War. (It should be noted that neither the Korean War or the Vietnam War were actually called “wars.” They were called “police actions” or conflicts.)

- Does the war end when one side *says* it surrenders or when the Peace Agreement is signed? On August 14, 1945 Japan announced it would surrender. Yet, it took 19 days to hammer out the terms of surrender. The surrender document wasn’t

signed until September 2, 1945.

- If a major battle takes place after a peace agreement is signed, are the dead considered “war casualties?” The War of 1812 officially ended on December 24, 1814 after the Treaty of Ghent was signed. Unfortunately, 15 days later, the British fleet (unaware the war had ended) attacked New Orleans. Over 1,500 British soldiers died.

When you get to the actual raw numbers in part 3, you will find two groups of deaths: “battle deaths” and “non-battle deaths.” The difference between the two is not always as clear as you would think. For example, the following deaths are usually considered “non-battle deaths:”

- A soldier is on a training mission in Nevada and he is killed when his helicopter crashes because of mechanical problems.

- A soldier is being flown to an on-going battle and is killed when his helicopter crashes a half-mile from the front lines because of mechanical problems.

- Six helicopters are flying on a covert mission deep behind enemy lines. The secrecy of the mission requires they fly under very dangerous conditions (very tight formation at night with no lights). Two helicopters crash into each other; killing all on board.

- A German U-Boat torpedoes a ship transporting soldiers from the U.S. to England. There are no survivors.

- A soldier on the front lines is forced to live in a foxhole for several weeks. He dies from diseases brought on by unsanitary water and living conditions. In some wars, more soldiers have died from disease than from actual battle injuries. In fact, two thirds of the Civil War deaths were from disease.

It’s understandable that military planners don’t want to skew combat statistics with unrelated deaths. Yet, the military deliberately tries to keep “combat deaths” as low as possible in order to hide the true

losses from the public.

In my opinion, if it weren't for the war, most of these people would not have died. Although these people may not have died directly from the hands of the enemy, they definitely died in the service of defending their country in a time of war. Therefore, I have included these numbers in my statistics.

Being captured and held as Prisoner of War (POW) meant different things in different wars. For example, you were 10 times more likely to die as a POW in the Korean War than you were in WW1. Some countries, such as Japan, was notorious for killing its POWs. Other countries, such as Korea, were notorious for its unhealthy living conditions.

Documents discovered after the fall of the Soviet Union has provided some chilling revelations. Not all of our POWs were returned to us after the wars (WW2, Korean War, and the Vietnam War). As it turns out, the Soviet Union took possession of some of our POWs and listed them as dead. Although there is no indication any of them are alive today, documents show some of them lived for decades in Russian prisons.

Except for the past 100 years, *direct* battle deaths in wars were actually quite low. Wars were not the carnage machines they are today. For the majority of history, most wars were fought with hand-held weapons like clubs, spears, and arrows. Some of the larger and more advanced armies (like the Roman Empire) used larger weapons such as catapults.

Although these weapons were quite deadly, their use didn't create massive deaths on the battlefield. Most of the deaths in these wars (which were sometimes very high considering the population sizes) were brought on by disease and living conditions. Large concentrations of soldiers created contaminated water and unsanitary living conditions. This, in turn, brought diseases that quickly spread through the crowded camps. Even minor cuts and wounds were often fatal because of infection.

Today, improved sanitary conditions, antibiotics, evacuation helicopters, and mobile medical units have greatly increased the survival rate. If it had not been for the development of high explosives and high-speed delivery systems, war deaths would have dropped substantially.

High explosives have changed everything. A single bomb can kill dozens or hundreds of people. Destruction that used to take weeks can now be done in hours. "Battlefield deaths" have skyrocketed. (Nuclear weapons, of course, can cause far more destruction.) Although technology has greatly reduced secondary deaths, it has greatly increased battlefield deaths.

When high explosives were developed in the late 1800s, many people thought wars would be made obsolete. Many people (including the developers) felt that these highly destructive bombs would deter countries from going to war. They thought nobody would be foolish enough to go into a full war with these types of weapons. Unfortunately, they were wrong.

## Mortality Rates of American Wars –Part 2 (Part 2 of 3 parts)

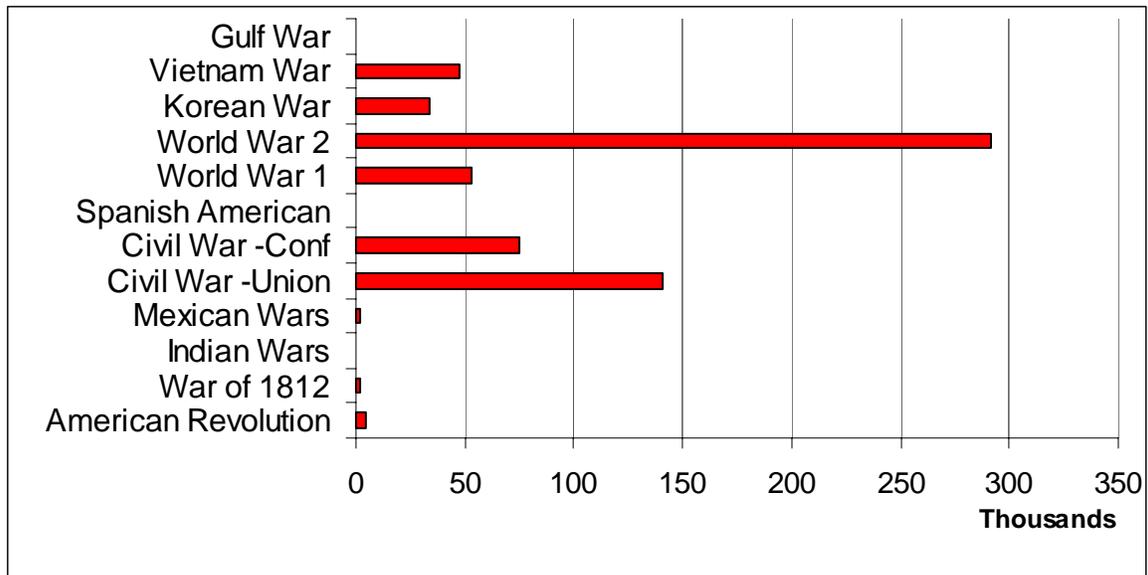
### Chapter: 4.07

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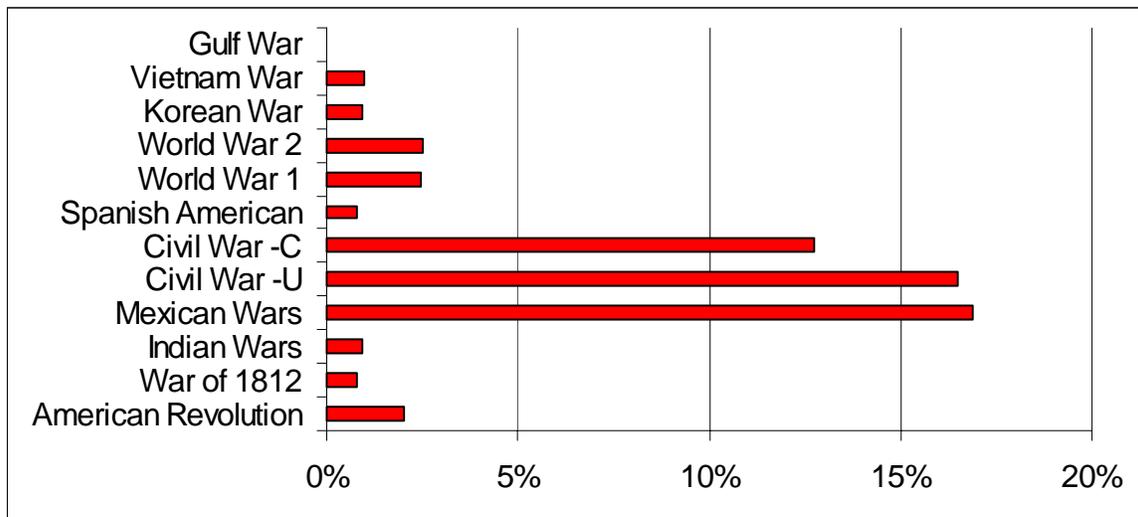
For the ease of reading, I have divided this subject into three chapters. The three chapters cover:

- Some interesting history of these wars
- Graphs of the mortality rates of American wars
- Statistics used to make the graphs

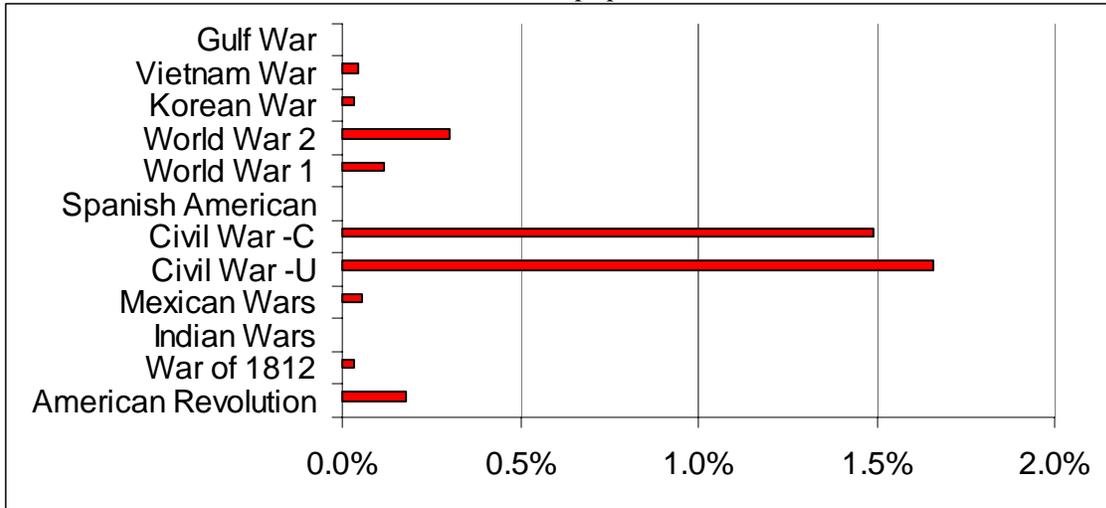
Graph 1: Number of soldiers who died during the wars.



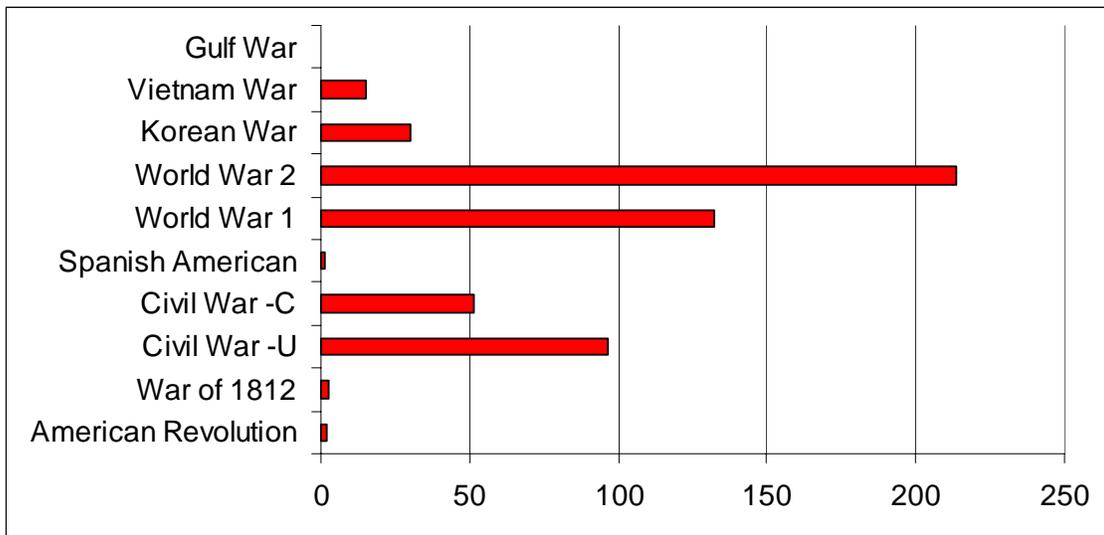
Graph 2: Number of soldiers who died compared to the  
*number of soldiers who served during the wars.*



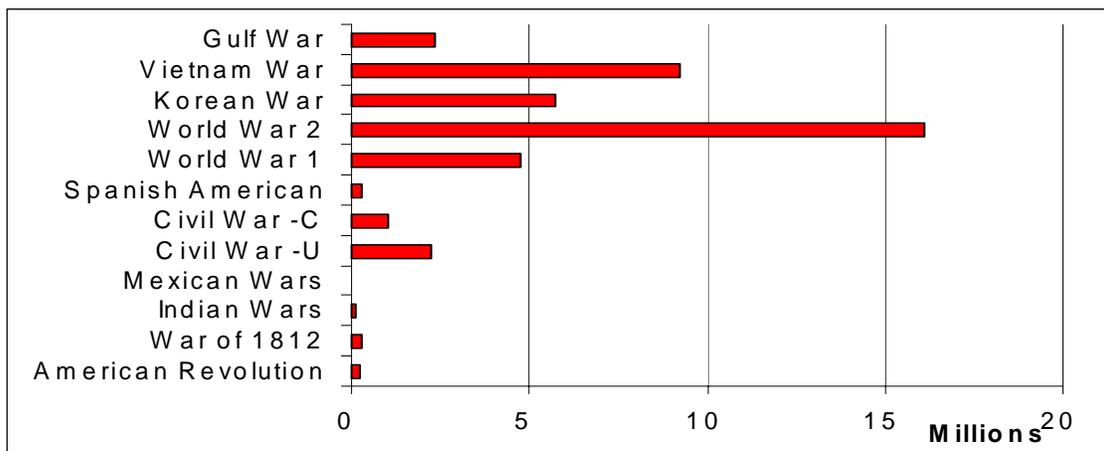
Graph 3: Number of soldiers who died compared to the U.S. population



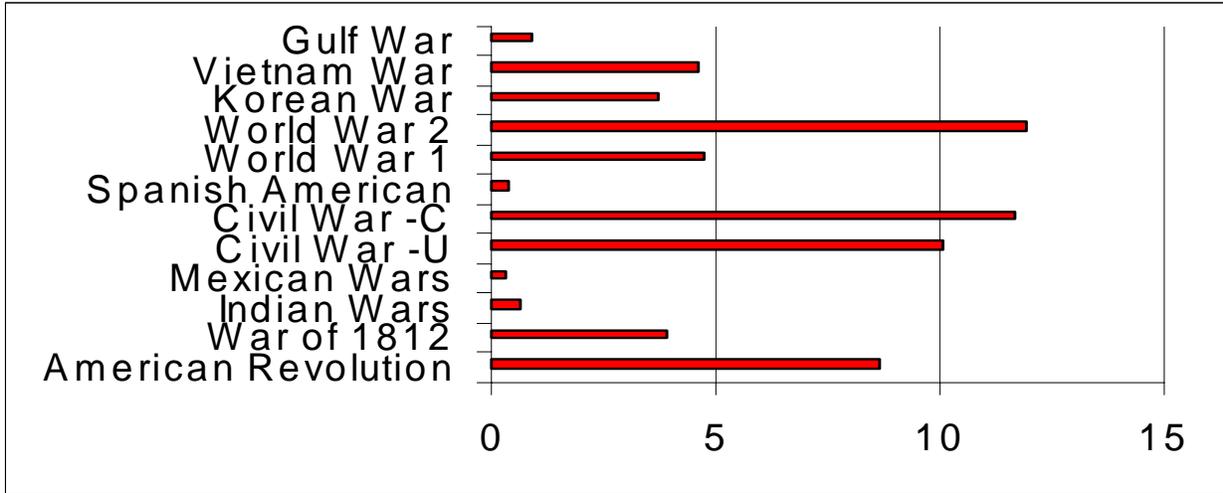
Graph 4: The number of soldiers killed each day



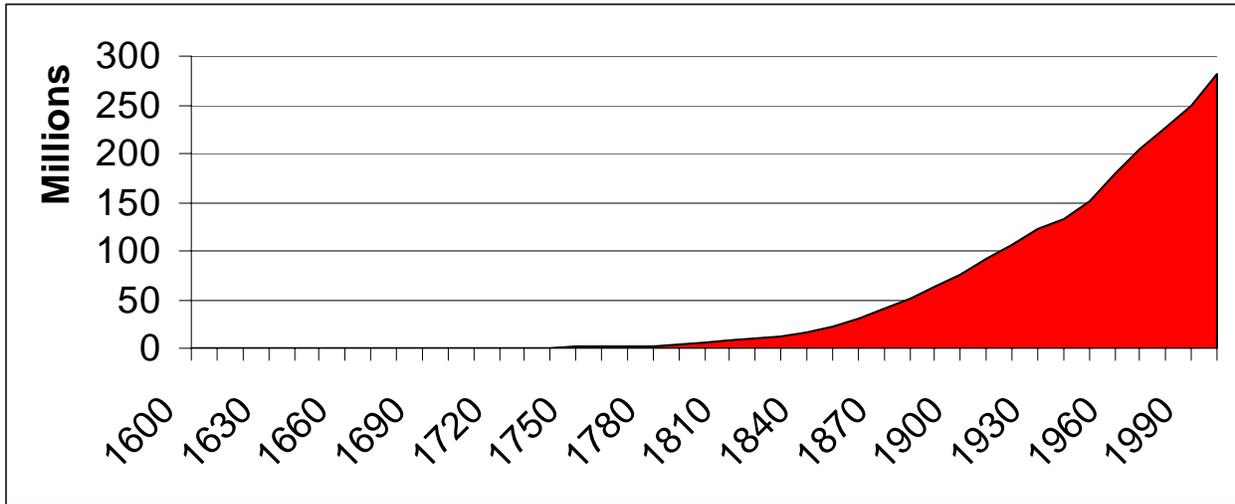
Graph 5: Number of soldiers who served



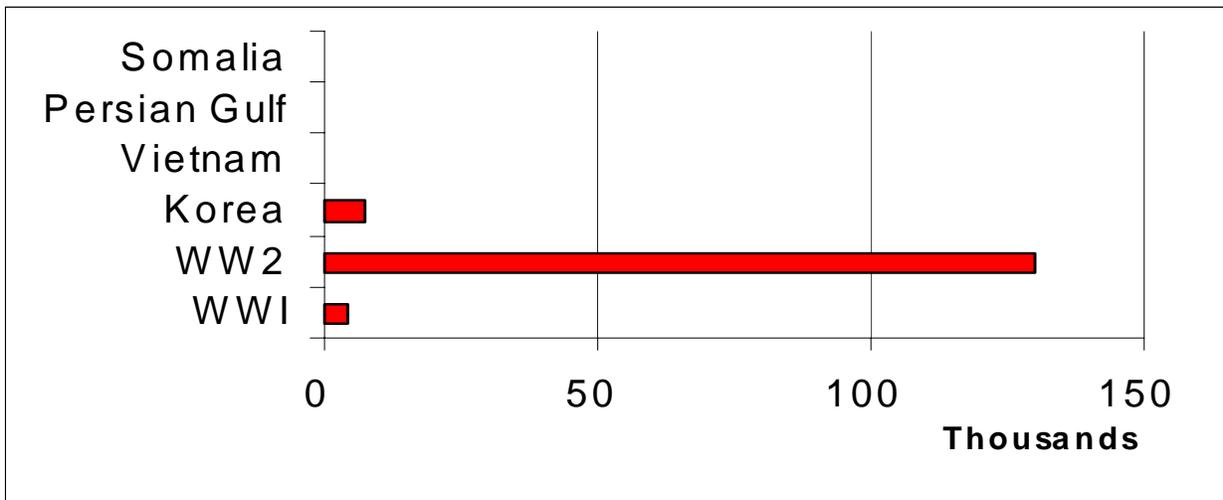
Graph 6: Soldiers who served (% compared to the U.S. population)



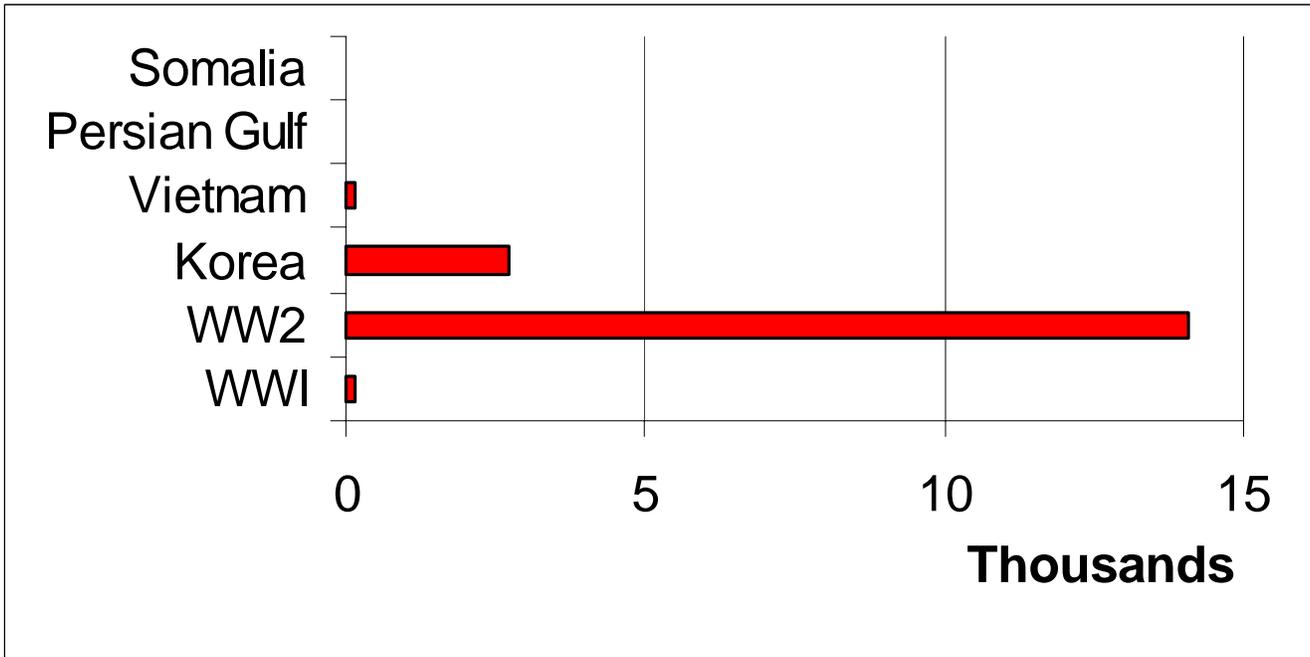
Graph 7: U.S. Population



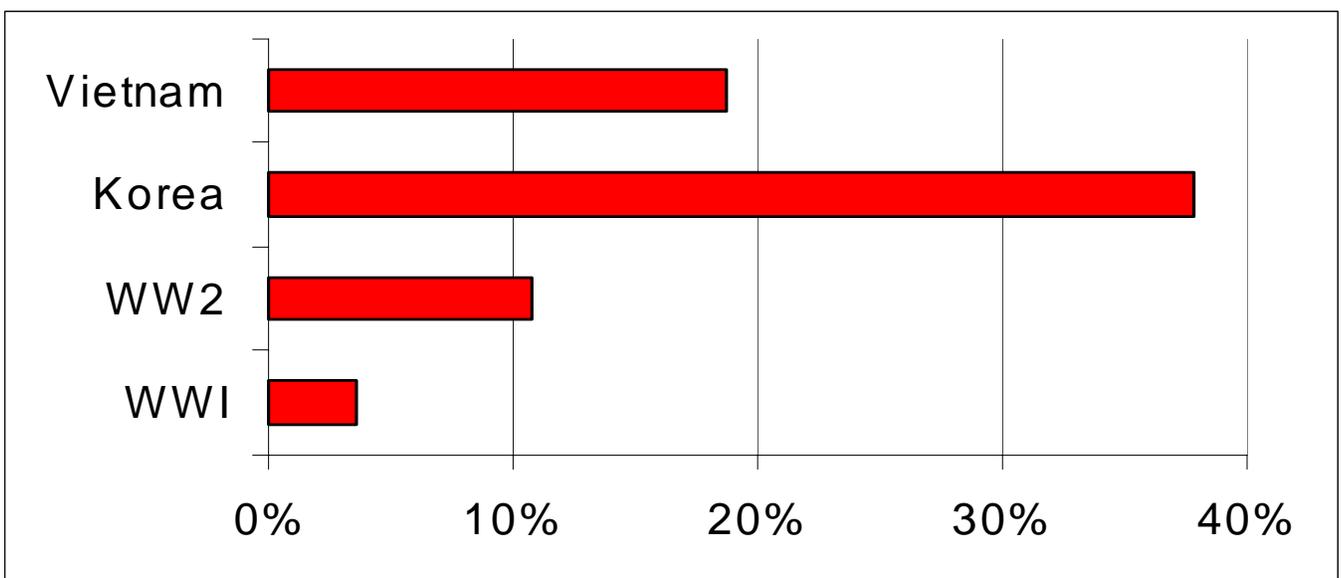
Graph 8: Number of POWs



Graph 9: Number of POW deaths



Graph 10: The % of POWs who died during captivity



## Mortality Rates of American Wars –Part 3 (Part 3 of 3 parts)

### Chapter: 4.08

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For the ease of reading, I have divided this subject into three chapters. The three chapters cover:

- Some interesting history of these wars
- Graphs of the mortality rates of American wars
- Statistics used to make the graphs

### General Statistics of American Wars

Name of the War	Year	Battle deaths	Non-battle deaths	Total # of soldiers	American Population
American Revolution	1775-1783	4,435		217,000	2,500,000
War of 1812	1812-1815	2,260		286,730	7,300,000
Indian Wars	1817-1898	1,000		106,000	17,000,000
Mexican Wars	1846-1848	1,733	11,550	78,718	23,000,000
Civil War -Union	1861-1865	140,414	224,097	2,213,363	22,000,000
Civil War -Confederate	1861-1865	74,524	59,297	1,050,000	9,000,000
Spanish American War	1898-1899	385	2,061	306,760	76,000,000
World War 1	1917-1918	53,402	63,114	4,734,991	100,000,000
World War 2	1940-1945	291,557	113,842	16,112,566	135,000,000
Korean War	1950-1953	33,686	20,560	5,720,000	155,000,000
Vietnam War	1964-1975	47,410	42,788	9,200,000	200,000,000
Gulf War	1990-1991	148	1,149	2,322,332	250,000,000

### Deaths (%) compared to soldiers and U.S. population

Name of the War	Percentage of deaths compared to the total number of soldiers (%)	Percentage of deaths compared to the U.S. population (%)
American Revolution	2.04	0.1774
War of 1812	0.79	0.031
Indian Wars	0.94	0.0059
Mexican Wars	16.87	0.0578
Civil War -Union	16.47	1.6568
Civil War -Confederates	12.74	1.4869
Spanish American War	0.8	0.0032
World War 1	2.46	0.1165
World War 2	2.52	0.3003
Korean War	0.95	0.035
Vietnam War	0.98	0.0451
Gulf War	0.06	0.0005

### Post Vietnam Combat Casualties

<b>Conflict</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Combat Deaths</b>
Lebanon	1982-1984	254
Grenada	1983	18
Libya	1986	2
Panama	1989-1990	23
Somalia	1992-1993	29

### Deaths of POWs

<b>War</b>	<b># of POWs</b>	<b>Died while a POW</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
WWI	4,120	147	3.6%
WW2	130,201	14,072	10.8%
Korea	7,140	2,701	37.8%
Vietnam	772	144	18.7%
Persian Gulf	23	0	0.0%
Somalia	1	0	0.0%

### The Number of Soldiers killed each day

<b>Name of the War</b>	<b>Beginning</b>	<b>End</b>	<b># of days</b>	<b># of deaths per day</b>
American Revolution	July 4, 1776	Sept. 3, 1783	2,615	1.7
War of 1812	June 18, 1812	Dec. 24, 1814	887	2.6
Civil War -U	April 12, 1861	April 9, 1865	1,457	96.4
Civil War -C	April 12, 1861	April 9, 1865	1,457	51.2
Spanish American War	April 25, 1898	Dec. 10, 1898	259	1.5
World War 1	April 6, 1917	Nov. 11, 1918	404	132.2
World War 2	Dec. 7, 1941	Sept. 2, 1945	1,365	213.6
Korean War	June 25, 1950	July 27, 1953	1,128	29.9
Vietnam War	Aug. 2, 1964	Jan. 27, 1973	3,098	15.3
Gulf War	Aug. 2, 1990	April 6, 1991	248	0.6

### The % of soldiers served compared to the U.S. Population

Name of the War	Beginning	End	# of days	# of deaths per day
American Revolution	July 4, 1776	Sept. 3, 1783	2,615	1.7
War of 1812	June 18, 1812	Dec. 24, 1814	887	2.6
Civil War -U	April 12, 1861	April 9, 1865	1,457	96.4
Civil War -C	April 12, 1861	April 9, 1865	1,457	51.2
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Korean War	June 25, 1950	July 27, 1953	1,128	29.9
Vietnam War	Aug. 2, 1964	Jan. 27, 1973	3,098	15.3
Gulf War	Aug. 2, 1990	April 6, 1991	248	0.6

### U.S. Population from 1610 to 2000

Year	Population	Year	Population	Year	Population
1610	350	1750	1,170,800	1880	50,155,783
1620	2,300	1760	1,593,600	1890	62,947,714
1630	4,600	1770	2,148,100	1900	75,994,575
1640	26,600	1780	2,780,400	1910	91,972,266
1650	50,400	1790	3,929,214	1920	105,710,620
1660	75,100	1800	5,308,483	1930	122,775,046
1670	111,900	1810	7,239,881	1940	131,669,275
1680	151,500	1820	9,638,453	1950	150,697,361
1690	210,400	1830	12,866,020	1960	179,323,175
1700	250,900	1840	17,069,453	1970	203,302,031
1710	331,700	1850	23,191,876	1980	226,545,805
1720	466,200	1860	31,443,321	1990	248,709,873
1730	629,400	1870	39,818,449	2000	281,421,906
1740	905,600				