

RADICAL BREAKTHROUGHS
to
OVERCOME ADDICTIONS

Discover a New Combination of Biblical
Principles To Move You From Your Addictions
To Abundant, Purpose-Filled Living

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Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over {and} above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it).

Ephesians 3:20-21

INTRODUCTION

You're about to learn a revolutionary new approach to overcome your addictions and find the abundant life you're searching for. Imagine your new lifestyle:

- You don't think about your addiction any more.
- No more fears of relapsing.
- Your life is filled with healthy, loving relationships.
- You're motivated every day to get up and go after your dreams!
- You know that nothing is impossible for you to achieve.

How do you get to this new lifestyle? By learning two principles that once they're implemented in your life your addictions are resolved as a by-product. These two principles are not taught in any support group or recovery program. They're not new principles, but they are new in the sense that they have not been used in an effort to help people overcome their problems (whether the problems are addictions, depression, marital, lack of purpose in life, etc.).

You can begin immediately to implement these two elements. These aren't "steps" that you take; they're lifestyles to master.

The radical breakthroughs consist of bringing together biblical principles to demonstrate the very basics of how people were designed to live. God created us to have a deep loving relationship with Him and to fulfill His vision for our individual lives. When we don't have these two elements active in our life, problems develop.

The world teaches us to work directly on overcoming our problems—but God tells us to work on loving Him, loving others, and following His personal vision for our

lives and then our problems will get resolved as a by-product.

With the Bible being over 1,500 pages, how can we figure out where to find the solution to overcoming our problems? Does the Bible give specifics for handling addictions? Isn't addiction a disease and it can only be managed, not overcome?

The good news is that the Bible gives us very specific guidelines on how to overcome addictions. It restores hope to the hopeless and brings new power into your life. You will learn how all things are possible when you have a relationship with God and His Holy Spirit residing inside you.

But you'll learn more than just how to overcome your problems. You're going to learn how to reach for the abundant life that only God offers!

- Get ready to receive the unconditional love you're looking for.
- Learn how to stop rehashing your past and plan for your future.
- Be taught how to develop healthy relationships.
- Get trained in the disciplines you need to accomplish your goals in life.
- Harness your emotions and your fleshly cravings and take control.
- Become a responsible person and experience the satisfaction of doing the right things.
- Discover your God-given vision for your life.
- Prepare for the most challenging, uplifting, inspiring journey that will keep you full of joy and anticipation for your future!
- You were designed to carry out God's specific plan

for your life at this time in history and under the conditions and circumstances surrounding you.

- You have gone through certain experiences to equip you to carry out this vision. Nothing in your life will keep God from fulfilling His purpose in you once you decide to follow His plans.

Are you ready for this challenge?

Life is too short to spend one more day stuck in the hell hole of addictions! Stop believing the lies thrown at you by the world and start believing the good plans God has for you. You've tried the world's ways of trying to overcome your addictions and it hasn't work—and it won't work because they're not dealing with the underlying issues.

You're going to learn two key principles for living:

- Develop healthy, loving relationships, first with God and then with others.
- Discover your passion in life and how God wants to put it in a project whereby you utilize it to love and serve others.

Then you will be taught tools on how to accomplish those two life-long tasks. You'll learn about attitudes, disciplines, cleaning out your heart, how to produce abundant fruit in your life, and how love binds everything together. You'll also discover spiritual laws that work every time.

This book is designed to give you the broad picture of how God created you to live. By aligning your life with these basic principles, your problems also get resolved. But there is a bigger picture than just overcoming your problems—God wants to give you the abundant life—one that fills you up to overflowing!

Give, and [gifts] will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, will they pour into [the pouch formed by] the bosom [of your robe and used as a bag]. For with the measure you deal out [with the measure you use when you confer benefits on others], it will be measured back to you.

Luke 6:38



RADICAL BREAKTHROUGHS

You've tried everything to overcome your addictions. Now it's time for some radical breakthroughs to help you get out of your addiction cycle and into living the life you've always dreamed of.

What are radical breakthroughs and why are they necessary? When you think of a breakthrough you think that something has finally happened to get yourself beyond the roadblock that's been stopping you. For a person with an addiction, this breakthrough might be finding the key to change your life so you'll never return to your addictions again. It is something that all of a sudden dawns on you and your new understanding gets you to where you want to go.

Why do I call them *radical* breakthroughs? Because you'll learn in this book some principles that are totally opposite to what you currently believe. Now I don't want you to balk at these principles—just because you've never tried them. If you really want to get out of the mess your life is in—and reach for your dreams—then I believe you will do whatever is necessary to break free from your current struggles.

Let me start with a breakthrough that will get you ex-

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cited! Society tells us that all addictions are a disease and therefore you can only learn how to manage the disease, not ever get fully free of it. That is the biggest lie around! Now I'm not a psychologist or a doctor, but I am a person who has been set free from an addiction and a deep depression and have experiences and insights that others don't.

In my twelve years of listening to people on crisis hotlines I've learned a lot—not only about how to help people change, but I've also seen how society has changed their philosophy on addictions in the last twenty-five years. In the 1980s I saw the changes begin in the mental and medical fields where they started calling alcoholism a disease so that insurance companies would pick up the costs and people could get the help they needed. These professionals saw that people still weren't coming in for help, so they decided to tell people that "it's not your fault that you're addicted, it's a disease that you have no control over." And people began to believe this. Why not? It's easier to believe that it's not our fault than to take personal responsibility for our actions.

Oh, I can almost hear you screaming right now! "What do you mean it's my fault? I can't control this addiction! You don't know what you're saying." This goes against everything you've been told and everything you believe. But I'm not saying this to condemn you. I'm saying this to let you know that there is hope to permanently get out of your addictions and get on with your life! Just be patient with me as I take you through the principles in this book. I know the struggles you're going through, I've been there myself when I tried the world's way to overcome my addiction to prescription pain pills and my major depression.

What Has Failed So Far

If you're like me and thousands of Christians, you've tried

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the following in an effort to overcome your addictions or other life-dominating problems:

- Attended support groups. At first it was great to learn that others struggled with similar problems. Then you realized you weren't going any place in your recovery because you kept rehashing your problems. Or you were told that your problem is a "disease" and since no cure exists, you can only learn how to manage it.
- You desperately looked for words to identify your problem, thinking that these labels would provide closure. Instead, they added more problems.
- Read self-help books until you pretty much knew they all said the same things, which just didn't seem to work for you in your situation.
- Talked to counselors (some were Christians). These visits gave you the personal attention you needed, but didn't help you find the underlying issues to your problems. Christian counselors used the world's methods and added Scriptures here and there.
- You tried talking to your pastor, but he referred you to a professional counselor since he did not know how to help you with your *deep* problems.
- You lost your friends because they didn't know how to help you and they got burned out by listening to you. Perhaps they gave you advice and because you didn't follow through with it, they wrote you off as hopeless.
- Your contacts with your family became less frequent because they didn't know how to help you.
- You read the Bible and prayed. Oh how you prayed! Yet you seemed powerless to turn away from the

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destructive behavior. So you prayed more and more, wondering at times if God even heard you.

- You attended Christian conferences to try to understand how to change. But the whole picture never came together on what you were to change into and what that process entailed.

So now you hold this book in your hands and wonder if it will help you. My prayer is that God will show you the overall picture of what He wants to do in your life and how to change your character so you can accomplish His goals—which also include your goals to overcome your problems and live the abundant, purpose-filled life.

The Big Picture

The big picture I want to paint is how people are to live and also the process for overcoming their problems (whatever they are). This book will demonstrate seven biblical principles we can use to start this process. By no means are all biblical principles set forth. Nor are these seven principles fully developed. My purpose is to give you a broad picture of how a person is to live and how to overcome problems now and throughout the rest of your life.

Let's begin with the fundamental truth that God created each of us. As our Creator, He also gave us His instruction manual—the Holy Bible. With the Bible being over 1,500 pages and filled with many instructions and principles, how can we determine what to do and where to start first? Our first goal is to find out what God's vision is for our lives—why He created us.

Two underlying principles appear throughout the Bible which give us a starting point:

- God wants a loving relationship with each of us. This relationship then carries over into us developing healthy, loving relationships with others.

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- God created each of us for a specific purpose. This purpose always entails a project whereby we love and serve others utilizing our God-given passion in life!

If we don't know about these two principles, then we have no direction in life and live our lives in whatever manner pleases us. Proverbs 29:18 states this clearly: *"Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law."* (NASB) Keeping the law means to follow God's guidance.

Now that we know the very basics of how God wants us to live, what is God's method for helping us overcome our problems?

- When you focus on living out God's two basic principles for living, your problems get resolved as a by-product.

This approach is so radical from the world's. Man teaches us to focus on our problems and overcome them before we even begin to reach out to love others. Some teach that God is a crutch, used only by weak people. But God's ways are not man's ways!

If you're not a Christian and don't have the Holy Spirit residing in you, then these principles won't work. You don't have the relationship nor the power residing within you to carry them out.

Now I know you may have attended a support group where you talked about a "higher power" that will help you to change and stop your addiction. But unless your higher power is Jesus Christ, you don't have any outside power or inner power to help you. All you have is yourself and it's obvious that hasn't worked so far. When we look to our higher power to help us, that higher power has to be able to provide what we need.

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Salvation

So let's get this problem fixed first. Let me give a brief explanation of how to become a Christian. A little bit of background is needed. God created us to have constant fellowship with Him. When Adam and Eve sinned, it broke that relationship. In the Old Testament God established rituals of shedding the blood of animals once a year to cleanse away all of a person's sins and restore that relationship. Unfortunately, the relationship was broken the next time a person sinned. However, in the New Testament, God sent His one and only Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross and through the shedding of His blood once and for all cleansed us of our sins. Thus our relationship can now be permanently restored with God.

All we have to do is believe in Jesus Christ as God's Son and that He paid the price for our sins. We ask Him to come and live within us. Once we do, the Holy Spirit then resides in our heart forever. This salvation is by faith, not by any works that we have to do to try to obtain it. We then begin to grow in maturity in our spiritual walk to become more like Jesus Christ, to love others and to share the good news of this relationship with others.

If you would like to begin this relationship with God, pray the following prayer:

Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. Forgive me for my sins, I pray. I turn away from my sins right now. I receive You as my personal Savior. Send Your Holy Spirit to live in me. Take control of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, you are now a Christian and have the Holy Spirit living inside you (even though you may not have felt anything take place). The Holy Spirit has

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all of God's power available for you to draw from. He will also make the Bible come *alive* to you and show you the steps to take.

Shift Our Thinking

As Christians we have to make a major shift in our thinking and also what we focus on. When we become Christians the first thing we must do is identify the false lies we believe. We do this by reading the Bible and getting to know God, who He is, and His instructions for living. By learning God's truths we will then be able to recognize the world's lies.

In order to make this shift in our thinking permanent, we must inundate ourselves with receiving this new knowledge about God and experiencing it in our lives. We have been influenced by the world's ways our entire lives. Now we must learn a new way of thinking and living. And in order to make this shift it requires us to change our priorities to allow a lot of time for this influx of new ideas and beliefs.

Understanding the Spiritual Realm

So where do we start in order to get out of the mess our life is in? Well, we have to understand there are reasons why we got into our addictions, other than the fact that they make us feel good or they help us to escape the emotional pain we're in.

In this book we're going to look at seven biblical principles. To lay the foundation for these principles, let me briefly explain to you the spiritual realm.

There are only two sides—God or Satan. There are no other gods out there, despite what other religions teach. There is only one true, living God, Who consists of three entities in One: God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Most people have heard the story of East-

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er, when Jesus Christ died on the cross to take the penalty of our sins so we can have a restored relationship with God. On the third day after His death, God raised up Jesus Christ from the grave and made Him alive again. Jesus Christ never died again! He literally rose to heaven still in His body which is still alive. Now, whenever a person believes the fact that Jesus Christ died for his sins and asks Jesus to come into a personal relationship with him or her, then Jesus Christ sends the Holy Spirit to live inside that person's heart.

Now here is the great news! The Holy Spirit who now lives within our heart has ALL of God's power that He used to raise Jesus Christ from the dead. Now that's power that no one can come against! Why do we need this kind of power? To resist the attacks of Satan.

Remember, I said there are only two spiritual realms, God and Satan. They do not have equal power. God is all powerful. Satan is an angel, not equal to God. Many times people think Satan is just as powerful as God and then wonder who is going to win the battle. But God's power living inside us via the Holy Spirit always wins because it is stronger.

Satan was once an angel in heaven, but he was kicked out when he wanted to become like God. Satan rules this earth and his goal is to keep people from knowing God or following God. His motive is to steal, kill and destroy. But Christians have the Holy Spirit inside of them to resist Satan's attacks and to live victorious lives.

However, Satan is very clever in his attacks. When a person becomes a Christian, it takes time to gain knowledge about who God is and how much God loves us and wants to help us live our life to its fullest. During this time Satan attacks a lot because he wants to put doubt into our heart. Satan will take a little bit of God's truth

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and mix it with his lies to deceive us. Therefore, we need to know as much of God's truth (the Bible) as we can in order to catch the devil in his lies and refuse to believe those lies.

Some of these lies are what I've mentioned above about addictions being a disease and that you'll never be set free from them. To give you one Scripture to hang on to at this moment, God tells us in John 8:32 that you shall know God's truth and that truth will set you free! This means freedom from whatever is holding you in bondage whether it's addictions, a bad relationship you think you can't handle, or a host of other problems. By the time you finish this book, you will be well on your way to having the knowledge and the motivation to radically change your life!

Discovering our new identity and authority in Jesus Christ motivates us to act accordingly and then we will see our lives changed.

Our New Identity and Authority

We have a spirit, soul and body. When we become a Christian, our spirit becomes born again through the Holy Spirit who now lives in us. Our old spirit is gone and now the Holy Spirit guides us. Just like a child has certain rights and inheritances because of their parents, we now have a new identity and rights available to us now that we are God's adopted children.

We have power inside us to enable us to walk away from our addictions and the strength to get through the rough times of change.

We have a new purpose in life—a new challenge to live a godly lifestyle. Nothing in the world will give us this challenge nor the satisfaction of winning this battle. We are in a spiritual battle and must learn how to fight these

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battles with spiritual warfare. You will learn more on this in chapter 9. But let me show you a glimpse of your new strategy:

Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies {and} the deceits of the devil.

For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist {and} stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place]. (Ephesians 6:11-13)

If you continue reading the verses that follow it describes what our armor is and how to use it. You might want to review that section before reading further.

I also bring this up because I must warn you that once you become a Christian your battles will increase. Why? Because before you became a Christian Satan had complete control of you, and now that you are a child of God Satan is mad! He will try everything to discourage you to get you back into your old lifestyle.

I challenge you to rise to this new call upon your life. Take hold of God and His unconditional love for you. Learn how to manifest God's power in our life to radically change the way you live and your purpose in life. Remem-

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ber, everything is possible with God! Get ready for the best experience of your life.

Radical Breakthroughs

We're going to cover a lot of material under each of the seven biblical principles. There is no particular order to these principles. They are not "steps" to recovery. The two main goals of living are:

- Relationships (first with God and then with others)
- Inspired Living

The other principles tell you how to accomplish those two goals. Many other biblical principles exist, but to focus on getting an overview of how to live and overcome your addictions, these are the starting points.

These biblical principles are easy to remember because they form an acrostic R.A.D.I.C.A.L.:

R elationships
A ttitudes
D isciplines
I nspired Living
C lean Heart
A bundant Fruit
L ove

These principles center around the two goals listed earlier: (1) love God and others, and (2) pursue God's vision for your life. As a by-product of implementing these goals, your addictions and other problems get resolved.

These principles are not taught in any support group or recovery program. We must focus on following God's guidelines for living rather than focus on solving our problems. Getting our eyes off of "me, myself and I" and onto fulfilling God's purposes for our lives is the greatest motivation to keep us headed in the right direction and from

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relapsing.

Daily we must pursue these goals. Are you ready to take on this challenge? I pray that God will reveal His awesome love to you and give you personal guidance on the specific vision for which He created you.

Application Questions

1. What has been your "big picture" for the future of your life?
2. How is your big picture different or in line with God's?
3. Are the two major principles listed already active in your life? Describe in detail what areas you see yourself already doing them
4. Have you seen in your own life the truth that some problems get resolved as a by-product of you doing something else? Describe a situation where this happened.
5. Have you asked Jesus Christ, God's only Son, to be your Savior and Lord? When did that take place?
6. Are you willing to be open to learning new truths as you read the rest of this book? If not, are you willing to ask God to help you be willing?
7. Have you noticed times when Satan does things to keep you from getting to know God better? Describe.
8. What is your reaction to the truth that your addiction is not a disease?
9. With the Holy Spirit residing inside you (if you're a Christian), does this give you new hope that you will be able to permanently overcome your addiction?
10. What do you already personally know about your new identity and authority in Christ? Make a list.

2



RELATIONSHIPS THAT FULFILL YOU

One key holds everything together in our life—it is relationships. When our relationships go sour, so does our life. Think about it for a moment. Take a look at all the problems you've ever had. Weren't they all related somehow to your relationships (or lack of relationships)? Others hurt us, disappoint us, reject us, turn on us after we've helped them, they step all over us to get themselves elevated at work, some will do whatever it takes to keep us from recognizing the truth and standing up for what we're entitled to.

Sometimes our lack of relationships keeps us depressed, lonely, feeling sorry for ourselves, wondering if we're good enough for anyone to love us, etc., etc.

Can you see a pattern evolving? Relationships cause us a lot of pain. And if we're not strong enough to handle the emotional pain, we'll resort to using alcohol, drugs, or whatever type of addiction gets hold of us. We end up doing whatever it takes to numb the pain from others hurting us or the pain from our own insecurities.

So what has caused your pain? Keep a pen and paper

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near you as you read this book because you'll want to catch what's going on inside your head the moment these insights and memories are triggered. Just write down things that have hurt you, and don't worry about what to do with this information right now.

It's Not God's Fault!

Some people have even felt hurt by God. They think "How could a God of love allow something like this to happen?" God gets blamed for a lot of things that He wasn't responsible for. Let me explain a second biblical point. Remember the first one? There are only two spiritual realms—God and Satan.

This second point is that there are four avenues through which things happen to us: God, ourself, others, and Satan's influence over us or others. Most people think that since God is sovereign, that He is in control of everything, including our "will." But since God gave man the freedom to make choices, God cannot override man's decisions. He allows us to make our own choices—good or bad! God loves us very much and is grieved at some of the things that happen to us. God wants the best for us! God isn't up in heaven rubber-stamping his approval on everything bad that happens to us! If we make a dumb decision, God's not going to stop us. God will try to get our attention to help us change our choice. However, God can still work through those circumstances to bring some good out of it if we let Him.

So, blaming God for bad things that happen to us is not the right thing to do. But what about when we ask God to help us stop doing things (like our addiction) and nothing happens? Is it God's fault? Is He punishing us because we're bad? No! As you learn these seven principles and how to apply them to your life, you'll realize there are things that you need to do, according to God's instruc-

tions, before God will do His part. For right now I just want you to take God off the hook for being responsible for your situation.

Well, if God isn't responsible for our situation, who is? We are! Now, I'm not saying this to condemn you, but knowing that you can take responsibility for your life, then you can take back control of your life, overcome your addictions, and get back into going after the dreams for your life. It isn't up to someone else to do something first before we'll do our part. No. We need to take control of our lives now and learn how to live according to God's instructions.

God's Ways vs. Man's Ways

What's so different about God's instructions versus what we've tried so far to handle our addictions? God's instructions on how to live (and overcome our problems) are opposite of what man teaches us. So who is right and why?

God created man to live in a personal relationship with Him. God also knew that Satan would try everything he could to keep us from enjoying that relationship. So God gave us His personal instructions on how to develop a close, intimate love between Himself and us and how to be alert to Satan's lies and schemes. Whose instructions are better—God's (who created us), or man's (who uses methods tainted by Satan's influence)? By the end of this book, there will be no doubt that you will see that God's ways are the only way to live!

God's instructions are recorded in the Holy Bible. Perhaps you've tried to read the Bible before and it seemed like a dry history book to you. Well, now that you're a Christian, the Holy Spirit resides permanently in your heart and He will make the Bible alive to you. You can now read the Bible with a better understanding as the Holy Spirit enlightens to you the meaning behind the words. Better keep that pen and paper nearby as you now read

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the Bible and write down personal insights that God reveals to you as you study the Scriptures.

Religion vs. Relationship

You see, God wants just as much to have a personal love relationship with you as you want one with Him. God is the only One who can fill that empty void in our souls. He is the only One who can give us the unconditional love we seek. He also fills our life with hope and provides each of us with His vision for what He wants us to do with our lives. If we'll seek after Him in order to know Him and love Him, this pleases Him and He will fill us up with His love.

Have you gone to church before and perhaps wondered to yourself, "Why would I want to serve God?" Attending church and having a personal, on-fire relationship with God and His Son Jesus Christ, are two different things. Once God has touched you with His love for you, you won't want anything else in your life except to put God first and do whatever He tells you!

It's important that we spend a lot of time getting to know God (through reading the Bible, praying, listening to tapes, watching videos, etc.). As we draw closer to God, and begin to understand His unconditional love toward us and how He treats us despite how rotten we can be at times, then we begin to treat others this same way. We begin to see others through the eyes of Jesus Christ, and our love and compassion changes, even toward people we hate.

Can you, right now, lay aside any preconceived ideas you had about God and allow Him to show you Himself? Just talk to God right now about what's bothering you and listen for His Holy Spirit to speak to you. It won't be in an audible voice. More likely it will be through your intuition, or thoughts placed in your head, or a peace that comes over you. Take time to turn off the TV, radio, computer,

Chapter 2 Relationships—25

and get in a quiet place to talk to God. You may want to open your Bible to the Book of Psalms in the Old Testament and start reading. Also read the Book of John in the New Testament.

Now I know some of you may only have the King James version of the Bible in your house and you're thinking, "I can't understand all that funny language!" There are many different translations of the Bible today. I would recommend either the Amplified Bible or the New Living Translation. Both of these are easy reading yet still contain the original intent of the Scriptures. If you don't have a Bible you can easily understand, you won't read it and you won't get very far in understanding Scriptures. In this book I use the Amplified Bible.

Relationship With God

I've been talking about our relationship with God and how important this is. As mentioned earlier, all of our problems come from relationships (or lack thereof). Perhaps the relationship you lacked the most is the one with Jesus Christ. This is the first relationship to work on in applying these seven biblical principles. In fact, this relationship **MUST** be developed first in order to understand how to relate to everyone else.

Are you afraid you're going to turn into one of "those religious fanatics" and lose all your friends? I wouldn't worry about that—I'd be more concerned about being willing to do whatever it takes to get yourself out of the hell hole you're in! What's it worth to you to be able to be completely set free from your addictions—never to return to them again? What would it be like to be happy and joyful again, to have healthy and loving relationships in your life, and to have hope for a bright future? I hope it's worth all your time and effort—because when you do things God's way, nothing is impossible!

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Parable of the Sower and the Seed

When we first become Christians (actually throughout our Christian walk) there are many things in our life that keep us from accurately hearing God speak to us personally through Scripture. Jesus gave us a parable that describes how we are at various times and what some of the things are that keep our hearts cluttered so we can't receive the Word of God. Let's look at this parable.

Give attention to this! Behold, a sower went out to sow.

And as he was sowing, some seed fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up.

Other seed [of the same kind] fell on ground full of rocks, where it had not much soil; and at once it sprang up, because it had no depth of soil; And when the sun came up, it was scorched, and because it had not taken root, it withered away.

Other seed [of the same kind] fell among thorn plants, and the thistles grew {and} pressed together {and} utterly choked {and} suffocated it, and it yielded no grain.

And other seed [of the same kind] fell into good (well-adapted) soil and brought forth grain, growing up and increasing, and yielded up to thirty times as much, and sixty times as much, and even a hundred times as much as had been sown.

And He said to them, Do you not discern {and} understand this parable? How then is it possible for you to discern {and} understand all the parables?

The sower sows the Word.

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The ones along the path are those who have the Word sown [in their hearts], but when they hear, Satan comes at once and [by force] takes away the message which is sown in them.

And in the same way the ones sown upon stony ground are those who, when they hear the Word, at once receive {and} accept {and} welcome it with joy; And they have no real root in themselves, and so they endure for a little while; then when trouble or persecution arises on account of the Word, they immediately are offended (become displeased, indignant, resentful) {and} they stumble {and} fall away.

And the ones sown among the thorns are others who hear the Word; Then the cares {and} anxieties of the world {and} distractions of the age, and the pleasure {and} delight {and} false glamour {and} deceitfulness of riches, and the craving {and} passionate desire for other things creep in and choke {and} suffocate the Word, and it becomes fruitless.

And those sown on the good (well-adapted) soil are the ones who hear the Word and receive {and} accept {and} welcome it and bear fruit—some thirty times as much as was sown, some sixty times as much, and some [even] a hundred times as much. (Mark 4:3-8; 13-20)

Where do you think you see yourself in this parable? Jot down what God is showing you right now, even if it doesn't make sense. The more bad stuff we have in our life that we deal with, the easier it will be for God's Word to take root in our life and produce the kind of fruit that pleases God (and us). This book is about getting rid of the bad stuff in our lives and replacing it with God's way of living

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and utilizing His power to confront Satan's influence. This will lead us to living the abundant life that only God can provide us!

Many times new Christians are excited about their new relationship with Jesus Christ. But slowly they stray away from it because the things of the world are more appealing, even though they know that it's the wrong way to live. In order to stay on the right path of following God, you must make some radical decisions. Some of these are explained in the chapters on attitudes and disciplines.

We also get frustrated when God's timing is not in line with when we want things accomplished. Being patient is another decision we must make. God's timeline in making things happen is illustrated by the concept of a farmer who tills the ground, plants seed, allows time for the seed to grow, watering the crop and taking out weeds, and then harvesting his crop. When we apply this to our life, we recognize that what we want changed won't happen overnight.

Begin to look at your life and determine what seeds (beliefs, thoughts, actions) you planted to get yourself to where you're at right now. What do you think needs to be done differently? Some of these things you already know in your spirit, but you've been ignoring them. I encourage you to start today to work on one of these items. If you don't have a clue, then keep reading and you'll discover several things to do. As already mentioned, reading the Bible and talking to God is one place to start.

You will notice as we go through these seven principles (relationships, attitudes, disciplines, inspired living, clean heart, abundant fruit, and love) that they overlap and compliment each other. They really cannot be done in isolation.

Also included are elements not directly related to prob-

lem-solving. But they do help you solve your problems as a by-product of carrying them out. Just as happiness cannot be worked on directly but is a by-product of doing other things, overcoming your addictions will come as a by-product of working on relationships and the other goals set forth in this book.

Relationships With Others

Let's talk a little bit about what our relationships with others should look like in light of how God treats us in our relationship with Him.

Why do we get into relationships? Because we're looking for love—unconditional love. Unconditional love means "I'll love you, no matter what you do. You don't have to do anything to earn my love. Because I love you I'm going to put you above my own desires and do whatever I can to encourage you to become the best person God wants you to be." Only God can provide us this unconditional love all the time. If you have a friend or spouse who provides you unconditional love, consider yourself blessed! In today's world, this is rare.

So, what does love look like? Love shows up through our attitudes and behavior and motivates everything we do. Therefore, in order to understand how to develop healthy relationships, we need to know how love manifests itself. Let me give you some ideas taken from the Bible at 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

- Love endures long and is patient and kind
- Love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy
- It is not boastful or vainglorious
- Does not display itself haughtily
- It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride)

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- It is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly
- Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking
- It is not touchy or fretful or resentful
- It takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]
- It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail
- Love bears up under anything and everything that comes
- It is always ready to believe the best of every person
- Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances
- It endures everything [without weakening]
- Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]

Now that's a pretty hefty list! We can each take any one of those items and spend quite a bit of time conforming to it. And that's exactly what we need to do. However, let's not get overwhelmed with the task before us. We're not alone in our efforts. God is inside us and will give us insights on what needs changed first in our lives and how to do it. He also gives us the motivation and His power to accomplish the changes.

You know, we want people to treat us this way, but how often are we willing to treat others the same way? Are you willing to treat others the way you want them to treat you? That's a tough question to be honest about. Because the truth is, even if we treat others with the type of love described above, they won't treat us the same way. So we think, "Why should I bend over backwards to treat them

right when they're not going to treat me right?"

Let me answer that by asking you this: How does God love you? Does He love you only when you love Him in the right manner? No—He loves you every day, twenty-four hours a day, no matter how you treat Him back. Now that's radical love toward us that we don't deserve. Thankfully, God doesn't give us what we *do* deserve!

Lack of Self-Centeredness

All of the elements of love demonstrate a lack of self-centeredness. Because you're stuck in your addictions, you think you need to work on yourself first in order to get out of your rut, but that's not God's way. He tells us to eagerly pursue and seek to acquire His kind of love toward others—to make it our highest aim, our great quest! (see 1 Corinthians 14:1) God instructs us to seek after this type of love (true affection for God and man, growing out of God's love for and in us) even more than we would faith (conviction and belief respecting man's relation to God and divine things) or hope (joyful and confident expectation of eternal salvation). (1 Corinthians 13:13)

Self-centeredness in America is the number one cause of failed relationships. Everything in our society teaches us to look out for number one! Even recovery programs focus on putting your needs first. Many tell us that we can't go out and love others until we first learn how to love ourselves. Let me ask you a question—when will you reach a point where you know you love yourself enough that you can now turn your attention toward others? This lie keeps you stuck in your rut because you can't love yourself any more than you already do! If you didn't love yourself, you wouldn't be reading this book, trying to improve your condition. You wouldn't care what happened to you.

Since God instructs us to love others, then He provides

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His love through us when we think we're not capable of loving someone. Sometimes we have to say, "God, I don't know how to love that person, nor do I even want to. But You instruct me to love him/her, so show me how and give me Your love to love them with." And He always does!

Responding to Others

Now, how do we handle it when we love others and they don't respond to us the way we want them to? What we usually do is we expect people to fulfill our deepest need for unconditional love. But they can't fulfill that need—only God can. So we need to transfer this expectation from people to God. Then when people fail us we are not devastated like we have been in the past, because now we are looking to God to meet our deepest need. This frees others to be who they are as we stop trying to get them to change in order to meet our personal needs.

I know we've all tried to change another person. Did it work? Why not? Because only God can change people. What we need to do is ask God to change us so we can handle whatever is bugging us in the other person. Yes, we still ask God to change that person if the thing they are doing is contrary to God's will. However, most of the time these things come from personality clashes or from our own pride that says, "My way is the best way to do things."

Be Responsible

Many times we are so intense on finding everything wrong with another person that we don't see we have those same problems in our life. The Bible tells us to take the log out of our own eye before mentioning the splinter in the other's eye. I find it helpful that whenever I start getting upset because the other person won't change, I remind myself of my own problems and turn my focus toward working on myself and let God take care of the other person. By working on our own problems we get the feel-

ing of being in control of our situation.

We take responsibility for our life by focusing on working on our problems instead of insisting that someone has to change first in order to make us happy. No one else makes us happy. It's all in our attitudes and not our circumstances. Once you acknowledge that you're where you're at because of your choices, then you stop blaming others and you can take full responsibility for your actions from this moment forward. Think about this for a moment. While someone may have done something to hurt you, it was still your choice on how to react. You can forgive that person immediately and move on with your life, or you can wallow in your pity parties and continue to get worse. The choice is up to you. Remember, you can't change how people treat you, but you can change how you react to life. You are in control of your destiny!

Take a moment and think about people in your life and what things they do that bug you. Now ask God to change you so you can maintain your peace when you're around that person. You see, we can avoid a lot of hurt and emotional pain by learning to accept others as they are, forgiving people who have hurt us, and taking responsibility for our own emotions, actions and our future.

Choose Your Friends Wisely

Let me take a moment to talk about the flip side of relationships. The above was talking about how you love someone. Now let's look at developing relationships where others love you.

Your main source of receiving constant unconditional love is from God. Your deepest need for love will be fulfilled through that relationship. However, God also uses people to show His love toward us. And we need to purposely bring these people into our life. If you don't have anyone who loves you, then you need to start hanging out

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with some other folks.

It's up to you to take responsibility for developing healthy relationships in your life—both how you love others and who you choose to get into relationship with. Changing your friends might be the best thing you can do right now. I'm not telling you to stop loving the people around you, but start to bring around you people who will build you up. Make a list of your friends and determine if they are a positive or negative influence on you. Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Are they also stuck in their addictions with a negative attitude of never overcoming them?
- Are they keeping you in bondage by telling you that your addiction is a disease and you'll never be set free?
- Do they suck life out of you and leave you hopeless?
- Are they self-centered and don't care about what happens to you?
- Do they encourage you, lift you up, help you make good decisions?
- Do they bring out the best in you when you're around them?
- Do they accept you and not give you a list of things you need to change in order to make them happy?
- Do they help you realize your potential and encourage you to set goals?
- Are they sharing with you how much God loves you and how God can help you overcome your problems and start living the abundant life?
- Do they help you understand Scriptures and how to apply them to your life?

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- Have they not given up on you?
- Can you have fun with them?

We all need a variety of relationships to stay in balance. One person cannot fulfill all our needs. We also cannot be fulfilled living in isolation. God tells us to be sure we are around other Christians on a regular basis. Besides our spouses, we also need friends of our own sex.

One major problem of people with addictions is that they have burned many bridges to friendships and relatives. Many live in isolation by default, or their only friends are other addicts. One way to overcome this obstacle is to find a church where you will be taught the Bible and it also provides home fellowships (they may be called home Bible studies, Care Groups, or something similar). You won't make many friends by going to church only on Sunday mornings. By attending these meetings in a person's home you have an opportunity to immediately begin developing friendships with a variety of people. I suggest this type of home gathering rather than a support group or recovery group. When people gather together to deepen their spiritual walk with God, this focus will help you mature spiritually quicker than being around other addicts who only discuss their problems.

Prioritize Your Time

As you begin to apply these principles to your life you will notice you need to rearrange your priorities to make things happen. We can't keep doing the same things yet expect different results. To develop healthy relationships means we need to make the time to be around people who will influence us in the right direction. This means we have to turn off the television, the stereo, our computers, stop driving the kids all over town, and attend to those activities which will produce interaction with others.

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How do we make the major shift from focusing on ourselves to lifting up others? One way is to every day purposely determine how you can be a blessing to someone. Who can you say an encouraging word to (either in person, over the telephone, email, or writing them a note)? Who is in need of something which you are able to provide? In the chapter on Inspired Living that Fulfills Your Dreams you'll learn more on how to love and serve others by using your passion in life.

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

Since developing healthy relationships is one of the two major keys (the other one being inspired living), let me take a moment to show you how the other elements of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. breakthroughs fit into this goal of developing relationships.

Radical Breakthroughs—This is a radical breakthrough in how to approach solving addictions. Instead of focusing on only the addiction or trying to find out what hurt caused us to start abusing, we focus on building healthy relationships along with pursuing our God-given vision for our life. Because even if we do find out what caused us to start abusing, we have been in this mental state so long that our entire thought life is wrapped up in ourselves. By turning to developing a relationship with God and healthy relationships with others, this begins to shift our mind-set away from "me, myself, and I."

Attitudes—Our change of attitudes in many areas will motivate us to stick to our path of change. We will change only to the degree that our attitudes (our inner thinking) change. We cannot rise above our level of thinking (and our beliefs). Our attitudes affect both our relationship with God and with others. They cannot be ignored.

Disciplines—In today's society of instant gratification, disciplines are difficult to stick to. But when we discover

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God's truths, uncover Satan's lies to us, then we need to discipline our senses to come in line with God's truth. Understanding the outcomes of certain disciplines will enhance our ability to attract healthy people into our lives and form long-lasting, loving relationships.

Inspired Living—Utilizing our passion in life in a long-term goal that reaches out to love and help others gives us our sense of purpose and helps us impact the people around us. Our God-given purpose in life always includes helping others. Therefore, learning the priority of developing relationships is crucial.

Clean Heart—To allow God's love to freely flow through us to others, we must get rid of a lot of junk in it. Such things as unforgiveness, bitterness, negative emotions, identifying ourself by false labels, attachment to the things of the world, and our self-centeredness must be gotten rid of. They are replaced with what we really need in life—God's love and divine purpose for each of us!

Abundant Fruit—The source of our change is our relationship with God. We learn how to produce good fruit (both internally and externally) by developing our relationship with God and then taking risks to reach out and love and serve others. We cannot make the changes in our life by ourself. We must depend upon God's help in every step.

Love—Understanding God's unconditional love toward us and how He works through us to love others is a life-long process. One factor we will learn is that applying love in a relationship, instead of pointing out one's mistakes, will deepen our relationship. Love is also demonstrated through actions.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

Don't let this message of the impact of relationships be stolen from you by Satan. This is your lifeline! In order for

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your relationships to grow and develop into healthy ones, you must do whatever is necessary to protect this new knowledge. You must treasure it and nurture it, protecting it like a mother does her child. No matter what else you learn in this book, unless you focus on developing godly relationships, nothing else matters. It is our responsibility to receive the seed (God's Word about relationships) and trust God that by following His directions, *He* will multiply the fruit of our efforts.

Stand firm against Satan's attacks in this area. God loves you so much and desires to be in a deep relationship with you. Don't believe Satan's lies that you're not worthy of being loved or that no one will ever love you to the extent you desire. God already loves you and is waiting to reveal His love to you. Receive God's seed of love and focus on it. Ask Him to reveal more and more of His love for you. God will never disappoint you!

Application Questions

1. What relationships caused you hurt in your past that you think impacted how you're living today? Write down specific things that happened (or didn't happen).
2. Do you struggle with thinking you're not good enough to be loved? How long have you felt this way?
3. Do you believe that God loves you? Do you think God has favorites? Why or why not?
4. Do you blame God for some of the things that have happened to you? Can you take Him off the hook?
5. Since God gave you freedom to make your choices, this means He is not in control of everything that happens to you. What choices did others make that hurt you or affected your situation negatively? What choices did you make that hurt you?
6. Have you noticed the drastic difference between man's

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ways and God's ways for living and for solving problems? List some of them.

7. What are some of God's ways for solving your current problems that are different than how others are telling you to handle them?
8. Has God given you some personal insight and wisdom on how to deal with your problems? Write them down.
9. Do you have "religion" (following rules and regulations or doing what has traditionally been done in church) or a personal relationship with God?
10. Describe your relationship with God. Is it on fire? Boring? Lukewarm? Intimate? Passionate? Do you pay much attention to it? Is it always on your mind?
11. Are you afraid of what others might think about you if you became radically on-fire for God?
12. After reading the parable of the sower and the seed, describe areas of your life that identify with the various types of soil. Remember, the seed is all of God's Word (not only the message of salvation). It can affect your beliefs, thoughts and actions.
13. Describe what you are doing to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ and how often you do it. What else can you do to help draw you closer to God?
14. Do you recognize that God's love is unconditional? Do you have anyone who gives you unconditional love?
15. Do you give unconditional love to others? To whom?
16. Looking at the list of some ways in which love shows itself, which ones do you already do, which do you need to work on, which persons can you specifically apply your efforts toward for each of these items?
17. Knowing ahead of time that people are not going to love you back this way, how can you handle their lack

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of godly love? (i.e., forgiveness, dying to being self-centered, love them even more, love without expecting anything in return, etc.)

18. Are there people you need to love but haven't because you don't *feel* any love toward them? Will you ask God to help you show His love toward them? Determine specific things you can do to show that love. Do it!
19. Are you expecting others to provide the unconditional love that only God can provide you? Identify who you expect this love from.
20. What activities do you do to try to earn this love from others? (The world calls this codependency.)
21. Spend time every day praying to God for Him to reveal His love to you and *receive* His unconditional love. Determine how you can stop demanding that others love you in a manner they may not be capable of doing.
22. In what ways are you self-centered? Write down your thoughts, actions, reactions when you don't get your way (even while driving!), any manipulation, lying to get your way, do you blame others for how you react (making others responsible for your behavior)?
23. Accept responsibility for your own thoughts, actions and attitudes. From the answers to the above question, how can you take responsibility and change how you act or react? Be specific.
24. Do you need to make new friends and/or quit hanging around friends who are keeping you down? Determine where you can go to find the right kind of friends
25. Begin to look at your schedule to see how you need to prioritize things (delete some things to make time) to have time to implement these new actions.



ATTITUDES THAT MOTIVATE YOU

Attitudes set us up for what to expect from life. How's your attitude at this moment? Look at the last month and write down how your attitudes, positive or negative, influenced your actions. Were most of your actions a result of positive attitudes or negative?

Attitude is a choice. We are responsible for our attitude. Even when we wake up and feel like we're in a bad mood, we can still choose to ignore those feelings and think positive thoughts which will change our attitude. Nobody can make us feel a certain way. We may have conditioned ourselves to respond to certain behavior with a negative attitude, but that is a choice that we can change if we want to.

Our attitudes come from what we think about, which comes from our beliefs—whether they are true or false. Some are engrained into us during childhood. Our parents, teachers, relatives and friends said things that influenced what we believed about ourselves. Being a child and not knowing how to distinguish truth from lies, we believed what we were told without ever questioning it.

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Now it's time to discover some truths and change our beliefs, which will change our thoughts—which will motivate us to change our choices on our attitudes.

Attitude Toward Addiction

Our most difficult struggles deal with who we are and what we think we're capable of doing. The biggest question before you at this moment is, "Can I ever be set free permanently from my addiction and live a normal life?" What you believe affects how you answer this question, which affects your attitude towards yourself and your world.

The medical profession says your addiction is an incurable disease and you can only learn how to manage it, not get completely free from it. Not very much hope there! No wonder it's difficult to get a positive attitude about your future if you believe you have to drag around this thousand pound weight with you the rest of your life. But what about those who have been completely set free? How did they do it? Are they deceiving themselves?

We can choose to believe what mankind tells us, or we can believe what God tells us. God created us, knows everything about us, has given each of us a unique purpose in life, and has put His Holy Spirit inside those of us who are Christians to provide the power to change. Once we begin our personal relationship with God, we need to look at life from His perspective and everything changes.

So what is God's perspective on addictions? It is a sin which can be repented of and you can be completely set free from it. Sin means we've missed the mark of God's instruction. This can be something we did against His instruction, or something we didn't do. Repent means to turn away from that behavior and make a decision to not do it again. I know this isn't easy to believe. I can hear you saying, "I've made that decision not to do drugs thousands of times and it never worked!" But when God tells us not

to do something, He also tells us what to do instead. Once you've read this book and begin applying the principles, you'll have something to replace your addiction—drawing closer to God, working on developing healthy relationships and pursuing your God-given purpose in life. How desperate are you to be set free from your addiction cycle? Hang in there and don't quit reading.

In essence, knowing that your addiction is sin is the best news around! Because since it is sin, it can be overcome and you don't have to return to it ever! Will this be an overnight change? Probably not. Why? Because it's not just the act of your addiction that needs to be changed. It's the underlying problems that need to be identified and worked on: (1) learning God's truths on how to live and the impact of the Holy Spirit living inside you; (2) building healthy relationships, and (3) putting into action your God-given purpose in life.

When we learn God's truth about how to live and also about our abilities to do things because we have God helping us, our attitudes change. They also change as a by-product of doing things not related to solving our problems.

Our Best Attitude

The best attitude we can have is that all things are possible with God! (see Mark 9:23). Remember, God is more powerful than Satan and that power lives inside your heart if you're a Christian. So let God revive your dreams and fan the flames of your desire to love others and leave your mark upon this world!

Changing Our Attitude

How do we start to turn our attitude around? First, make a list of all your negative thoughts, whether they're about yourself or your circumstances. Now you must find out

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whether these thoughts (what you believe) are true or false.

When you read the Bible, write down what God says about who you are because of your relationship with Jesus Christ. When you come across statements that are opposite of what you have written on your list of negative thoughts, write out God's truth next to that thought. Start memorizing these new Scriptures. When you start thinking on these false lies, stop your thoughts and begin repeating these Scriptures, preferably out loud.

Our thoughts have a powerful impact on us. Proverbs 23:7 says, *"For as he thinks in his heart, so is he..."* The words we verbalize are even more powerful as stated in Proverbs 18:21, *"Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life]."* The choice is always ours to make.

To continually make the right choice for our attitudes is not easy. We are easily influenced by the people we hang around with. When we begin to make right choices, all of a sudden we see how negative our friends are and we want them to stop being so negative so it will be easier to maintain our positive attitude. But remember what was said earlier about how we can't change others. However, we can influence them by maintaining our positive attitude despite their pessimism.

Expect Opposition

When we begin to believe God's truths and act accordingly, others will come against us. When your addict friends tell you that you'll never be set free because you've got a disease, then it's time to change the people you hang around with. Unfortunately, most Christians have also bought into the lie that addictions are a disease. Therefore, you must stand strong upon what God's Word says and obey His instructions. He will give you His peace as

you go through this change.

God has great thoughts and plans for you, plans to give you a great future on earth as well as in heaven. While Satan's plans are to steal, kill and destroy, Jesus Christ's plan is for us to have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance, to the full, till it overflows!

Attitude Toward God

What are some of the specific attitudes the Bible shows us we should have? We must first explore our attitude towards God and Jesus Christ. Our attitude should be one of total submission to God and His will for our lives. This requires a dying to our selfish ambitions of putting ourselves first in everything we do. We must now seek God's guidance for our daily living, with an understanding that He has good plans for us.

We should have an attitude of expectancy. Knowing that God wants to change us and give us the abundant life, every day we can have an attitude of expecting great things to happen.

We fuel our attitude of expectancy when we exercise our faith. The Bible describes faith as the assurance of the things we hope for, being the proof of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality (faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to our senses). Faith is not always creating something new. Many times what we want already exists in the spiritual realm and by exercising our faith (believing and acting accordingly), it becomes a reality in our physical world. Therefore, we carry through our attitude of expectancy to its completion by acting accordingly.

For example, if you expect God to help you at this moment not to take drugs, then by faith you physically walk away from the temptation and turn your thoughts and ac-

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tions toward working on something God has shown you to do (which will be your God-given purpose in life discussed in chapter 5) and expect the temptation for drugs to disappear. And you have immediate victory because once you have stopped thinking about your temptation to take the drug and now think on what God has before you to do, victory is yours! But don't forget Satan wants to keep you in bondage, so the temptation will come again, and each time you must carry through this process of putting action to your faith.

Attitudes of Jesus

When you read the Bible, look at the attitudes that Jesus demonstrated toward people. Also look at what he didn't do. He never grumbled or complained. He didn't point out people's faults. He wasn't prideful or made sure everyone knew who HE was!

Jesus was never in a hurry—never! He knew that He was on a specific mission from His Father, God, and that everything would be done in its proper time. Each of us also has a specific mission from God and we cannot hurry its completion although we can delay it. Jesus knew that if He stayed in constant contact with His Father, He would receive specific instructions when needed, at the right time. His job was to carry out the instruction before Him, not knowing how the rest of the mission would be accomplished. He had an attitude of trust and faith toward God which was carried out through his actions.

Jesus' attitudes also included humility, being a servant (even though He was God), sacrificial (even to the point of death), and He did everything with an attitude of love.

Attitude of Contentment

Why do we grumble so much and point out the negative in everything? Because we're not content with either our-

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selves or our circumstances. Can we be content even though our circumstances are lousy? Yes! Let me show you how.

The Apostle Paul went through many trials in his life after he became a Christian. Yet he learned how to be content. In Philippians 4:11-13 he tells us his secret:

Not that I am implying that I was in any personal want. For I have learned how to be content (satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or disquieted) in whatever state I am. I know how to be abased and live humbly in straitened circumstances, and I know also how to enjoy plenty and live in abundance. I have learned in any and all circumstances the secret of facing every situation, whether well-fed or going hungry, having a sufficiency and enough to spare or going without and being in want. I have strength for all things in Christ Who empowers me [I am ready for anything and equal to anything through Him Who infuses inner strength into me; I am self-sufficient in Christ's sufficiency].

This was a choice Paul had to make over and over. We also have the same choice—to either look at our circumstances and grumble and get upset, or to know that with the Holy Spirit inside us, we have strength to be content no matter what we're going through. And the more often we trust God and see His love and faithfulness toward us, the easier it will be to quit grumbling and change our attitude to one of contentment. We must be thankful to God for what we do have rather than what we don't have.

Although we have an attitude of contentment, what we don't like about our character or our circumstances can motivate us to change in those areas.

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Attitude of Submission

With self-centeredness being prominent in the United States, what does it look like to die to our selfishness and to love and serve others first? The first aspect is that we must die to our selfish desires and look to God for Him to show us how He wants us to live. He tells us and shows us throughout the Bible how we are to live. Our first priority must be to obey God, no matter the cost. Our attitude is one of submission to God's will in our life.

In Romans 6:16 it tells us that whatever we submit to we become a slave to. Look closely at what you're submitting to and then find out what God wants you to submit to instead.

Attitude of Putting Others First

When we're trying to overcome our problems, our focus is on ourselves all the time. We're told by psychologists that we must first take care of ourselves before we can reach out and love others. But God tells us to get our eyes off of ourselves now, even while we're in our problems, and to love others. We may not feel like we have any love to share with others because we think we don't love ourselves. But since God commands us to love others, when we take the action steps (verbal or physical) to reach out and love someone, God is there to pour out His love through us. This is another area where we put actions to our faith.

Living by our feelings is dangerous. Feelings lie to us! They deceive us! They are not always based on truth. If there is a positive and a negative aspect to a certain situation, our natural tendency is to focus on the negative. Satan knows this and that is why he mixes God's truth with his lies. If anything looks like there is some of God's truth in it, then we tend to accept the whole package as being God's truth. We must begin to discern God's truths in order to recognize Satan's lies. Once we can make this dis-

inction, then we can choose to focus only on God's truths and harness our emotions so they won't lead us astray following Satan's lies.

How can you begin to change your focus from being self-centered? Look at your words and actions for the past week. How many were centered on you only? How many were focused on others? Now determine what you can say or do today to focus on loving someone else. If you find yourself in the middle of frustration because of your circumstances (whether it's your addictions, your job, your living situation, your marriage, etc.), stop your negative thoughts and focus on showing love to someone else. If you live alone, get out of your house and go visit a friend or go to a church service. If no one is around, go some place just to physically change your surroundings.

Every day we must choose the appropriate attitude and make a conscious decision to do something to show love to someone. We can even plan our week ahead if there are certain things that need to be done ahead of time in order to bless someone.

Our attitude to love others does not mean we have to agree with their lifestyle. A person can be living in sin, yet we still love the person, not the sin they do. Even if that person acknowledges that what he or she is doing is sin but refuses to change, we still love that person. However, there may be some limits we put on our contact with that person (see Matthew 18), but we never stop loving them. We don't put on an attitude of superiority, thinking we're better than they are, just because our sins may not be as obvious as theirs, when in fact we are all sinners.

Attitude of Humbleness

We must also get rid of our pride. This attitude says, "I'm better than you. I know what's best and nobody else does. My way is the best. Because I'm better than everyone, I

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deserve the best treatment." Pride is shown in a variety of ways, some not always obvious.

Pride is a major hindrance in our efforts to overcome addictions. We think that we are strong enough to kick the habit ourselves. We believe that if we just try harder, we'll get out of this vicious cycle of stopping our addictions and then relapsing. Even after we finally admit our addictions and we become a Christian and begin allowing God to help us change, once we raise ourselves up a little, then our pride comes back quickly. It is something we must always be aware of and choose to die to it by having an attitude of humbleness.

Attitude of Trust

What about our fears? We have multiple types of fears. I'm not talking about the healthful type of fear that will keep us from doing wrong things. I'm talking about the fears that keep us immobilized. The fears become bigger than the truth and keep us locked in our own little world. Sometimes we fear that even if we overcome our addictions, we'll eventually end up being stuck in them again, which convinces us to not even try to stop in the first place.

Remember that our attitude is our choice. Fear is also our choice. To overcome fear we must find out God's truth on the matter and have an attitude of trust. We must trust that God's ways are the right ways, even when we don't fully understand them. Sometimes we just have to do things afraid! We must decide not to let fear hold us captive any longer. Instead of focusing on the fearful outcome we project, why not focus on the positive outcome of our following through with our actions.

We can only rise to the level of our thinking. If you're stuck in a rut, it's because your thinking is stuck. And if you'll examine your thoughts, you'll begin to recognize

several fears within.

God knows the importance of the way we think. In fact, this is how God tells us to get transformed—by changing our thoughts. The Bible tells us at Romans 12:2, "*Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, even the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you].*" And we can only change our thoughts when we replace the lies we currently believe with God's truths.

Attitudes Toward The World

When God's truths begin to take hold in our lives, we start seeing the world from a different point of view. This can bring confusion unless we know what God tells us about separating ourselves from being involved in the affairs of this world. Let's review a few of these attitudes Christians should have towards the world.

Do not conform to it. We are to follow God's ways, not the ways of the world. As the world changes its direction and theories on the best way to find happiness, God's ways remain the same. God has been around since the beginning, psychology has only been around since the late 1800s. Happiness is not our goal as a Christian—obedience to God is our goal.

Do not love the world. Nothing the world has to offer us can compare to the love God has to give us. "*Do not love {or} cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one's*

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own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself]. And the world passes away {and} disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

Do not be friends with it. We cannot straddle the fence and be friends with the world and friends with God. God will not allow it. "Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

Do not be entangled with the world. Who we are loyal to—the world or God—determines how we spend our time. We will not succeed in either arena if our loyalties are split. "No soldier when in service gets entangled in the enterprises of [civilian] life; his aim is to satisfy {and} please the one who enlisted him" (2 Timothy 2:4).

While we are not to entangle ourselves in the world, God still wants us to reach out to the non-Christians and tells us how:

Seek their salvation. Through our behavior and our attitudes we may entice others to also believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. "Conduct yourselves properly (honorably, righteously) among the Gentiles, so that, although they may slander you as evildoers, [yet] they may by witnessing your good deeds [come to] glorify God in the day of inspection [when God shall look upon you wanderers as a pastor or shepherd looks over his flock]" (1 Peter 2:12).

The Apostle Paul knew what he had to do to reach non-believers: *"To the weak (wanting in discernment) I have become weak (wanting in discernment) that I might win the weak {and} overscrupulous. I have [in short] become all things to all men, that I might by all means (at all costs and*

in any and every way) save some [by winning them to faith in Jesus Christ]. And I do this for the sake of the good news (the Gospel), in order that I may become a participator in it {and} share in its [blessings along with you]" (1 Corinthians 9:22-23).

Reprove non-believers. How will those who are being misguided know the truth unless we instruct them? We are not to judge others regarding the status of their salvation, but we are told to rebuke those who are teaching false doctrine. *"For there are many disorderly {and} unruly men who are idle (vain, empty) {and} misleading talkers and self-deceivers {and} deceivers of others. [This is true] especially of those of the circumcision party [who have come over from Judaism]. Their mouths must be stopped, for they are mentally distressing {and} subverting whole families by teaching what they ought not to teach, for the purpose of getting base advantage {and} disreputable gain" (Titus 1:10-11).*

Pray for non-believers. We ask God to work in their lives to bring them to the knowledge of their need for God. Remember what was said earlier about how we can't change people, only God can? Well, the same is true here. We cannot make someone become a Christian, but we can pray to God to change their hearts and open their eyes to God's truth. *"I admonish {and} urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be offered on behalf of all men, ... For such [praying] is good {and} right, and [it is] pleasing {and} acceptable to God our Savior, Who wishes all men to be saved and [increasingly] to perceive {and} recognize {and} discern {and} know precisely {and} correctly the [divine] Truth. For there [is only] one God, and [only] one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:1, 3-4).*

Persuade non-believers. Even if you are a new Chris-

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tian, you have enough of God's truth to share with someone who doesn't know there is a better way to live. We must be diligent in our efforts to show others God's truth. *"Herald {and} preach the Word! Keep your sense of urgency [stand by, be at hand and ready], whether the opportunity seems to be favorable or unfavorable. [Whether it is convenient or inconvenient, whether it is welcome or unwelcome, you as preacher of the Word are to show people in what way their lives are wrong.] And convince them, rebuking {and} correcting, warning {and} urging {and} encouraging them, being unflagging {and} inexhaustible in patience and teaching" (1 Timothy 2:1).*

Move Beyond the Survival Mode

Let me conclude this chapter with a look at the importance of our attitudes. As mentioned, our attitudes set us up for what to expect from life. Most of us operate from an attitude of survival. We do what is necessary to survive what comes our way today. And if today is a bad day, we worry about how we're going to handle tomorrow if it's a bad day too, because we only have so much emotional and physical energy.

God tells us to handle life differently. He tells us that if we die to our self-efforts and rely upon His power and guidance, then we will be able to take the actions necessary to live the abundant life He offers. Most of us don't want to die to ourselves, whether it be because of our pride or fears. If we don't die, this keeps our focus upon our own abilities to survive or change. This desire to survive keeps us operating in the flesh and wears down our emotional and physical faculties. It also robs us of the power and the blessings of God. Our attitudes remain pessimistic because we realize we don't have the strength in ourselves to make the changes we want or those that God is asking us to make.

The biggest influence to changing our attitudes and keeping them changed is learning more about Who God is and what His promises are to those of us who are His adopted children. Our attitudes are filled with motivation when we understand God's love toward us and how much He desires to fulfill our deepest needs of love and purpose. If we change our thinking, we change our outlook on the world, which influences our attitudes.

Getting over your addictions is just one small part of God's overall plan for your life. He has so much in store for you and wants you to look beyond your present situation and grab hold of the bigger picture for your life. Nothing is impossible for God!

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters integrate into this principle about attitudes?

Radical Breakthroughs—If we don't make a radical change in our attitudes, we won't change! We must purposefully change our attitude every day, sometimes every hour.

Relationships—Our bad attitudes affect our ability to develop healthy relationships because they stop us from even trying. We must shift our attitude of relying upon our own efforts or personality and have an attitude of trusting God.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

If we don't have an attitude that seeks after everything God offers us, then we won't be diligent in pursuing God and Satan will steal what little knowledge we've learned about God. Then we're right back to our old ways and remain stuck in our addictions.

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Application Questions

1. What is your attitude toward your addiction? Do you see it as a disease? If so, are you hopeless of ever getting over your addiction?
2. What is your reaction to learning that addictions are a sin, which means they can be overcome and you can learn how to live the abundant life?
3. To change your attitudes, you must first identify them. Write down all your negative thoughts that you keep repeating to yourself. Search the Bible to see whether the beliefs that lead to your negative thoughts are true.
4. Describe your attitudes toward God. Do they include total submission to Him with an attitude of expectancy?
5. Read one of the Gospel books (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) and write down every attitude of Jesus Christ, both toward the world and toward others. How do your attitudes compare? How can you improve?
6. Do you have an attitude of contentment? How do you act when you're not content? How can you change?
7. Do you have an attitude of submission to love and serve others first? What specific things have you done that demonstrate this?
8. Are you prideful (demonstrated by the fact that you think you can quit your addiction whenever you want)? What words do you speak that say you are?
9. Are you fearful or do you have an attitude of trusting God? Give examples of each.
10. Review the section on attitudes toward the world. In what areas can you change?



DISCIPLINES THAT CHANGE YOU

The only way you will change your lifestyle is step by step. It's not an overnight transformation, although God can and sometimes does do this. You must learn new disciplines to create new responses.

Without doing the right disciplines consistently, we won't change our way of living. To determine what disciplines to focus on, we need to know what our objectives are. We may think our primary objective is to overcome our addictions. But our addictions are only a by-product of what's going on in our lives. We must change from the inside out. Once our beliefs and thoughts are transformed, our actions will be permanently changed. During this time of transformation, we work simultaneously on our thoughts and our actions.

What are our objectives? As Christians we are to become like Christ in everything we do. It is a complete lifestyle change. It begins with gaining an understanding of who we are as new creatures in Christ. God created us with a spirit, soul (mind, will and emotions) and body (our fleshly instincts). When we asked God to come into our lives, our spirit was born again by having the Holy Spirit

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take its place. But our soul and our body did not become renewed. This is a process *we* have to carry out. It is called sanctification. This is a life-long process of separating ourselves from committing sin, being entangled in the world's system, and dedicating our life to serving God. We do this with God's help.

Therefore, in order to know the type of person we are to seek to become, we must know more about Jesus Christ, who He is, and what behaviors we are to lay aside and what it is God asks us to do instead. So we need disciplines in two realms— spiritual and physical.

Spiritual Disciplines

In the spiritual area, these disciplines include

- Reading and studying the Bible
- Prayer
- Worship
- Evangelism
- Serving
- Stewardship of our time and money
- Fasting
- Time for silence and solitude
- Learning
- Perseverance in these disciplines

Because these are discussed in more detail in Donald S. Whitney's book "Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life," I recommend you read this book and others for further insights. See the Appendix for further resources. However, I will discuss the aspects of Bible study, prayer and prioritizing your time.

Bible Study

God's process of change is little by little. He must first show us what we are doing wrong, then we confess our sin, decide and commit to turn away from doing that sin, and replace it with doing what God instructs us to do. When we read God's Word (the Bible) He will show us what needs changing in our lives. This includes recognizing our false beliefs and also seeing our sinful behavior and thoughts. Besides pointing out what we're doing wrong, God also shows us His love for us and His way of living. We're not left alone to walk this narrow path of following God. He will never leave us or forsake us.

The more we read about God's unconditional love toward us and begin to experience this love and His peace, the hungrier we get for God's presence in our lives. And only God will fulfill that deep hunger within us. This begins a new focus for us—to be in God's presence to receive His touch in our lives. The more time we spend in God's presence, the more our inner life gets changed.

One way to draw close to God is to take time to meditate upon Scripture. When you read the Bible and a verse tugs at your heart, stop and spend time re-reading that verse, asking God to enlighten you as to its meaning and application in your life. Also when you don't understand the meaning or application of particular Scripture, stop reading further and spend time asking God for His insight and wisdom on what you are reading. Reading the Bible isn't about reading our quota for the day or week. It's about deepening our personal relationship with God. When we look at it from this viewpoint, our perspective and desires change.

We find a lot of promises in the Bible which fuel our hope for a better future. Sometimes these promises have conditions that we must fulfill first before the promise be-

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comes a reality in our lives. So on the paper you're keeping close to you as you read the Bible, jot down these promises, as well as your part to do to make the promise available to you. Also write down the book, chapter and verse number for future reference.

Besides God's promises, also begin a list of the thoughts, attitudes and behaviors God is showing you to stop doing, and the thoughts, attitudes and behaviors He is asking you to replace them with. Don't get overwhelmed that your list may be long—we all have long lists! Now, choose one or two of those items you can work on today to change. Remember, changing is a step-by-step process, not an overnight change.

Prayer

The second important spiritual discipline is of prayer. This is simply talking to God, just like you would talk to a friend. It's admitting to God your failures (sins), asking for His forgiveness, *receiving* that forgiveness, praising Him for who He is and what He has done in your life and for what He will do in your life. You also ask Him to help other people in your life in specific areas.

You need to be very specific in your prayers. If you ask for God to "bless" you, what does a blessing look like? If you ask God to open the opportunity for you to get a new job, that is a specific request. Yes, God is interested in the small details of our lives and everything, big or little, that concerns us. Since He knows the numbers of hairs on our heads, then He's also interested in every detail of our lives.

Earlier I mentioned that we can't change anybody, only God can. Well, here's your opportunity to ask God to change them! But more importantly, you must ask God to change you so you are able to handle, in a positive manner, whatever that person does that bugs you. This is learning how to be proactive, rather than reactive. Most of

our lives we have reacted to others, and then blame them for how we feel. But we are responsible for our own feelings. Nobody can make us feel or respond a certain way. Taking responsibility for our own reactions is a big step toward getting control over our destiny. And God wants to help us be responsible, first to Him, and also to others.

Prioritize Our Time

The third spiritual discipline is prioritizing our time. Why is this a spiritual discipline? Because our time is spent doing either spiritual or evil things. Ephesians 5:15-17 explains this: *"Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully {and} worthily {and} accurately, not as the unwise {and} witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people), making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil. Therefore do not be vague {and} thoughtless {and} foolish, but understanding {and} firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is."* As Christians, we are in a spiritual battle and in order to win it, we must be proactive in how we live.

To be a person who is proactive in today's world is a radical concept. With the emphasis on ease, pleasure, gluttony and sloth, a person who exercises self-control does not fit in with the people around them. But that's okay. We're not living our lives to please those around us. We are doing things that will radically change the way we live, our outlook on life, and our ability to influence and impact the lives of others to point them toward a God who loves them and wants them to also be a part of His family.

Society teaches us to focus only on things that will bring us instant gratification. Our concept of establishing goals is based only on their present outcome and how they will make us feel. So if we've done something to make us feel good today, then we think it's okay to slack off for a few days and rest from our efforts. After all, we worked

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hard and got our immediate gratification. But the few days of slacking off allows Satan an inroad to keep us from getting started on our next goal. And pretty soon we're back into our old habits which lead us back into our old cycle of problems.

Our thinking process must change from short-term goals that bring instant gratification to long-term goals, with daily disciplines leading us toward accomplishing those goals. We can't act like Jesus did when He was "on the spot" if our lifestyle isn't like Jesus'. Jesus could make the right decisions at the right moment because he daily disciplined himself until it was a lifestyle to follow God's instructions. That's the whole idea of discipline—to prepare yourself to make the right decision at the moment it's needed.

We are on a mission. We don't have time to sit back and allow Satan to creep into our lives and bring us down again. We must be on the alert for Satan's schemes. One of them is to make us out of balance in our lives. To maintain a healthy proactive stance, we must maintain balance in our spiritual walk and bring our soul and our body under the control of the Holy Spirit now living inside us. Thus, everything we do (how we use the 24 hours every day) must stay focused on changing to become like Jesus.

Physical Disciplines

Many teach you about spiritual disciplines, but not about disciplines of bringing our soul (mind, will and emotions) and our body (the fleshly desires and instincts) under the control of the Holy Spirit. These include areas such as:

- Align our "will" with God's
- Renew our mind
- Control our emotions
- Verbalize our future

- Control our fleshly desires

Align Our Will With God's

There is one key element that is common in everything we do—that is our "will." This is the faucet that allows us to follow God or continue following our own self-centered ways. The will is described as the power of control over one's own actions or emotions. It is our choice to make on how we exercise it. When we become Christians, our desires change to where we want to obey God. This is the motivation to change our will.

Sometimes our decisions must not be based on the facts before us or our feelings, but the truth God has shown us. Our will always wants to follow our senses—what we see, hear, touch, feel, or smell. Yes, there is a fight within us to do what we think is right or to obey God. So what are some of the common struggles we have when we learn that God's truth is different than what we currently believe?

First, let's deal with looking objectively at our problems of addictions. The longer you have been in your addiction, the more your thinking has solidified into hopelessness of breaking free from the addiction. This can come from repeated attempts to break free, only to relapse. You can be influenced by those around you, either by seeing their inability to be set free or them telling you that your situation is hopeless and you can only learn how to manage it, not ever escape its grip.

However, if you are a Christian, you now have a reservoir of power to draw from that is able to set you free—permanently! Non-Christians do not have access to this power, and thus they are not able to get set free from their addictions. This power of the Holy Spirit living inside Christians is the same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead. That's pretty awesome power! And it's al-

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ready inside you right now. You don't have to pray to God for more of His power, you just need to learn how to access it and release it to work in your life.

How do you do that? In the last chapter on attitudes I talked about physically walking away from your addiction and turning your thoughts and actions toward whatever God has shown you to do and you will have victory. This describes how we access the power of God within us. We choose to put it into action. Instead of asking God to take away the temptation while we're standing there staring at it, we take action ourself to walk away. The moment you take that first step, God releases His power to help you take the next step, and the next one, until you're involved in doing what He wants you to do.

You'll find many times in the Bible that Jesus asked a person who wanted healing to do some physical act—stretch out a hand, stand up and walk, etc. The person had to do something physical which then manifested God's power in that situation. The same is true for us when we face temptations. These temptations include not only our addictions, but our bad attitudes, our bad language, our bad actions toward others, and everything else that Satan throws our way. When you know that all of God's power is inside you and that God is waiting for you to do something to manifest that power, the moment you act, God's power is present.

Knowing that God's power is available and that it is our choice to access it gives us freedom to choose the course of our life. Therefore, looking at our problem of addictions from God's perspective gives us hope and motivation to have our will line up with obeying God. This is a daily, sometimes moment-by-moment, discipline we undertake.

Renew Our Mind

In referring to our soul, it is often described as consist-

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ing of our mind, will and emotions. In transforming our soul, we must also deal with these three elements in the same order. We must renew our mind (learn God's truths and recognize and replace our false beliefs), which influences our decision-making (our will), which then allows us to be able to control our emotions.

This discipline of renewing our mind is also a spiritual mandate. The Bible tells us that the way we change is by transforming our thinking:

Do not be conformed to this world (this age), [fashioned after and adapted to its external, superficial customs], but be transformed (changed) by the [entire] renewal of your mind [by its new ideals and its new attitude], so that you may prove [for yourselves] what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God, {even} the thing which is good and acceptable and perfect [in His sight for you] (Romans 12:2).

*Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts {and} desires that spring from delusion; **And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude]**, And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24, emphasis added).*

In the above verses in Ephesians the highlighted verse tells us how to strip off our old nature and put on our new nature. It all begins in our mind. I discuss this further in chapter 9 when I talk about the Law of Thinking.

Control Our Emotions

Yes, we can control our emotions. Jesus tells us at John 14:1, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled (distressed, agitated).*" Jesus does not tell us to do something unless we're capable of doing it under His power. When our hearts are troubled, our emotions get out of whack. But now we can control them, despite how many years we've let them control us. It's time for us to take control of our emotions and stop blaming others or our circumstances for how we feel. We need to stop being a victim and start being victorious! It's a much better lifestyle to live!

One way to control our emotions is to stop the lies in our thinking and replace them with God's truths. Earlier I asked you to keep your pen and paper handy while you read the Bible and to write down Scriptures that deal with what you're going through. These are the truths you need to focus upon when your emotions start getting you down. When you begin verbalizing these truths, God's peace will replace the agitation of your emotions.

What feeds our bad emotions is all the negative stuff coming at us from different directions. What we read, see on television, hear on the radio, and what others say all influence us. But it's our choice on what to allow into our lives. We can turn off the television, change the music we listen to, choose books that motivate us, and even change the people we hang around with. Since we are surrounded by these influences every day, we must take a close look at our lifestyle and see what needs changing, how to do it, and commit to starting that change today.

Another thing feeding our bad emotions is what we see—or don't see. We see our history of failures, but we don't see a future of success. We see only what is physically in front of us, not what is available to us through faith in God. This discipline of changing our focus will be

our greatest motivation. We can only change on the outside to the degree that we have changed in our inside. Our changed beliefs, thoughts and attitudes will result in changed behavior. The only thing limiting our growth and change is ourselves. Yes, it is up to us to take responsibility for our future. We cannot blame others for our present situation. Let's get on with our life and take responsibility today for what how we act today and how we see our future.

Verbalize Our Future

To begin changing our perspective on our future, we must daily verbalize how we want our life to be. I'm not talking about the "name it and claim it" prosperity teaching. I'm talking about verbalizing God's truths about ourselves, and making positive affirmation statements as if the changes have already been made in our lives. I suggest you read Joyce Meyer's book "Me and My Big Mouth!" for further motivation on this subject. See other resources in the Appendix.

Remember, faith is believing that things that are not currently visible to you will become reality. It doesn't mean they don't already exist. They can exist in the spiritual realm and by our verbalizing them and believing them, they become reality in our world. God created earth and man by verbalizing words. He didn't think them into existence or wish that they would be created. He believed and therefore He spoke them into reality. The same is available to us.

This principle also applies to the area of manifesting healing. The healing already exists in the spiritual realm. But it must be manifested by our believing that it already exists and then verbalizing it to bring it forth. We must not have any doubt or unbelief in this area or else it will cancel whatever belief we do have for healing. Usually, when

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healing doesn't occur right away, doubt and unbelief attacks us. But if we hold steadfast to God's truth, then healing will occur.

Control Our Fleshly Desires

Bringing our body under the control of the Holy Spirit is also done through our will (choice). How does our body get us into trouble? We give in to its desires. These can be desires for food (overeating), rest (laziness and being physically out-of-shape), wanting to feel good (addictions), sexual desires (pornography and illicit affairs), wanting to impress others (pride), being greedy, lying, and other similar desires. When we indulge in these, we are giving in to being self-centered.

Romans 8:12-13 shows us how to combat these desires. *"So then, brethren, we are debtors, but not to the flesh [we are not obligated to our carnal nature], to live [a life ruled by the standards set up by the dictates] of the flesh. For if you live according to [the dictates of] the flesh, you will surely die. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever."* Again, we see the power of the Holy Spirit helping us change our habits and being able to deny the desires of our body. This takes daily discipline for the rest of our lives.

To review, here are some specific disciplines you can do:

- Read and study the Bible; meditate upon how the Scriptures can be applied to your life
- Pray specific prayers to God for yourself and for others
- Prioritize your time
- Be proactive and make good use of every day

- Think in terms of long-term goals
- Choose to have your "will" obey God
- See your problems from God's perspective
- Act by faith to manifest God's power inside you
- Renew your mind by discovering God's truths
- Control your emotions
- Change the influences around you
- Change your focus from your problems to your future
- Take responsibility for your life
- Verbalize your future
- Bring the desires of your body under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters integrate into this principle about disciplines?

Radical Breakthroughs—None of us like to discipline ourselves. We know we need to, but we keep procrastinating. If we don't discipline ourselves we'll never reach our fullest potential. This is a daily, life-long pursuit. But so are its benefits!

Relationships—We must discipline ourselves to purposely pursue building healthy relationships. They won't happen by themselves. Since relationships take time to develop, the discipline of how we use our time is of utmost importance.

Attitudes—Our attitude toward carrying out our disciplines is critical. Be aware that this can become a double-edged sword in that we need to discipline ourselves to have good attitudes, yet we need to change our attitudes so we can follow through on our disciplines. God will help

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us with both!

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

It takes discipline to change our focus from what the world offers to learning about God and His promises. Unless we discipline our time and the input of things into our lives, Satan will steal God's truths from us before they take root in our heart. We must work on both spiritual and physical disciplines to get God's Word rooted in our heart quicker.

Application Questions

1. With your ultimate goal being to become like Jesus Christ, what disciplines do you already do (both spiritually and physically)?
2. From reading this chapter and other books on spiritual disciplines, which ones do you need to work on?
3. Write out each spiritual discipline you are aware of and what each discipline is to produce in your life.
4. How many hours a week do you watch TV or are on the Internet? Will you spend more time than that reading and studying the Bible?
5. In what areas do you need to align your thinking with God's? Write out specific thoughts or actions.
6. In what areas do you need to align your "will" with God's? Ask God to help you change your will.
7. What can you do to control your emotions? Also ask others how they control their emotions.
8. Are you verbalizing your positive future and believing by faith it will come true? Write down these statements for review several times a day.
9. In what areas do you need to bring your fleshly desires under control? What can you specifically do?



INSPIRED LIVING THAT FULFILLS YOUR DREAMS

You can go as far as you can dream! You have a passion inside you to do a particular thing. When you mix that passion with God's specific direction for you, then you have a life-long goal through which you will love and serve others. You will make an impact on the lives of other people, and perhaps a family, neighborhood, city, state, nation or internationally. It's up to you how far you want to go in life!

It may have been a while since you've thought about your dreams. Being stuck in your addictions, your dreams died a long time ago. Now it's time to resurrect them. You can't wait any longer. You can't wait until you're over your addiction or have your act together. You must grab this moment in front of you. By doing so, you begin the journey that will lead you into a new lifestyle that propels you into fulfilling your dreams and living the life God wants you to live.

You won't find this principle being taught in any support group! Yet this is the element that will do the most to provide the constant motivation to keep you pursuing God's vision for your life. It is the only thing strong

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enough to pull you out of your mind-set of "me, myself, and I." When you pursue your vision, it doesn't take long to begin to see changes in your life.

Rediscovering all the intricacies of your dream and attaching emotions to them will motivate you to bring it into reality. It gives you purpose in life. Without a dream for your future, what momentum do you have to get out of your addictions? When you're stuck in your addictions, you don't care about tomorrow, you only care about how you feel today. And if you don't have anything to look forward to, there isn't any reason not to mess up your life. But when you revive your dreams that you buried, you began to come alive again!

I'm not talking here about Step 12 of The 12 Steps which teaches you to carry a message of recovery to other people stuck in their addictions. How can the blind lead the blind? Until a person is set completely free from their addictions, how can they lead others to this freedom? What I'm discussing in this chapter is discovering your passion in life, asking God to help you put that into a project whereby you can utilize that passion in loving and serving others. Most of the time this is something unrelated to your efforts to get out of your addictions.

For example, if a woman has a passion for sewing or knitting or making quilts, she can find an organization where she can donate these items to where the needy will get them. This might be a rescue mission, a women's transitional living home, or one of many organizations that help the poor and needy. She might volunteer one day a week at that organization so she can become better acquainted with the people who receive the benefit of her passion. This will provide even more motivation.

An example for a man might be if he has a passion to fix cars, he can provide his services for free to single moms

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and single women, including the elderly. He can go to his pastor and share his desire to do this and gather other men in the church who can come together as a group and provide these services. Other organizations who assist the poor, as listed above, could also benefit from these services.

No matter what your passion is, you can use it to serve God. That's why God created you—to take your passion and love and serve others.

Passionate Living

So how do we identify our passion? Passion is our heart's desire to make a difference somewhere, using the gifts and talents God has given us. Each of us has a unique passion. God doesn't want us copying the ministries of others. He has a specific purpose and mission for each of us.

Before we became Christians, we probably already identified some of our passions. Now that we are motivated to obey God, if our passion is in line with God's purpose, we can still use that same passion. But instead of our motivation being self-centered, it is now God-centered and others-centered. We no longer do these things to bring attention or praise to ourselves. We now do it out of obedience to God and we give God all the glory for the outcome.

Types of Passion

Most people have never identified their passion or even know if they have any. Passion can be classified into three general categories, although some overlap exists.

1. A passion about people. You long to make a difference in certain people's lives.
2. Operating in certain roles or functions. You receive enormous enjoyment by your functioning in a certain role.

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3. You have a passion for a cause, whether it's addressing the needs of world hunger, fighting for human rights, financial stewardship, reaching the spiritually lost, etc.

While your passion may be to do a certain thing, look to the whole picture of what the ultimate outcome will be. The two examples I previously listed would fall under the first category in wanting to make a difference in people's lives.

An example for a person who has a passion to operate in a certain role or function might be someone who likes to help in whatever way they can; it can be as a visionary or a leader; or it can be as a member of a team that accomplishes the overall dream.

Identifying Your Passion

If you can't identify your passion, don't worry. The following will assist you in the process. Get your pen and paper ready as you look through these six indicators to help you identify your passion.

1. *It impacts your daily routine.* When you talk about your passion, you speak a little faster, your body language changes in that you lean forward and your voice goes up a little. Your thoughts create emotions about your passion and drive you to stay up late at night or bounce out of bed early in the morning. What topic makes you react in this manner?
2. *You dream about it.* In your daydreaming you allow your heart's desire to take over and dream of things as though they were not. Obstacles are removed and your potential is unlimited. Your feelings get heightened and you know an emotional chord has been struck. What do you daydream about?

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3. *Past achievements indicate themes.* Looking at your past achievements will indicate what you thoroughly enjoy doing. This pattern helps you identify specific topics or ways of relating, whether you're a leader, a follower, a planner, cause-oriented, task-oriented or people-oriented. What are the patterns of achievements which you enjoyed doing?
4. *Time passes quickly.* You're involved in a project or talking to people about a topic and suddenly you realize time has slipped away. What areas are you involved in where this happens?
5. *You have an inner confidence you are following God's guidance.* When you are headed in the direction of your God-given passion, no matter what obstacles you encounter, you are confident you are doing what God has asked. What area are you involved in where you have confidence that God is leading?
6. *Your passion energizes you.* Ever notice how much physical and emotional energy you have when you're doing something you thoroughly enjoy? This is one of God's ways of revealing you're headed in the right direction. What things do you do where you recognize an increase in energy?

After reviewing your responses to these six factors, can you state in one or two sentences what your passion is? If you cannot identify your passion, ask a close friend to review these questions with you and provide insight.

You may find you enjoy doing many things and have a variety of gifts and natural talent. I challenge you to narrow the description of your passion into one area. What makes your passion unique are the life experiences God has given you so far, your personality traits, and the spiritual gifts God has given you. Now, what specific thing do

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you feel your passion in life is?

Spiritual Gifts

God gives each Christian spiritual gift(s) to carry out the passion God has put in them to do a certain thing. *"As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God's many-sided grace [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor]" (1 Peter 4:10).* Spiritual gifts are different from natural talents, although some of our natural talents may enhance our spiritual gifts. The purpose of spiritual gifts are to glorify God and edify others.

The following chart is based upon 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 4, and several other passages.

<u>Spiritual Gift</u>	<u>Description</u>
Administration	The ability to understand what makes an organization function and the specific ability to plan and execute procedures that accomplish the goals of the ministry.
Apostleship	One specifically called by God to oversee the start and development of new churches.
Discernment	Able to distinguish between truth and error. To discern the spirits, differentiating between good and evil, right and wrong.
Encouragement	Being able to present God's truth in a manner to strengthen, comfort or urge to action those who are discouraged or wavering in their faith.

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Evangelism	Effectively communicate the Gospel to unbelievers so they respond in faith and move toward discipleship.
Faith	Act on God's promises with confidence and unwavering belief in His ability to fulfill His purposes and promises.
Giving	Able to contribute money and resources to the work of the Lord with cheerfulness and liberality.
Healing	To be God's means for restoring people to wholeness.
Helps	Attach spiritual value to the accomplishment of practical and necessary tasks that free up, support, and meet the needs of others.
Interpretation	The ability to make known to the body of Christ the message of one who is speaking in tongues.
Knowledge	Through a revelation or biblical insight be able to bring truth to the body of Christ.
Leadership	The ability to cast vision, motivate and direct people to work in harmony to accomplish the purposes of God.
Mercy	To be able to cheerfully and practically help those who are suffering or are in need.
Miracles	To be able to authenticate the ministry and message of God through supernatural interventions that glorify God.
Prophecy	To reveal truth and proclaim it in a timely and relevant manner for under-

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	standing, correction, repentance or edification.
Shepherding	A special calling to nurture, care for, and guide people toward ongoing spiritual maturity and becoming like Christ.
Teaching	The ability to understand, clearly explain, and apply the Word of God, thus causing greater Christlikeness in the lives of listeners.
Tongues	To speak, worship, or pray in a language unknown to the speaker.
Wisdom	To apply spiritual truth effectively to meet a need in a specific situation.

While many people have the same gift, its expression is unique, according to the individual's personality and way of relating to others. No two people express a gift in the same manner. If you need further help to identify your gifts, your local Christian book store has several books to help you identify and understand your spiritual gifts.

God's Vision is Always Big

One thing that is exciting, and also scary, about God's vision for our life is that it is such a big project that we can't do it by ourselves. We must have God's help or it will fail. If our vision only requires our efforts, then we don't have hold of God's vision for us. His vision causes us to stretch beyond what we consider our personal limits.

Earlier I discussed that in order to change our outside, we have to change the thinking on the inside. So how do we dream big dreams? The Apostle Paul encourages us at Philippians 3:12-14:

Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I press on

to lay hold of (grasp) {and} make my own, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me {and} made me His own. I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured {and} made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.

Paul shows us that we must change our focus from our past and that it is a lifelong journey. Our ultimate goal is to become like Christ. And one aspect of our journey is to seek after the vision God gives us to fulfill in our life. Only you can fulfill what God has shown you to do!

Capturing Your Vision

The words of Martin Luther King, Jr. "I have a dream ..." changed the course of history forever. These four simple words can inspire change in ourselves, others, a nation and the world. But until each of us can stand and proclaim "I have a dream ...," our life remains void of the abundant life we're seeking. You'll experience the abundant life as you confidently live out the dreams God has birthed within you.

You must first recognize your dream, plan for it, and finally take action to implement it. The hope of your dream becoming reality is intensified when you're convinced God approves of your dream. Such approval carries with it all of God's grace and power to fulfill it. When you contemplate God's hands-on involvement in your dream, the fire within your soul is unquenchable.

Have you spent time dreaming how your passion to do certain activities can be put into a life-long vision? The complete picture may not be revealed all at once. But God

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will guide you. *"I [the Lord] will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with My eye upon you" (Psalm 32:8).*

God usually only gives you the initial revelation of His vision for your life. The specifics come as you take each step when it's revealed. Your dreams (also called vision, burden or call) are given by God and God is counting on you to contribute to the fulfillment of these dreams.

Perhaps the idea of having a vision which guides and energizes you for the rest of your life is new to you. But that is exactly how God created you. If you've never thought along these lines, take time to consider what you would do with the rest of your life if you had no limitations. To help initiate dreaming, this exercise may help.

1. Write out everything you ever dreamed of doing. Things that are specific to you, not you and a spouse. If you are single, avoid "If I had a spouse, I would ..." Also avoid, "My only desire is to be married and raise a family, etc." The desire for a spouse is not something you can fulfill. But the dreams God implants in you *can* be brought to realization.
2. Specifically identify the pictures your dream produces.
3. Express the emotions you envision feeling as you carry out each step and eventually see your goals accomplished.

God designed us to do things as a team. *"For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints {and} ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love" (Ephesians 4:16).*

Many of us need to change our dreams from "my" dream to "our" dream. Each Christian plays a part in carrying out God's plans for this world. Thus, we need to remain open to teaming up with others to accomplish God's mission.

Characteristics of a Vision

Once you have determined what your passion is and understand how God wants you to use it in a life-long goal, you need to know what to expect when you start to work toward accomplishing your dream. Let's look at eighteen lessons you will learn about your God-given vision.

1. *It requires change.* You can't keep doing the same things and expect a different outcome. It requires a change in your priorities, your thinking, your attitudes, the people you hang around with, and the use of your time. Most importantly, it requires you to draw closer to God and rely upon Him as you go through this change. accomplishing
2. *It redefines success.* What you considered as success before you became a Christian is no longer what God calls success. Success is not achieving the final goal or vision—it is daily obedience to the journey. Success is what happens along the road to fulfilling your dream. Therefore, you must enjoy every day and grab hold of every opportunity before you. You can no longer say, "I'll be happy when ..." Your happiness depends upon what you do today.
3. *It demands perseverance.* Make a commitment to God's vision for your life. What else in life is there worth pursuing? There will be hard times when you will want to quit—but you can't! There is nothing in life that gives you the deep satisfaction you seek as when you are following God.

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4. *It requires hard work.* This is hard work that you don't mind doing because you are so on fire about doing God's work that nothing compares to the high you get from doing this job. While it requires hard work and extra time, you must also be sure to maintain balance in your life; otherwise, burnout is right around the corner.
5. *It is consistent with your surroundings.* Your vision is one that can utilize the elements around you to help fit together the pieces of the vision. Looking at your environment will help you analyze how to implement your vision. For example, you can locate people or organizations that can help you either clarify your vision or implement your vision.
6. *It is not comfortable.* The vision God has given you is bigger than you could imagine carrying it out by yourself. It makes you get out of your comfort zone in many areas. The vision is also not comfortable for others. Be prepared for resistance (look at the Apostle Paul's life). It is also controversial and it makes others get out of their comfort zone. When God gives you His vision, it is never one that will bring you a life of leisure and ease. However, remember that God does promise to be with you in every step you take.
7. *It is not easily embraced by others.* God's visions many times appear foolish to others because they counter the mentality of society. Therefore, it requires you to retell the vision many times, in a variety of ways, until people grab hold of it and come alongside you to encourage you in carrying it out.
8. *It unfolds progressively.* This is a lesson some of us have a hard time learning. We want to know steps A to Z before we'll do step A. But God doesn't work

that way. He usually shows us one step at a time and when we carry out that step, then He shows us the next one. This requires us to place our faith and trust in obeying God. Sometimes we think we know the method to use, but God shows us a better way of doing things, which brings more glory to God (so we don't become prideful thinking we accomplished things because of our talents and skills).

9. *It is entrusted to an individual.* God gives each person their own vision. Now, it can take several Christians to several million Christians working together to accomplish God's overall vision. However, God's vision for you comes as a direct conversation between you and Him. No one else can tell you what God's vision is for you, nor how to fulfill it. Thus, you must stay in constant contact with God to maintain clarity.
10. *It is as much a journey as it is a destination.* God is interested in how you act and change every day and what you experience in the process of changing as you pursue His vision. In the Western world we focus on short-term goals, instant gratification and celebrating when we have reached our goal. But God's vision is a life-long journey, with shorter goals within that vision. Therefore, you must realize that every day is your vision.
11. *It outlives you.* God's overall vision for mankind is an ongoing work. Each Christian has his or her own part of the overall vision to carry out during their lifetime. Thus, our vision will outlive our lifetime. Therefore, instead of looking toward reaching the completion of our vision, we should focus on our daily obedience. God is more interested in our

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faithfulness than our fulfillment of the vision which is meant to be carried beyond our lifetime.

12. *It reflects God's objectives.* Man's objectives for success include wealth, prestige, innovations, records, posterity or human desires. God's objectives are for our holiness and obedience. (Jeremiah 9:23-24) God's objectives may conflict with our assumptions, preferences or prayers. But when we obey, then God blesses us beyond our wildest dreams and in ways we might never perceive.
13. *It frightens people.* Once people see your zeal for your vision and your commitment to it, people may brand you as being crazy. Look at people who gave their lives to totally serving God and carrying out God's vision in their life and see how others responded. In the Bible this happened to Moses, Paul and also Jesus. Be prepared that people won't respond to you like you want them to—even if it means that their life will become better!
14. *It motivates the masses.* Although I just told you that people will be frightened by your vision, others will catch on to the vision because what you are doing speaks to their inner yearning to also lead lives of significance. They can see in you what they want for themselves. You don't need extraordinary charisma, abilities or experiences to make this happen. With your heart of commitment, God can use you to do great and mighty things.
15. *It breaks your heart.* Do you have a soft spot in your heart to accomplish a particular thing? This is the area where God will give you His vision to carry out. He has placed that burden within you and He has also given you a specific vision on what you can do to make a difference in that area. Hav-

ing this strong desire, along with knowing God is going to help you accomplish something that is contrary to the world's ways, breaks your heart and you don't want to do anything except carry out this vision.

16. *It redefines your personal ambition.* Once your heart is broken and realize God has given you a BIG vision to carry out, your personal objectives no longer appeal to you. Your only aim is to obey God at whatever cost to carry out His will for your life.
17. *It instills humility.* Who are we that God will use us to carry out His plans? We don't feel worthy nor capable of handling the task before us. Yet, God awarded to us His specific vision. He uses people the world would never think about using to accomplish big goals.
18. *It drives us to God.* With a broken heart, our personal desires laid aside and our humble attitude, we are driven to stay close to God. We must constantly take time to be in God's presence and hear from Him. When God's instructions are combined with our obedience, nothing is impossible with God! Nothing!

I know the above lessons can't be learned overnight. However, knowing what to expect will take away the surprise and sting they could otherwise inflict. For more insight on the above, read George Barna's book, *Turning Vision Into Action* from which these items were taken.

Keep Your Dream Fueled

How will you keep your dream fueled? You can't emotionally stay on a mountaintop experience forever. When you entail some of the confrontations outlined above, or your own flesh wants to rebel, what will you do to keep yourself

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committed to your dream and staying on the right path?

Stay in touch with God. Once God gives us His vision, we are so on fire that we run off and start doing things through our own efforts. Because we receive such an immense blessing from this, we tend to continue working when we should be resting. We must maintain balance in our life to avoid burnout. When we receive opposition to our dreams, we must lean upon God Who gave us His vision. He will sustain us and give us specific guidance on how to handle the conflicts arising in our life.

Keep your thoughts right. Our thoughts are borne from our beliefs. We must stand on our belief that it was God who gave us this vision to carry out and that He will sustain us through times of trial. Once we stay committed to our vision, we must do something to propel us forward. Remember, we can't go on the outside where we haven't gone on the inside. Therefore, we must spend time thinking about the vision, determining how to accomplish it, what the end results will look like, and what our emotions will be at each phase of the project. The more time spent meditating upon your dream and adding emotions to your thinking, the more you will be motivated to stay on track. Sometimes it helps to write your thoughts on paper to quickly grab and meditate over them when things get rough. I encourage you to review your dream at least every morning and evening.

Be accountable. Find someone whom you can share your dream with and with whom you can meet on a weekly basis. You will probably have to ask someone to be your accountability partner. I have found that when I ask someone to be my accountability partner, they feel honored to do this. Choose a person whom you trust and know that they have your best interest in their heart. Give your partner permission to ask you the hard questions

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and you must be honest when you share your triumphs and struggles.

Cultivate faithfulness through obedience. This is a daily journey and we must recognize that God only requires that we take the step before us. If we are not obedient, then we get stalled in our progress of carrying out our dream. If we're not going forward, we're going backward. We cannot stay in neutral! If we have faith that God is working in us and in others to help fulfill His vision, then we exercise that faith by our actions.

Stay focused. Satan loves to get us sidetracked and we so easily accommodate him! Have you had times where you seemed to get a lot done in a short period of time, even though you had that same opportunity day after day? You got a lot done because you were intensely focused. You didn't let anything interrupt what you were doing until you got that job done. The same holds true for staying on track with your dream. You must purposely determine to stay focused. You may need to inform others around you not to interrupt you for a period of time because you want to get a particular thing done.

Work or Volunteer?

What do you do if God's vision for you has nothing to do with your current work situation? The ideal situation is to be able to work at doing what you are passionate about. Since this may not happen immediately, finding a place to volunteer when you can use your passion is a starting place.

Through volunteering you gain the experience and God's guidance on putting together the pieces of the puzzle that comprise your dream. It allows you to determine what skills you need to develop or what education you need. It allows you the time to improve yourself so that when God opens the door for you to get paid doing this full

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time, you are ready.

One thing that helped me a lot while struggling not to fall prey to my addiction was to volunteer during the time I found myself most vulnerable. For me that was Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. Since I volunteered at Christian-based crisis hotlines, I could choose almost any five-hour shift I wanted. What is your most vulnerable time?

You'll be amazed at how many volunteer opportunities exist in your community. Look in your Yellow Pages, or ask at your church, or call the United Way or other volunteer organization in your county and find a place where you can volunteer once a week. Any lesser amount of time will not keep you focused and involved. Even if you don't think you have the skills or education, call and find out in what capacity you can volunteer. Just being around others in the field that interests you will motivate you to change and begin to trust God as He unfolds His plan for you.

If you don't know what your passion is or how God wants to use you, don't wait until you have all the answers. Volunteering gives you the opportunity to try many different avenues to help you determine what you really are passionate about. When you find that area, then ask God to reveal His vision for you.

Don't ignore what you're learning on your day job. Many principles you need to learn can be learned while working on your job. While God's vision will eventually become your occupation, your current job is your pre-occupation until God opens the doors when He decides you're ready!

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters inte-

grate into this principle about inspired living?

Radical Breakthroughs—Focusing on turning your passion into a life-long vision given to you by God is a concept not taught in any recovery group. Support groups tell you what not to do, but don't tell you what you should change your focus toward. When you grab hold of God's vision for you, it is a big enough project to get your eyes off of "me, myself and I" and toward loving and serving others. Constant work on your vision will provide the momentum to pull you out of your cycle of addictions and keep you permanently free!

Relationships—Your God-given vision will focus on loving and serving others. Through this project you have the opportunity to develop healthy relationships. Because your dream is focused on loving and serving others, this is also what healthy relationships are based on. Therefore, through this avenue you have a greater chance of naturally developing good relationships than if you went out and tired to locate people and forced yourself upon them.

Attitudes—How you think and perceive God accomplishing His mission through you will change your attitude and give you the motivation to stay focused on obeying God. The exercise of meditating upon your dream and adding emotions to it will keep you in a positive attitude. You have a "can do" attitude because you know God is involved in your life and your dream. Nothing is impossible with God!

Disciplines—With this new vision before you, you now need to determine what disciplines are required to help you change into the person who can fulfill the mission. The best discipline will be to learn all you can about who God is and how much He loves you and desires to be with you every day. You will learn that apart from Him you can do nothing on your own. As God unveils to you different

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aspects of the vision, He will also show you what further changes you need. God won't overwhelm you with showing you at one time the multitude of changes needed. He will enlighten you step by step as you stay close to Him and follow His guidance. Through your obedience God will bring into your life people who can help you reach your dream.

Take a moment to review chapter 4 and determine which disciplines you need to begin right now that relate to your inspired living. Keep this list handy for you to re-view every morning.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

The purpose of sowing the seed (God's Word) is to have that seed grow to its fullest, ready for harvest, and then shared with others. God's seed will produce after its own kind—it will produce Christ-like character in you with the purpose of carrying out God's will (vision) in your life.

How well that seed grows depends upon the condition of the soil of your heart, which is discussed in the next chapter. The seed consists of all the things taught in Scripture. It doesn't relate only to our initial step of salvation. There is a process called "sanctification" which is the carrying out of our salvation in our life. It's our growing into maturity in our spiritual life. Maturity is described as becoming like Jesus Christ. Since we will not become perfect until we die and go to heaven, this process is never realized during our lifetime, but we can progress as much as possible.

This is why God is more interested in our daily journey, rather than our accomplishment of our vision. As different seeds (biblical principles) are planted, we change, allow time for that seed to come to full maturity, then others reap the benefits of that growth. The ultimate benefits of the seeds are to help others. Yes, we also reap benefits

and change, but our focus must be outward, not inward, while we allow God's truths to change us. We will discuss this further in the chapter on Abundant Fruit That Benefits Everyone.

Application Questions

1. What dream(s) did you put on the shelf a long time ago?
2. After reading the six criteria to help you identify your passion, what are you passionate about? (It can be more than one thing.)
3. Write in one or two sentences what your passion is. (You can have one passion, but numerous ways of carrying it out.) Keep re-writing your passion until you have it down to one or two sentences.
4. Have you identified what spiritual gifts God has given you?
5. How do your spiritual gifts and your life experiences fit in with your passion?
6. Has God given you a specific vision on how you are to take your passion and put it into a project whereby you utilize it to love and serve others?
7. God's vision is always big. Are you limiting your thinking when you identify the vision? If money and circumstances were not a problem, describe your bigger vision.
8. Do you need to revise your dream to include God's input, and also include others in your dream (especially a spouse)?
9. Take time to visualize in your mind how you think your dream can play out. Now write it down on paper being sure to include the people it will involve, all the short-term and long-term goals, and attach emotions

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to it.

10. Take the vision you wrote about in the above question and now apply the 18 characteristics of a vision. List each characteristic and how you see your vision in light of that characteristic. Write this all down.
11. The vision you now have written is in a form that will be revised as time goes on. But for right now you can use it to motivate you to go in the right direction and to stay on track. Every morning when you first wake up read this vision paper; and every evening before you go to bed read this vision paper.
12. Take that vision paper and determine what parts of it you can work on this week. Write out something you can do for each day of the upcoming week. Also review this paper, and adjust it if necessary, every day.
13. Review the five ways to keep your dream fueled. How can you use these ways to keep yourself motivated to follow the vision God has given you?
14. Is your vision one that you can make a living at it?
(1) If not, find a place where you can volunteer and fulfill your vision through that means; (2) If you can eventually make a living doing your vision, then have that as one of your goals. But in the meantime, find a place to volunteer using the passion of your vision.
15. What attitudes and disciplines do you need to implement to help you obtain your vision?



CLEAN HEART THAT ALLOWS GOD TO WORK IN YOU

In the parable of the sower, our heart represents the soil in which the seed (God's Word) is planted. To allow the seed to get properly rooted, nourished, grow and produce fruit requires that we purify the soil of our heart.

What makes up our heart? It is our inner self that thinks, feels, and decides. It experiences all our emotions. The thinking processes are carried out by our heart. Through our heart we make decisions. It also contains our purpose, intention and our "will." Often it refers to our true character or personality.

It is filled with beliefs that are contrary to God's Word. Our lifetime of hurts, resentments and fears are contained in it. Our defense mechanisms against being hurt are stored there. But also buried deep inside our heart are our dreams for a better life.

Whatever is opposite of God's truths must be gotten rid of. We must learn to discern between the world's ways and God's ways of living. We will not be successful at change if we try to add God's ways to our current thoughts and behavior. God's ways must replace the world's methods. In

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order to allow God's truths to take root, we must make room for them.

Think of a farmer who has to clear his land before he can plow the field. You can imagine the different things he has to remove. The following table shows the parallel between what the farmer has to remove and the spiritual application:

<u>Farmer</u>	<u>Spiritual Application</u>
Trees	False beliefs
Boulders	Self-centeredness; Unforgiveness Attachment to the world's cares; What others think about us.
Rocks	Sinful habits
Grass	Worldview of living we embrace
Thorns	Little things in life that continually bug us

Sometimes the farmer must treat the damaged soil to get it healthy to receive the seed. Our damaged heart needs to be treated with God's love to make the soil rich to receive the other seeds God wants to plant in it.

In this chapter we take a closer look at some of these items and how they affect your ability to change your beliefs and ultimately get out of your addictions.

Changing Our Beliefs

The first area where we need to be willing to change is in our beliefs. If we're not open to allowing God to show us a better way to handle our problems, then we'll stay stuck in our addictions. If you are dead set against believing that God can help you, then at least ask God to change your will so that you're willing to be open to God's input. This first step of recognizing the lies you are believing and replacing them with God's truths is essential for everything else to happen.

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What are some of the big lies you need to recognize?

- That addictions are a disease and you'll never be set free; you can only learn how to manage them.
- You will just relapse into your addictions like you have so many times in your life.
- You are in such a deep pit that nobody can help you get your life straightened out.
- That it takes many years to overcome your addictions.
- You will never be able to develop the loving relationships you desire.
- You will never find love, peace, joy and purpose in life.
- You will never amount to anything.
- You have done too many bad things; God will never forgive you or help you.
- With your past, no one will ever hire you or want to have a relationship with you.
- You don't have anything to offer another person in a relationship.
- You have to clean up your act first before you can reach out and love others.
- You are who you are, you cannot change.

Once you discover God's truths to counter these lies, it is a daily decision to choose who you will believe—God or the world. In order for God's seeds of truth to take root in your heart, you must discard the lies you currently believe. The more you study the Bible and pray, allowing the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the meaning of Scripture, the more you will be able to discern between God's truths and the lies you've been taught.

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We must discipline ourselves to maintain our new priority of learning more about God. We tend to go through periods where we learn so much new truth that we can't read the Bible fast enough. But sometimes this period is followed by times of getting sidetracked or think we know enough to keep us out of trouble that we can slack off on reading the Bible for a while. Remember, if we're not moving forward, we're moving backward. We cannot allow ourselves time of slack because it gives Satan an opportunity to come right back into our lives and mess us up again!

Die to Self-Centeredness

One reason we slack off after going through a period of change is because we become self-centered again. We think we've done enough changing for a while, so we just take a break and cool it. We tell ourselves that we'll get back to studying and talking to God in a little while. But Satan gets his foot into our lives and keeps us so busy (or lazy) that we don't get back into the habit of reading and studying the Bible. Once again, we fell for Satan's lie.

Satan knows that if he can get us to focus on ourselves, put our desires above others, or get us to take a peek at one of our destructive habits, he has a hold on us for quite some time. Many times we are oblivious to his tactics until we reach bottom again. The longer we allow Satan free reign in our lives, the more cluttered our heart becomes and God's Word is made useless.

To keep alert to Satan's tactics requires perseverance on our part. Our relationship with Jesus Christ is 24/7. It's not just on Sundays. It's a whole new lifestyle. It's a personal relationship with Christ, not some laws that we must obey in order to earn God's favor.

Dieing to self-centeredness is hard when you're doing everything you can to get out of your addictions. We think that by working directly on not submitting to our addic-

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tions, we will conquer them. But God tells us that by dying to our self we will receive the life we seek.

We die to ourself when we focus on loving and serving others. When you focus on carrying through your God-given vision, you're focusing on loving and serving others. Although you feel like you benefit more than the people receiving from you, your motivation must remain to love and serve others, not to do it because it helps you.

As our relationship with Christ deepens, our motivation changes from being self-centered to wanting to obey Christ no matter what the consequences will be. Through our obedience God's truths take root in our heart.

Another way our self-centeredness pops up is when we become attached to the cares and things of the world and also our concern about what others think about us. We buy into the lie that the more possessions we have, the happier we will be. Or if we can gain enough education, wealth and happiness are right around the corner. If we're insecure we may do whatever it takes to make others like us. But none of these things will fill the void in your heart that God created for Himself to fill. Our relationship with God is the only thing that satisfies us.

When we focus on deepening our relationship with God, we begin to mature spiritually and we start to see things from God's perspective. We see people through the heart of God. People we used to hate, we now love. People we thought were losers, we now see as people with great potential. We even see ourselves in this new light. Where we once saw our chances of change as hopeless, we now see we can live the victorious life by living it in Christ.

Forgiveness

To turn our focus from the past, or from today's problems, to the future requires us to let go of some of the ugly stuff

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we've been hanging on to for many years. Without forgiveness, we will always have a string tied to our past, holding us back from reaching the fulfilled, purpose-driven life.

"I will never forgive him until he pays for what he did to me!" These words spew out of our mouths and turn our stomachs into knots. We carry a grudge (known as bitterness), sometimes for years, and wonder why we can't enjoy life. Our tendency is to rehash the wrong that was done to us, not for the purpose of designing retaliation, but because it feels good to do so. While the person who hurt us carries on with his or her life unaware of our grudge, we let our bitterness smolder like ashes, and at times fan them into a full-blown blaze. This festering wound in our spirit can only be healed by our forgiving that person.

We also use what another person has done to us as an excuse for our current behavior. I am not denying the pain and hurt we endured, but we are responsible for our behavior, despite how others act. When bad things were done to us as children, we did not know how to properly react. Now, as adults, we are responsible for our current behavior. Sometimes that involves forgiveness and restoration.

Definition of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the act of setting someone free from an obligation to us that is a result of a wrong done to us. It also entails a commitment not to bring up again the wrong that was committed. This is clearly seen in God's forgiveness of us. We commit a sin, the penalty for sin is death, but because Jesus Christ died on our behalf (his death paid the price for our sins), the penalty is cancelled, God forgives us (and also forgets our actions) and we are reconciled to God.

To fully understand forgiveness, it helps to know what it is not. It does not mean that what the person did was okay. It does not mean that with time the memory will go away (the pain will, but not the memory). It does not mean there won't be any consequences for the sin.

Forgiveness is also not based upon our feelings. Since God commands us to forgive those who have hurt us and to ask for forgiveness from those whom we have hurt, we must obey this command, no matter what our feelings may indicate. I hear many people say, "I'm not ready to forgive that person." They're waiting for their feelings to tell them that it's okay. Those feelings will never come. Even in the midst of the tremendous hurt we are going through, God still asks us to forgive the person who hurt us.

Our hurt will be healed by our relationship with God, not by our withholding forgiveness.

When we sin against God, how soon does God forgive us when we ask Him? Immediately. This is exactly how God wants us to treat those who have hurt us.

When we hurt someone, saying "I'm sorry" is not the same as asking for forgiveness and receiving forgiveness. Saying these words does not carry with it the obligation to never bring up the hurtful event again. There must be an asking for forgiveness, followed by a "yes" from the person we have hurt.

Let's look at the various types of forgiveness and the process:

God Forgives Us

Since all have sinned and are falling short of the honor {and} glory which God bestows {and} receives. [All] are justified {and} made upright {and} in right standing with God, freely {and}

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gratuitously by His grace (His unmerited favor and mercy), through the redemption which is [provided] in Christ Jesus, Whom God put forward [before the eyes of all] as a mercy seat {and} propitiation by His blood [the cleansing and life-giving sacrifice of atonement and reconciliation, to be received] through faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over {and} ignored former sins without punishment (Romans 3:23-25).

The most important restoration of a relationship is the one between us and God. While nothing will separate us from God's love, our sin does disrupt our communication with God. When we ask God to forgive us, He is faithful and will always forgive us. He does it immediately. He then wants us to move on with our life, and not get stuck thinking about our failures.

Forgiving Others

For if you forgive people their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins, leaving them, letting them go, and giving up resentment], your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins, leaving them, letting them go, and giving up resentment], neither will your Father forgive you your trespasses. (Matthew 6:14-15)

God asks us to forgive each other, just as God forgives us for our wrongdoings. In fact, God says if we won't forgive others, He won't forgive us for our sins. That's pretty strong! This is a characteristic of God we find difficult to manifest in our lives. We want to hang on to the memories and let our feelings fester to their fullest fit of turmoil. We

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want the other person to pay for their mistake. However, reality shows that we are the ones who suffer, while the other person hasn't a clue of how hurt we are over the situation. Yes, God knows our hurt and wants to help heal us. Part of this healing process is learning to forgive others.

Forgiveness is a choice. It's a decision we make based upon being obedient to God, not based upon our feelings. If we wait until we feel like forgiving people, we will never forgive. How soon after an event are we to forgive? Immediately. How soon can we ask God for forgiveness of our wrongs? Immediately. Once God forgives us, He forgets. However, we don't forget when others hurt us, but we can learn to allow the pain to lessen over time.

Forgiveness is a process. Once we make the initial decision to forgive someone, we must decide whether we need to verbally tell that person we forgive them, or whether our internal decision is sufficient. This decision will be determined by the individuals involved and the circumstances. Our dealing with our hurts should not bring additional hurt to others.

After our act of forgiveness, when the memories surface, we must immediately remind ourselves we have forgiven that person. We are to stop our thought process from rehashing the event and stirring our emotions into a frenzy. This thought process is where most people enjoy replaying the event in their mind and allowing themselves to feel justified for their reactions (both mentally and physically) to the hurt. Some don't want to let go of the memory and the hurt. They want to hold it as an ace for when that person hurts them again, then they can recall *all* instances of hurt to attack the person. (Sound familiar spouses?)

Christians can pray to God for strength to do the right

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thing—to stop the negative thought process and turn our thoughts onto something else. God tells us to think upon things which are pure, lovely, admirable, things that are excellent and worthy of praise. (Philippians 4:8-9) We are also to pray for those who hurt us. (Mark 5:44) This process is not easy nor is it a one-time event. Sometimes it takes years for the pain from the memories to completely go away. Note: I didn't say the memories will go away. Hopefully, the memories stir us to become better people because of what happened to us and the lessons we learned from them.

What we turn our thoughts toward is very important. Instead of dwelling upon other problems we may have, our goal is to direct our energy toward our future. Involvement in a project big enough to immerse ourselves in is what we're looking for. If after reading the previous chapter on Inspired Living you can't come up with such a project, ask God and He will give you many options!

Seeking Forgiveness

So if when you are offering your gift at the altar you there remember that your brother has any [grievance] against you, Leave your gift at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come back {and} present your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way traveling with him, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. (Matthew 5:23-25)

When we are aware that we have sinned against someone, God expects us to go to that person and ask for forgiveness. For Christians, this forgiveness also carries with it the element of repentance, which is an intent to turn away from the sinful behavior or attitude and to do what

is right in God's eyes. Without this repentance, God does not require the other person to forgive us. *"Pay attention {and} always be on your guard [looking out for one another]. If your brother sins (misses the mark), solemnly tell him so {and} reprove him, and if he repents (feels sorry for having sinned), forgive him" (Luke 17:3).* The withholding of forgiveness by the other person is to motivate us to add the element of repentance and thereby do what is pleasing to God.

This perspective differs from the above section on forgiving others. In that scenario, a person has hurt us and has not asked us for forgiveness. Here is a scenario under this section that many may not recognize: as a child, our parents did something that caused us great pain, and over the years we developed bitterness toward our parents. This bitterness now affects our relationship with our parents. As an adult, we are to forgive the sins done to us as a child. Also as an adult, we need to ask our parents for forgiveness for the bitterness we have or had toward them.

Forgiving Ourselves

I don't find anything in the Bible about forgiving ourselves. I believe the self-centered focus of today's society has developed the phrase "we need to forgive ourselves." What I see a lot of today is not receiving God's forgiveness and staying stuck in the realm of feeding upon our guilt and also the sympathy we get from others.

If we could forgive ourselves, there would be no need for God to forgive us. In reality, we need to admit to God we sinned and acknowledge that, because of our depraved hearts, we are capable of sinning again. Once we have asked God (and perhaps the other person) to forgive us, we need to accept and receive God's forgiveness of us, and refuse to allow memories of the event to take control of us. We can access God's power to help us when we are again

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tempted so we can avoid sinning.

Two examples from Scriptures indicate a proper response to personal sin. When David sinned with Bathsheba (2 Samuel 11:2-25), once he was confronted about his sin and repented before God, he went on with his life. There was no rehashing of his sins or telling everyone what he did and how bad he felt in an effort to punish himself or get sympathy from others. No, God's forgiveness of him was sufficient grace to allow David to continue striving to live better than before. However, he did suffer the consequences of his sins. (2 Samuel 12:13-14) Have any of us done the horrible sins of David? God's grace is sufficient for us, no matter what our sins may be. God is more interested in having us reconciled to Him and strive to live in a godly manner, rather than hang on to our past.

Another example is the Apostle Paul. He indicated he was the "chief of sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). His repetition of this fact was to illustrate the sufficiency of God's grace toward us when we ask God to forgive us and we repent of our actions. Paul accepted God's forgiveness and grace as sufficient to enable him to continue striving to live in a godly manner. His focus was to strive to reach God's best for him, rather than dwell upon his past.

Restoring Relationships

If possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (Romans 12:18)

God asks us to work hard at living in peace with others as much as we can from our standpoint. (See also Psalm 34:14.) We are to take the initiative to restore broken relationships. It's up to the other person whether he or she will accept our attempt at reconciliation. A lot of time should not elapse between the time of the hurtful event, our forgiveness, and our attempts at reconciliation. The more time allowed to elapse, the harder hearts be-

come—both ours and the other person's.

Restoration is also to be done with a proper motivation and attitude. God asks us to lay aside our selfish desires and to love others with God's love. Thus, our motivation is to put others ahead of our own desires. Because of our right motivation and our outpouring of God's love, miracles do happen.

Hindrances to Forgiving

If you feel like something inside you is stopping you from seeking forgiveness, review the following hindrances and see if any of them apply to you.

Pride. Forgiving others may make us appear to be weak. We also enjoy the attention and sympathy we receive from others who know we've been wronged.

Control. We want to make sure the person is punished, just in case God forgets. We won't release the person into God's hands.

Ignorance. We've not been taught how to respond to hurts and painful situations. Non-Christians find it difficult to forgive because they haven't experienced God's forgiveness of their own sins. They also don't have the Holy Spirit and His power to carry through in forgiving others.

The Keys to Forgiving

One of the keys to a forgiving spirit is to see God's ability to use the events that happen to us for an outcome that will glorify God. God can turn what was meant for bad into something good. (Genesis 50:20)

A second key is we have to want to change. We must want to rid ourselves of the guilt, allow God's peace to fill us and then follow God. Only prayer will change our hearts to allow these things to happen.

Results of Forgiveness

When we think of forgiving others we usually don't think of the benefits and how our life will be changed for the better.

Freedom from bondage. We have instant freedom from our internal turmoil. God gives us His peace.

Pain from memories begins to fade. As we let go of our grip on the past, the pain from our memories begins to fade. As the pain lessens, we spend less time dwelling upon our past.

We see the forgiven person in a different light. We cannot pray for other people and not change how we feel towards them. With the recognition of our own weaknesses and how God forgives us for our mistakes, we see how frail others are and can offer them forgiveness too.

Possible reconciliation. Relationships now have the freedom to grow and develop into godly relationships.

As you can see from the above, forgiveness is something we must do to get rid of the bitterness, resentment and anger. This is something we must do daily, even for the small things that people do that affects us. We cannot allow Satan an open door to come in and keep us in bondage again.

Get Rid of Labels

"Hello, my name is Joe and I'm an alcoholic" is a phrase known to many who attend various types of support groups modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous. Despite the fact that Joe has not had any alcohol for five years, he still calls himself an alcoholic and attends a weekly support group. But is he? He tells himself, "Once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic, I'll never change." Even though Joe is a Christian who has Christ's power inside of him to change, he keeps himself chained to his past, afraid to let

go and grab hold of his future.

Labels are prolific today. Some are so inclusive that no matter what behavior problem we may have, we can find a label for it. Even normal behavior can qualify to fall under one of these labels. A few of the widely used labels include:

alcoholic	abused person
addict	adult child
codependent	mentally ill
enabler	victim
low self esteem	disease

We like labels because we're looking for something that tells us why we act certain ways. We think they give us reasons for our behavior and provide boundaries for us to conform to. However, labels add more problems, rather than assist us in overcoming them.

Labels are descriptive, not diagnostic. Their definitions are general and can be applied to even good behavior. As we review the use of labels, let's keep in mind who determines their definition and who decides what is good or bad behavior.

To gain a proper perspective of the impact of labels, we will discuss:

Five common problems with labels

A look behind the labels

God's response to labels

Five Common Problems

Following are some common problems with labels, few of which are explicitly talked about.

Used As An Excuse. If we examine the words we say, we may find we're using labels as an excuse for our behavior. Problems misidentified as diseases allow a person to think he's not responsible for his behavior. Yet, the alleged cure for the disease is behavior modification, not medical inter-

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vention. While a big debate exists about labeling certain behavior as diseases, I encourage you to review your circumstances in light of the material presented in this book.

I do not deny that some physical conditions affect how a person acts and reacts. (However, if your doctor says you're suffering from alcoholism, depression, addictions, eating disorders and these are diseases, this is what should not be accepted as being truth.) If a thorough medical checkup does not reveal any true medical condition, I challenge you to look at your life from a different perspective.

Victimization Role. The label of victim entraps a person into seeing her whole world through this narrow viewpoint. This particular label is rarely spoken of by the victim. Rather, it is a role she plays in life. The victim cannot see her position of responsibility in the situation. She portrays the image of being helpless, a victim of her circumstances and upbringing. She is in a reactive role to life, rather than comprehending she can learn to respond differently to her situations.

Forever Trapped. An underlying feeling of "I am what I am, I cannot change" accompanies many of the labels. The more we repeat this self-talk, the deeper this feeling is embedded. The adage of "once an alcoholic always an alcoholic" is not applicable to Christians. God can transform our lives into new ones. By accessing God's power and learning to live according to biblical principles, our old habits can be put aside and never touched again.

Labels stick to us even after we've outgrown them. We continue to claim them by repeating the words out of habit. People view us in light of the labels we proclaim. Such a stigma is difficult, but not impossible, to get rid of.

Endless Therapy. If counseling focuses only on specific problems and not on helping us get our entire lifestyle in

line with God's plans, it can take years for change. Labels force us to look only at specific issues. However, the wrong motivation which caused the initial problem, and then the subsequent sinful responses, need to be identified in all areas of our lives and dealt with. If not, the problem continues in other areas, thus keeping us in the proverbial counseling cycle. This endless trap is easy to get sucked into because "everyone else" follows this procedure.

A common misunderstanding exists that it takes a long time to overcome problems. For Christians, this is not true. In situations where our problems are a result of our sin, once these sins are identified, biblical solutions found and applied, change can be quick and permanent. With God's guidance and His power to transform us, we can overcome any obstacle.

Another area which keeps us stuck in our problems and prolongs our transformation process is a lack of change of focus from being self-centered to being God-centered and others-centered. This change of focus should begin immediately, even while problems are being worked on. We spend a lot of time and emotional energy on our problems. If we don't have something else to turn our focus toward, we tend to dig up minor problems and turn them into major ones. If all of our problems were resolved, what are we to think about? The past, present or future? God wants us focusing on today and the future and being involved in a God-centered plan, utilizing our passion in life.

Normal Behavior Characterized as a Disease. In January 1996 an article in the Los Angeles Times entitled "Death of a Label" stated that the label of "codependency" was finally dead. Somehow, society hasn't heard this good news, especially Christians. The church is keeping this label alive and well, to the detriment of building godly

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character in Christians. Society has a tendency to label kind, caring givers as diseased. Codependent characteristics are typically feminine traits and, today, have nothing to do with alcoholism.

Codependency, along with a proliferation of other labels, has gained access to the classification of disease by the medical and psychology industries. However, God classifies the behavior as either normal or sin, depending upon the motivation behind it. As we read the Bible we can discern what God calls normal behavior and that which is sin.

A Look Behind The Labels

Let's look at the world's definitions of a couple of these labels and then what the truth is.

Addictions—A person feels he has no control over the use of certain items, be it drugs, alcohol, food, gambling, sex, work, exercise, use of the Internet, etc. It is now classified as a disease and people are told "it's not your fault."

Reality: A person makes these choices for various reasons. First, God says man's heart is self-centered and does things to please himself. Here are some of the reasons people stay stuck in addictions:

- Life is boring
- Avoiding working on problems (avoiding the painful feelings associated with it)
- They're afraid that working on their problems will be too painful
- The addiction feels good
- They don't know what to do with their free time
- Peer pressure
- It's a way of handling stress

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- They've given up any hope for change

God asks us to deny ourselves and to follow God's way of living. We need something bigger than "me, myself, and I" to draw us out of our rut—such as working on our God-given vision for our life.

Codependent—A person gets his or her self worth, security and happiness only from other people. They sacrifice themselves to please others, even if it means doing something wrong (sinning). Being codependent is bad—one must become self-sufficient.

Reality: God created us to depend upon each other and also upon God. Woman was created to be loving, caring, compassionate, giving, committed, a helpmate for man, emotional, concerned, a mother, etc. However, God does not ask us to break a law (sin) in order to please someone else. Through our relationship with God we understand our valued position as a child of God. We are not to look to another man or woman to meet all of our needs, because only God can do that. A lack of knowing how to communicate and how to develop healthy relationships is present in people who call themselves codependent.

Adult child of an alcoholic—This term was originally applied to an adult who as a child had one or two alcoholic parents. It attempted to identify the dysfunctional behavior of said adult. However, the term has been shortened to "adult child," which now focuses upon the "child in each of us" who has not matured because of the hurt still inside of the adult which the child received during childhood. They promote that the path to freedom requires a person to go back and re-live the painful experiences of their childhood.

Reality: When good role models are absent, a child does not learn proper communication and relationship skills. Thus, as adults, they attempt to get their needs met in unhealthy ways. Many dynamics to the family structure

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have eroded during the last 20-30 years:

- Lack of communication
- No demonstration of love
- No touching
- No encouraging
- Lack of family time together (around the dinner table, evenings, weekends, vacations)
- Lack of commitment in marriages
- The invasion of alcohol, drugs and the Internet
- The self-centered approach of parents (passed on to their children)
- Unresolved problems (lack of forgiveness and restoration of relationships)
- Lack of personal responsibility

We do not need to re-live our past. God only asks us to forgive others, take responsibility for our action today, and walk toward maturity in Christ. If we change from attending a support group to attending a home Bible study, we will find good adult role models who will encourage us in our growth.

God's Response to Labels

In the process of transforming us, God asks us to lay aside certain things. This includes the chains that keep us tied to the past, some of which are the labels we use. An analogy of changing a label is the way God changed people's names. When God did this, He always gave the person a name which encompassed the person's potential. It never dwelt upon a person's history.

While we are sinners by nature, God doesn't want our attitude to be, "Because I'm a sinner, I can't" Instead, I believe five names characterize how we can view ourselves

in light of our new relationship with God.

Child of God. Once we accept Jesus Christ into our lives, we become children of God, with rights to inherit all that God has available for us. This includes access to the power of the Holy Spirit which now resides in us. This power can transform us, guide us, and empower us to carry out God's directives. We also have a future in heaven where we will spend eternity as a child of God. God's instruction book (the Bible) for His children is made alive to us by the Holy Spirit.

Redeemed Person. Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins by dying on the cross. Because of Him canceling the debt owed for our sins, we can now stand before God as if we had never sinned. This right standing before God allows us full access to the intimate relationship God originally intended to have with man. Nothing we do earns us this standing. No matter how bad our past is, we can confidently claim a new life in Jesus Christ.

Forgiven Person. When we ask God to forgive us, He always does. God's forgiveness goes to the heart of our issue—the guilt we feel from having violated God's laws. Immediately after we sin we can ask God to forgive us. This eliminates the opportunity for guilt to take its hold on us. However, sometimes we hang on to things and punish ourselves for what we have done. Just as we choose to lay aside the guilt once God forgives us, we can—and must—choose to lay aside the self-imposed punishment.

New Creature. With God in our lives, we are being transformed into new creations—the old life is being laid aside and the new life of following God's guidelines is being instituted. Old habits can be replaced with godly actions. As a new creation, we worship the Creator (God) rather than ourself.

Victorious. Christians always have the opportunity to be

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victorious in their lives. It is a choice we make. Victory comes as we obey God and become more Christlike, despite the obstacles Satan throws our way. Greater is God who is within us than Satan who is in this world.

What labels do you use to describe your situation or yourself? Listen to yourself during the day and become aware of the words you use. As indicated earlier, life and death are in our words. Our words contain power and we must be careful that we don't promote negative outcomes in our lives unconsciously.

Take Care of the Little Things

Many of us have heard, "Don't sweat the little things in life." Well, if we don't take care of the little things, they will continue to eat away at us and eventually take their toll. Little things can irritate us just like a constantly dripping faucet. We may think they are insignificant and wonder why should we bother dealing with them. Because if we don't, they will develop into a major problem.

Look at your relationships. How many of the big problems began as a little, insignificant irritation that grew larger in size the more you thought about it and the longer it continued. The same may be true about how you became addicted. You tried it once—just a little—but the more you thought about it and focused upon it, the more of it you had to have and the bigger the problem grew.

God explains this to us when He tells us how sin is conceived. In James 1:13-15 it says:

Let no one say when he is tempted, I am tempted from God; for God is incapable of being tempted by [what is] evil and He Himself tempts no one. But every person is tempted when he is drawn away, enticed {and} baited by his own evil desire (lust, passions). Then the evil desire,

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when it has conceived, gives birth to sin, and sin, when it is fully matured, brings forth death.

We are tempted when we are drawn away—drawn away from what? From our focus on our relationship with Christ. The whole temptation process starts in our thoughts. We think about something we shouldn't be thinking about. We get drawn away from focusing on God to focusing on something evil. We continue to fantasize about the situation. Our emotions get involved, which then leads to our actions. We commit the forbidden act (sin) and instead of it bringing us the fulfillment we fantasized about, it brings about spiritual death.

So how do we stop this process? We must stop it in its first stage—our being drawn away from our close relationship with God. The moment we recognize that what we are thinking about is not from God, we must stop our thought process. We must draw closer to God and ask Him to help us stand against the evil that is attempting to entice us. Let's look at a few examples.

In a relationship, if the other person does some little thing that irritates us, we have a tendency to focus on that event and the longer we dwell on it, the more we blow it out of proportion. For example, if a husband does something to aggravate his wife in the early evening, if the wife chooses to focus upon that event, by the time she goes to bed she will be quite upset, angry, emotional, and the husband won't have a clue as to why. The next morning she wakes up and starts rehashing the event from the night before and her day is already ruined! How long will this go on?

However, if the wife chooses to immediately forgive her husband and extend love to him, there is no building up of her frustration level. She recognizes that she also has her own faults and failures and would rather have someone

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treat her with love instead of revenge for her mistakes. The Bible tells us that *"love covers a multitude of sins."* Try loving someone next time they do something that makes you angry. By keeping our heart clean from the buildup of anger, bitterness and unnecessary emotional turmoil, we allow God to work through us— allowing His love to flow through us to others.

This example is minor, but think how the little things build up to big things when they are carried over from day to day, month to month, year to year. Look at your own life and write down what little things developed into big things. How long did it take before they became big issues and how long have you been carrying them around? Today is the day to stop the process. Forgive someone if necessary. Give the situation and/or the person over to God to handle—remember, we can't change anyone, only God can. Now, decide how to reach out in love to that person. Also make note of your internal response when you decide to love someone rather than react out of hurt.

Repair the Soil of Your Heart

The soil of your heart may be so deprived of nutrients that it's not capable of allowing anything of God to grow inside it. What nutrients do our hearts require? Love. Unconditional love. The kind that only God can give us. We've searched for love for so long and in so many different ways from the world, yet it never filled the empty vacuum in our heart. Only God's unconditional love was meant to fill that hole. Allow God to love you.

If you are a Christian, the Holy Spirit resides inside your heart. He is there ready to comfort you and encourage you. He is not there to condemn you, your conscience already does a good job of that. You have all of God inside you via the Holy Spirit. God is love. You have love inside you. Let it come alive in your soul by reading Scriptures

and praying. Allow yourself to *receive* a revelation of God's love. Put away your self-condemnation and accept God's forgiveness and restoration.

As the sweet-smelling fragrance of flowers in the spring always appears after a cold, dark winter, God can mend your broken heart and bring you out of your dark hole and reveal to you the brilliance of His love and His great plans for your life. With God nothing is impossible!

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters integrate into this principle about having a clean heart to allow God to work in you?

Radical Breakthroughs—We can't just add biblical principles to what we're already doing to try to change. Since God's ways are opposite of the world's ways, adding these principles only confuses us and adds more "shoulds" to our list. Instead, we must make room in our heart to receive God's truths and allow them the right soil in which to grow. In order to know what methods need to be disposed of, we need to know more of God's truths. Thus, the more we read the Bible and pray, the more God will reveal to us His way versus the world's way and what specifically in our life needs to be changed. Some of these changes are radical: (1) stop seeing your addiction as a disease and recognize it is a sin from which you can turn and replace it with something positive; (2) forgive those who hurt you and begin taking responsibility for your actions today; (3) stop using labels and identify the thoughts and behavior which need corrected; (4) pay attention to the little things and deal with them before they develop into big problems; and (5) look to God for the unconditional love you need, instead of placing that responsibility on others who are not capable of giving it to you.

Relationships—It's hard to develop healthy, loving rela-

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tionships if your heart is full of unforgiveness, self-centeredness, and false beliefs. You must clear out this clutter to allow God's love to fill your heart to overflowing, which then allows you to love others with God's love. Learning how to handle the little things in relationships as soon as they pop up frees you to continue to deepen your love.

Attitudes—What is in your heart affects your attitude. You can only put on a front for so long. You must deal with the issues in your heart in order for your attitude to be genuinely changed and to last. Yes, we do choose our attitude. But without dealing with the clutter in our heart, we soon tire of choosing an attitude that rubs against what is in our heart and we then choose to no longer fight that internal battle. However, when God begins to touch you with His love, joy and peace, your motivation will change to where you want to get rid of everything that clutters your heart. Then is when your Christ-like attitude will flow freely.

Disciplines—In order to change our beliefs we must know God's truths in order to recognize the lies we believe. This comes by reading and studying the Bible and through prayer. It is helpful to also listen to good preachers and teachers explain Scripture and how they apply to our lives.

Dying to self-centeredness takes hourly discipline! We want to be on the throne in ruling our life. And that's where the conflict comes—between us ruling our life or allowing God to rule. It takes discipline to die to our selfish desires and to obey God. Yet while we think this discipline will destroy what we want in life, it in fact brings us more satisfaction than what we thought we could accomplish by doing our own thing. God's ways are always best, but we won't know that for sure until we step out and

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obey. Therefore, every day we must purposely choose to obey God rather than follow our self-centered desires.

Forgiving others *immediately* definitely takes discipline! Taking steps to reach out to restore broken relationships takes discipline! Things just don't happen by themselves. Relationships must be continuously worked on to deepen them.

It takes discipline to tame our words. First, we must recognize the negative words we use when we talk about others, our situation or ourselves. Then we must believe what God says about others, our situation and ourselves, and begin to verbalize those statements, even if we don't believe them right away. Remember, God used words to create the world and humans. There is power in words. So what we speak—either negative or positive—has power to create whatever we verbalize.

Inspired Living—Your motivation to pursue God's vision in your life will increase your desire to get rid of the clutter in your heart. You will recognize that it is difficult to go full speed ahead when you've got excess baggage holding you down. Your passion to go after your dream will help you let go of your past, forgive others, stop believing the lies of the world, and accept God's truths and therefore step out in faith. With the clutter gone and God's love now overflowing in your heart, you're ready to do whatever is necessary to fulfill God's will for you.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

We can only do one thing at a time. We can only think one thought at a time. We can only believe one viewpoint at a time. The purpose of cleaning the soil of our heart is to make room for God's truths and the emotional energy we will need to step out in faith to act upon our new beliefs. It is the "doing" of what God tells us to do that gets the seed of His Word implanted into our heart.

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How many times have you read the Bible, believed what it said, prayed about your situation, but nothing happened? How many times have you repeated over and over positive statements about who you are in Christ, yet it didn't impact you? Yes, it developed faith in you that what you read was true. But without putting action to your faith, those truths do not become embedded in you and change your behavior.

After being a Christian for several years I had deep knowledge and understanding of God's Word. Yet, I was still stuck in my depression and drug addiction. I would pray and pray, wondering why God wasn't changing me. I would read the Bible, tell myself over and over who I was in Christ, yet I still had my problems. It wasn't until I put action to my faith that my life totally change. When I began to work on the vision God had given me, which was developing a Christian-based crisis hotline, then what I knew intellectually about the Word took root in my heart. Through this process of putting action to my faith, my inner image became confident because I knew who I was in Christ.

I could have continued for years of reading the Bible and praying and not get it rooted in my heart as deeply as what my works did. The Book of James talks about faith and works going hand-in-hand. You can't have one without the other.

When you free your thoughts from your bitterness, self-centeredness, focusing on your labels, and all the little things that bug you every day, it frees you to focus on your relationship with God and His plans for your life. You must get rid of the clutter and change your beliefs!

It is what's in our hearts that prohibits God's Word from being received. Part of the parable talks about how when we receive the Word but when trouble or persecution

arises we become offended and fall away from our relationship with God. This comes from our not believing and trusting in God, that He will sustain us during our time of trouble and get us through our difficult situation. We are still stuck in believing the lies of Satan.

We can clean out the clutter in our heart, but if we don't replace it with God's truths and following His plans, then Satan will come back into our heart, this time even worse than before. This is where most recovery methods fail. They tell us what not to do, but don't tell us what to do instead. This is where filling our lives with God's vision and passionately pursuing it will give us the motivation to keep on God's path.

The root of all our sins is unbelief. We seek after our own desires and what the world promotes because we don't believe that God will give us as much satisfaction or fulfillment. In our past we were satisfied from some of the things we did, even if they were wrong, and so we seek after them again, but the satisfaction eludes us. We read about how God wants to help us, but it doesn't manifest because we haven't "done" what God has asked us to do. Again, the seed of God's Word gets planted in our hearts through our "doing," not our hearing alone.

Application Questions

1. From what you have read so far, what lies have you been believing as being truth?
2. From spending time in the Bible, what new truths have you discovered about living God's ways and what worldly methods have you quit using?
3. Are you disciplining yourself to read the Bible and learn new truths? Are you flooding your mind with this new information? Remember, we transform our life by renewing our mind—learning God's truths and laying

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aside the world's ways.

4. Do you recognize when the Holy Spirit shows you things? Explain.
5. Do you recognize ways in which you are self-centered? Write them down. Now, how can you replace those thoughts, words or actions by focusing on loving and serving others? Give specific details.
6. Do you need to forgive someone? Who? For what? Can you forgive them this moment? Do you need to let them know that you forgive them?
7. Now that you have forgiven them, you also need to stop rehashing the memories of that hurt. What will you turn your thoughts toward (once you stop rehashing the past)? Sometimes it helps to write out a list of things you can think upon or physically do to get your mind off the negative stuff. Write that list now.
8. Do you need to ask someone to forgive you? Who? For what? How soon can you ask them? (If you can't do it in person, sometimes writing a letter helps.)
9. Can you *receive* God's forgiveness of you for the sins you have committed?
10. What efforts can you make to restore broken relationships? Be specific. How soon can you start?
11. What labels do you need to stop using? How many times have you verbalized that label in the last week?
12. What "little" things in your life do you need to take care of before they develop into big problems? It's your choice to make the right decision on how to act and react to people and circumstances.
13. Do you need to allow God to repair the soil of your heart? Spend some quiet time alone talking to God about this.

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ABUNDANT FRUIT THAT BENEFITS EVERYONE

What we do in private and in public does matter. Everything we do affects others—either positively or negatively. God wants us to sow good seed so we can produce good fruit. Our goal is to become like Christ in everything we do. Our thoughts and actions reveal what is in our heart. To change our heart we must sow good seed (God's Word) continuously.

It's important to understand that we reap what we sow. If we sow bad seed, we will reap bad fruit. If we sow good seed, we will reap good fruit. That is why we need to understand what works and what doesn't, what methods are from God and what are from man. The world's ways are opposite of God's ways and cannot produce godly fruit. It will never happen! Therefore, we must be able to distinguish what is good seed and what is not. The only way to discern the difference is to saturate ourselves with God's truths in order to identify the false ways of the world.

Bad seeds may appear to be good in that they may have a little bit of God's truth in them. This is how Satan works—by taking God's Word and twisting it or only taking part of the truth and adding to it his lies. What are

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some of these bad seeds:

- Psychology. Yes, there may be some of God's truths used, but since it is mixed with Satan's lies, it produces bad fruit.
- Always putting yourself first in your relationships. Believing that marriage is only a 50/50 relationship. These two seeds will ruin any relationship.
- Your problems are diseases and therefore you're not responsible for your behavior.
- You must resolve your own problems before you can reach out and love others.
- What the world defines as success is the only thing that will fulfill you.

So how are we to determine what is true and what isn't? Don't believe everything you're told until you check it out in the Bible. Each of us must read and study the Bible for our own understanding. By doing so we will see that a lot of what is being preached from the pulpit has been tainted by the ways of the world. We must become discerners of truth. Don't take what a preacher says as being true. Check it against the Scriptures.

Even the church has bought into the lie that a person with *deep* problems must be sent to a "professional" counselor for help. This is not true. The Bible was created as a guide to help us learn how to live and how to solve our problems. It is provided to us by the Person who created us. Who better would know what we need to know on how to live the abundant life? Be radical! Find out God's truth and live accordingly.

The Source of Developing Our Fruit

Before we became Christians, we only had ourselves to rely upon for strength and the world's wisdom to change.

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Now that the Holy Spirit resides in us, we have constant access to God. Since God will not override our choices, we must purposely choose to follow God's ways and utilize the power of the Holy Spirit inside us. Where we once had no power to change, we now have all of God's power and His wisdom we need to change. But we must stay connected to God to draw upon this power and wisdom.

In John 15:5 Jesus illustrates this connection. He states, *"I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives in Me and I in him bears much (abundant) fruit. However, apart from Me [cut off from vital union with Me] you can do nothing."* This is the key to bearing much fruit.

What does it mean to stay attached to the vine? Stay focused on God, be aware of when we lean upon our own reasoning, and recognize that whatever good happens in our lives comes from God, not ourselves. We draw from the vine all the energy, power, love, motivation, living water, and guidance that we need to help us grow to maturity and continuously produce good fruit.

Internal Fruit

What good fruit are we trying to produce? We are told in Galatians 5:22-23:

But the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness) peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraining, continence) Against such things there is no law [that can bring a charge].

Although the Holy Spirit resides within us, our soul and body have not come into total alignment with what the Holy Spirit offers us. Once we recognize the lies we believe

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and replace them with God's truths, we then work on bringing our body and soul into alignment with these new truths.

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is already present inside us. We need to bring them into existence through what we do. Remember, seeds get planted by our "doing," just like works bring what we are believing for in faith into reality. It isn't that those things don't exist; they exist in the spiritual world and we must bring them into reality in our world. Knowing that they already exist relieves us of worry over whether God will provide us with those qualities. He already has! Knowing this truth allows us to immediately act according to those qualities. When we do, they manifest themselves in our lives.

If you want love—then love others. If you want joy—then go ahead and choose to believe you have the joy and change your thoughts accordingly. Do you need patience in your life? Then realize that it is already there and you can access it this moment. Stop telling yourself you don't have patience, when the truth is you do have it, you just need to access it. You want kindness, it's there waiting for you to use it. Goodness is always available for those who take the time to use it. Faithfulness is also available; it's our choice and God will always give us the power to make the right choice to follow His guidance. Gentleness, meekness and humility are available, but we have to purposely choose to put on these attitudes. What about self-restraint and self-control? Yes, they are already inside us. We have to recognize that we can access God's power inside us at any moment to apply self-restraint and self-control. Again, the choice is ours.

What about peace? It is always available, but it requires that we align ourselves with God before we will receive it. We can go through troubles and turmoil and still

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keep our peace if we are in the will of God. But if we do things that are against God's will or struggle to do things by ourselves (apart from abiding in the vine), then we lose our peace. Therefore, not having peace should be a signal to us to review our life and see if we're doing something out of the will of God or if we're trying to make things happen on our own.

Another internal fruit is that of knowing our full authority and power in Christ. If we know that God has already healed us, we can speak and act accordingly. If we know that Satan can't do anything against us unless we give him that power, then we can draw close to God and successfully resist Satan. If we know the spiritual laws, then we can act upon them with confidence. These spiritual laws are discussed in chapter 9.

External Fruit

Some of our internal fruits flow out of us for the benefit of others. These include unconditional love, words of encouragement, our testimonies, sharing God's truths, giving (our time, finances, material goods, etc.), serving, our attitudes, kindness, forgiveness, self-control, and using our authority and faith in Christ to help manifest things in a person whose faith has not manifested to that level.

In order to adequately share these fruits with others, we must keep ourselves filled in these areas. That is why it is important we continually draw close to Jesus Christ and continually read the Bible and pray.

Seasons of Sowing and Reaping

Let's take a look at the different seasons needed to produce good fruit. These consist of plowing, planting seed, waiting and weeding, harvesting, and pruning. Since we continually plant new seeds (learn new truths from God's Word), these seasons overlap in different areas of our

lives. We should never stop planting new seeds. Remember, if we're not moving forward in life, we're heading backward. There is no neutral standstill.

Plowing

This is preparation time. It's clearing the soil of our heart to properly receive God's truths. We discussed these things in the last chapter. Even though initially we get a lot of junk out of our heart, we can always look for ways to rise to the next level of obedience. In order to do this we must look at what is keeping us from taking bigger risks to follow God's leading. Usually it's our thinking that limits us. Therefore, we must learn more of God's truths (plant seeds) to help us overcome the lies we tell ourselves.

Plowing usually turns up hidden sins or sins we don't want to deal with. There could be things in our past that we've been running from instead of dealing with them. It could also uncover attitudes we cover up and make excuses for. Plowing also unveils the excuses we've been using.

Plowing is uncomfortable! But it is a necessity. Hosea 10:12-13 says, *"Sow for yourselves according to righteousness (uprightness and right standing with God); reap according to mercy {and} loving-kindness. Break up your uncultivated ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, to inquire for {and} of Him, {and} to require His favor, till He comes and teaches you righteousness {and} rains His righteous gift of salvation upon you. You have plowed {and} plotted wickedness, you have reaped the [willful] injustice [of oppressors], you have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your [own] way {and} your chariots, in the multitude of your mighty men."*

To turn from trusting in our own ways to trust in God runs against our natural tendencies. Our feelings will not support us. But our feelings lie to us! We must believe what God says and plow in hope (1 Corinthians 9:10). In

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Galatians 6:9 we are told not to lose heart, "*And let us not lose heart {and} grow weary {and} faint in acting nobly {and} doing right, for in due time {and} at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen {and} relax our courage {and} faint.*"

We cannot lose heart if we understand we are not doing this alone. God is with us in everything we do, even when change is difficult. "*For we are fellow workmen (joint promoters, laborers together) with {and} for God; {you} are God's garden {and} vineyard {and} field under cultivation, [you are] God's building*" (1 Corinthians 3:9).

Sometimes when something gets plowed up, God asks us to go back to a situation we left. Perhaps when we forgive someone, God asks us to go back and reach out to that person to try to restore that relationship. If we left a situation because we came up with an excuse, God may ask us to go back and carry through on a commitment we made.

Seed Planting

The seeds are biblical principles and Scriptures. We must continuously sow seeds in order to continuously reap. Psalms 1:1-3 states:

Blessed (happy, fortunate, prosperous, and enviable) is the man who walks {and} lives not in the counsel of the ungodly [following their advice, their plans and purposes], nor stands [submissive and inactive] in the path where sinners walk, nor sits down [to relax and rest] where the scornful [and the mockers] gather. But his delight {and} desire are in the law of the Lord, and on His law (the precepts, the instructions, the teachings of God) he habitually meditates (ponders and studies) by day and by night. And he shall be like a tree firmly planted

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[and tended] by the streams of water, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season; its leaf also shall not fade {or} wither; and everything he does shall prosper [and come to maturity].

When we have God's Word in us, we become like these solid trees—firmly planted—which enables us to withstand any storm that comes our way, ready to bring forth its fruit in its season, and everything we do prospers. Isn't this what we want? To be able to live a solid life without falling apart every time a problem comes our way. Notice it says our delight and our desires are wrapped up in knowing God and doing His will. That is when we learn how to lead a solid, stable life.

Once we receive God's Word into our heart, it takes deep root through our actions. James 1:21-25 bears out this principle:

So get rid of all uncleanness and the rampant outgrowth of wickedness, and in a humble (gentle, modest) spirit receive {and} welcome the Word which implanted {and} rooted [in your hearts] contains the power to save your souls. But be doers of the Word [obey the message], and not merely listeners to it, betraying yourselves [into deception by reasoning contrary to the Truth]. For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it {and} being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror; for he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like. But he who looks carefully into the faultless law, the [law] of liberty, and is faithful to it {and} perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets but an active doer [who obeys], he

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shall be blessed in his doing (his life of obedience).

It's interesting that this Scriptures talks about our "reasoning" contrary to the truth. We do this so easily. We hear the truth, we know it's the truth, but we come up with reasons why it won't work in our life or some excuse why we can't do it. But God tells us we're deceiving ourselves. Once again, we're looking to our own abilities (or lack of abilities) and tell God what we are or are not capable of doing. But it's not our ability we are to look at. Remember, we have all of Christ's power inside us; therefore, we can do what God tells us to do. The choice is ours. How bad do you want to get out of your problems and into living the abundant life? Here are two Scriptures to encourage you:

In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides]. (Ephesians 6:11)

Now to Him Who, by (in consequence of) the [action of His] power that is at work within us, is able to [carry out His purpose and] do superabundantly, far over {and} above all that we [dare] ask or think [infinitely beyond our highest prayers, desires, thoughts, hopes, or dreams]—to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever. Amen (so be it). (Ephesians 3:20)

Waiting and Weeding

What does a farmer do between the time he plants his seeds and harvest?

- He waits
- He waters

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- He pulls weeds
- He may put a fence around the field to keep animals out
- He puts nutrients on the soil if necessary
- He tends to it every day because it is his livelihood
- He never gives up; he expects the seeds to produce good fruit

Let's correlate these elements to the spiritual seeds we plant.

Waiting

Waiting is not passive. While we wait we diligently work on the elements listed below. Our attitude while we wait is what's most important. We should wait expectantly, watching God work in us and through others to bring about His will in our lives.

Through our actions we increase the ability of the seed to take deep root in our heart.

We draw upon the fruit of the Holy Spirit residing in us to help us be patient and not take matters into our own hands. Because we have a tendency to get sidetracked into other projects when we don't see immediate fruit, we must stay focused upon doing what God sets before us.

How long must we wait? When we think of a farmer planting seeds and then waiting for the harvest, we think in terms of waiting months and months. But waiting for fruit from spiritual seeds depends upon what seeds are planted and how soon we can align our thoughts and actions in accordance with our new beliefs.

Salvation comes immediately upon belief and confession. But working out that salvation into our life with the ultimate goal of becoming like Christ takes a lifetime. Some of the truths we learn, once we act upon them, we

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get immediate fruit. Others take time for our mind, will and emotions to get in line with that truth. Others take time for us to change our circumstances before the truth manifests.

Let's look at a few examples. The Bible says that your addiction is a sin. You confess it and work on replacing it with your personal relationship with Christ, building healthy relationships with others, and working on determining God's vision for your life (utilizing your passion in life) and establishing goals to accomplish that vision. The time you used to spend thinking about getting your next fix is now directed towards these two goals.

But your body and your emotions scream out for another fix! You feel you can't say no to these demands. To get God's truth rooted in your heart, you act according to your new belief—you now believe (know beyond a shadow of a doubt) that you have the power through the Holy Spirit to say no to these temptations.

You can't just say no and expect the temptation to go away. You have to replace it with something. You physically get involved in (1) deepening your relationship with Christ by reading the Bible, listening to cassettes, etc.; (2) reaching out to develop new relationships (go attend church, call a new friend, etc.) or (3) working on your goals for your vision. Jesus says the more you lean upon him, the more you are empowered to do what is right. (Ephesians 6:10)

Therefore, by your actions you immediately provide fruit from that seed. However, as you know, this is not a one-time decision. It does take time to change habits and your way of thinking.

To manifest good fruit from developing healthy relationships takes longer. It takes time to build new relationships and trust people. This is when you must not give up. Re-

member, it took years to get yourself into your current situation, and it can't be completely changed overnight. You must learn new ways of communicating and acting in relationships.

Another example is the biblical principle of loving and serving others. While you can produce immediate fruit from this truth, it does take time to make this a permanent lifestyle. It takes time to learn new skills, get educated, find opportunities, and learn to trust God as you take new risks.

Watering

We water our seeds through reading the Word and prayer. We may act upon a new truth which we read in one part of Scripture, but by reading other Scriptures, this new truth gets confirmed in a variety of ways. Thus, our confidence in believing and acting on this truth builds.

Watering our soul with God's Word is the only thing that satisfies our thirst. When we get discouraged during the waiting or because of our circumstances, reading the Word replenishes us and gives us new strength and endurance.

Weeding

This is the part we don't like. First, we must recognize what a weed is before we can deal with it. Weeds are things like the cares of the world, worrying, being anxious, fears, bad attitudes, little things that people do that irritate us and make us want to change that person, etc. They are everything that gets into our life that is contrary to God's Word.

Many times we pull off the top of the weed only to have it sprout back up again. We must get to the root of the problem and deal with it. You'll notice that weeds are little. They're not big problems like a tree or a boulder (like

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the items listed in chapter 6). So we must take care of the little things in our life before they end up becoming large problems. As mentioned earlier, it's the little things that can grow out of proportion if they're not dealt with immediately.

Fencing For Protection

For some crops a farmer may need to put a fence around the field to protect the crop from animals who might damage or destroy it. We need to do the same thing spiritually.

In what areas would we need to put up a fence? The parable of the seed and the sower adequately represents how Satan comes in and snatches away from us God's Word (seed) before it has time to take root. Also, our mind wants to destroy the seed through reasoning and excuses. Our flesh wants to destroy the seed because it wants its own way. Our friends and family may come against us as we begin acting according to God's Word.

How do we put up these fences? Spiritually, we draw close to God and resist the devil and the devil must flee from us (James 4:7). We stay focused on reading the Bible and praying. We renew our mind according to the mandate of Romans 12:2 and therefore stop our reasoning and excuses. Once our mind is renewed, our "will" is also renewed and thus it can instruct our body to come into conformance with how God wants us to function.

When friends and family attack us, we need to distance ourselves from them (unless it is our spouse). We don't go into isolation, but we find people who will build us up rather than tear us down. If our spouse gives us a hard time, we must draw close to God (instead of fighting with our spouse) and remember to love our spouse even more through this period of change.

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God tells us to guard our hearts. We do this by getting well grounded in our understanding of God's Word. We need to be doing this constantly. This can be done by attending church services during the week (or attending a home fellowship), reading books that help you understand biblical principles, or watching videos and listening to cassette teachings.

What about putting up fences to keep us from going back into sin? Yes, we must do whatever is necessary to help us stay away from whatever tempted us in the past. These fences can include:

1. Drive a different route to avoid passing the bar, the drug dealer, the adult video store, or the ice cream spot;
2. Put a filter program on your computer to stop you from viewing pornography;
3. Tell your addict friends that you love them but it isn't in your best interest for you to hang around with them any longer;
4. Decline to have lunch with someone who only gossips and puts everyone down;
5. If you're a Christian and you're in an intimate relationship with a non-Christian, you need to cut off that relationship;
6. Find someone to whom you can be accountable for your thoughts and behavior, and be honest with them.

Fertilizing the Soil

When our hearts have been hurt and bitterness and resentment develop, once we forgive the person who hurt us it still takes time for the pain to lessen. During that time we need to saturate ourselves with God's love. Through

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prayer, praise and Bible study God speaks to us and comforts us. He showers us with His love whenever we draw close to Him.

While we want to obtain as much of God's love as we can through the above methods, we receive more when we reach out and love others, even while we're still hurting. The seed of love always blossoms if we turn to God to provide His love to flow through us to others.

Daily Tending to our Seeds

The farmer looks after his crops every day because they are his livelihood. So is our relationship with Christ—it is our life! We cannot plant a few seeds, then go back to our worldly way of thinking and acting while we wait for fruit. It won't happen! Only if we stay focused on developing the biblical principles we are learning will they change us. This new life we received when we asked Christ into our hearts is now our lifeline. We have a new outlook on life. We have new goals in life. We have a new purpose in life!

We must protect this new lifestyle with everything we've got. We are in a battle. This is a spiritual battle, not a battle against people, although it is people who come against us. We fight this battle by using spiritual weapons. In chapter 9 this will be discussed further.

Persistent Waiting

We must never give up on expecting fruit from the seeds we plant. We cannot let unbelief cancel out our belief. We must believe in the spiritual laws rather than what we see physically. While we wait our hearts must be watching expectantly for God to bring about His plans while we do our part, whatever that may be.

Harvesting the Fruit

Harvesting our fruit is not a one-time event. Many fruits manifest through our character and thus remain with us

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as long as we cultivate that fruit. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that *"the fruit of the [Holy] Spirit [the work which His presence within accomplishes] is love, joy (gladness) peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraining, continence)." These are character qualities.*

The object of producing fruit is two-fold. First, it brings our life into alignment with becoming more like Jesus Christ in everything we do. Second, the fruit is for the benefit of others. Our lives may be the only glimpse of Jesus that others see. They may not listen to our words, but they cannot ignore the transformation that Jesus did in our lives. Our unconditional love towards others does not go unnoticed.

A bigger picture of the fruit in our lives is the fact that we no longer follow the passions, appetites and desires of our flesh. Instead we live under the direction and control of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:24-25). Here are some of the outward manifestations of this fruit:

- Love flows through us to others
- Our anointing is released to bless others
- We are able to adapt and adjust ourselves to other people (we don't insist they change to make us happy)
- We can joyfully submit to authority
- We influence others by our godly character
- Our peaceful countenance calms people around us
- People who see how God has changed us now have hope they can be changed too

Pruning

Pruning takes place all the time. God prunes us when we

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are producing good fruit and also when we aren't. God always wants to bring us up to the next level of producing fruit. He never leaves us in the state we are in.

At John 15:1-2, Jesus sets forth this principle, *"I AM the True Vine, and My Father is the Vinedresser. Any branch in Me that does not bear fruit [that stops bearing] He cuts away (trims off, takes away); and He cleanses {and} repeatedly prunes every branch that continues to bear fruit, to make it bear more {and} richer {and} more excellent fruit."*

How does God prune us? Only through His Word. He doesn't put on us sickness or terrible trials in order to prune us, although He can use these things to our benefit. Further on in the book of John Jesus tells us how He prunes us: *"You are cleansed {and} pruned already, because of the word which I have given you [the teachings I have discussed with you]" (John 15:3)*. Many mistakenly believe that it is God who brings upon us negative things to test us or to correct us. This assumption is not supported in Scripture.

This is a major point to catch. God wants to do good things for us, not bad. He woos us to Himself through His love for us, not through putting us through difficult trials.

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters integrate into this principle about producing abundant fruit?

Radical Breakthroughs —We can't continue to do the same things and expect different results. We must learn the process of change and know what to expect from certain thoughts and behaviors. This chapter taught you the process and chapter 9 will teach you spiritual laws so you'll know exactly what to expect when you follow God's guidance.

Relationships—Understanding the process of planting

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seeds and the work involved at each stage helps you hang in there for the long haul of developing healthy relationships. It takes time to learn to draw our fulfillment from God rather than from a significant other. It takes time to learn to forgive a person immediately and to reach out in love immediately to the one who hurt us. If you need to change the people you hang around with, you know it's going to hurt to lose those relationships. But in order to develop healthy relationships God's way, it may take some distancing between your current friends for a while. Once you have overcome your addictions and are well on your way to leading the abundant life God offers, then you will be strong enough to share with your friends how you were able to change, and not get yourself sucked back into that lifestyle.

Attitudes—By knowing this process of seed, time and harvest, it makes it easier to maintain positive attitudes during the various seasons you go through. Knowing what to expect from others, yourself, Satan and God helps you plan ahead of time how you will react. You now begin to be proactive in your life, rather than reactive. This in itself gives you a greater feeling of control over your situation and builds your confidence to handle anything that comes your way.

Disciplines—You'll have plenty of opportunity to learn new disciplines to help you get through these various seasons. The first discipline is to find out God's truths. It's the only way you will know what else needs to be removed from your life and what needs to be planted. The disciplines of reading the Bible and praying become part of your daily lifestyle. Once you find a truth that is opposite of how you are believing or acting, then you have a choice to make. Don't let your feelings make this choice for you, because your feelings will never support drastic changes!

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Remember, the more you choose to follow God, the more empowered you are to continue walking that narrow path that leads to abundant living.

Inspired Living—You will never reach your dreams if you never produce fruit. To fulfill the vision God has given you requires fruit in all areas of your life, not just in your pursuit of the dream. If you visualize the success of your dream, you will visualize the fruit produced in your own life to make it happen, and the fruit it produces to impact the lives of others. When you break down your dream into shorter goals, you will find things that you need to learn in stages of working on your vision. Sometimes we must produce fruit in one area before we can plant the seeds in another. God will show you the steps to fulfilling your dream and the seasons you must go through.

Clean Heart—In order to have fertile soil, you must get rid of whatever is cluttering the soil of your heart. You cannot add God's ways to man's ways. You must identify and discard man's ways, and obey God's instructions daily. It takes time to learn new ways of thinking. But with the junk out of your heart and God's love now filling it, you can now allow God to work in you.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

The sole purpose for this parable is to show you how everything in God's Kingdom works. Jesus said Himself that you must be able to discern this parable in order to understand all the other parables. God plants seeds (His truths) into our life. How it is received and acted upon depends upon the condition of our heart. Therefore, we must discern what is influencing our thinking and actions. Once God's seeds are planted, we must not give up before our abundant harvest of fruit.

It is a mystery how the seeds produce a harvest thirty times as much as was sown, some sixty times as much,

and some even a hundred times as much. Only God knows. It states in Mark 4:26-27, "*And He said, The kingdom of God is like a man who scatters seed upon the ground, and then continues sleeping and rising night and day while the seed sprouts and grows {and} increases—he knows not how.*" If we do our part, God will do his.

Application Questions

1. What kind of internal fruit are you already bearing?
2. What kind of external fruit are you already bearing?
3. In order to start producing good fruit, you need to stop producing bad fruit. Can you identify what thoughts or actions you have done in your past that resulted in bad fruit? It may help to keep a list and add to it as you think of more things.
4. Plowing Season—do you have any sins you're hiding, excuses you use, attitudes you need to change?
5. Seed Planting Season—Are you studying God's Word and meditating upon Scriptures and then obeying in order to get the seeds planted in your heart?
6. Waiting & Weeding Season—Identify areas where you're waiting, watering, weeding, fencing for protection, fertilizing the soil, daily tending to your seeds and persistently waiting expecting your harvest to come in.
7. Harvesting Season—You spend so much time working on getting your life together that you fail to recognize areas where you did accomplish your goals. In what areas have you reached the harvest season? How was it manifested (internally and externally)?
8. Pruning Season—God uses only His Word to prune you. How is He pruning you?



LOVE THAT BINDS EVERYTHING TOGETHER

The common thread running through everything we do is that of love. The Bible tells us at Colossians 3:14: *"And above all these [put on] love {and} enfold yourselves with the bond of perfectness [which binds everything together completely in ideal harmony]."* All these principles we've looked at so far are bound together by love.

Get a picture of a brick wall in your mind. The bricks are the different biblical principles, and the mortar that holds the bricks together to form the wall is love.

To create a wall that will not topple and will be strong enough to withstand adversity, it all starts with the initial brick laid. This brick is also known as the cornerstone. Once it is properly in place and it has no deformities which will allow it to crack, then the rest of the brick wall can be proportionately placed according to the original design. Spiritually, Jesus Christ says that He is the Cornerstone (see Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:20; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11; Ephesians 2:20; and 1 Peter 2:6-7). The foundation of our spiritual wall must also begin with the proper laying of the Cornerstone—our personal relationship with Jesus Christ. From this proper relationship flows God's love to-

ward us, through us to others, and everything we do in life is based upon this relationship.

We know the purpose of the bricks and mortar is to form a wall. The purpose of biblical principles and God's love is summed up in God's two primary commandments:

And you shall love the Lord your God out of {and} with your whole heart and out of {and} with all your soul (your life) and out of {and} with all your mind (with your faculty of thought and your moral understanding) and out of {and} with all your strength. {This is the first and principal commandment.} The second {is like it and} is this, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

Misunderstanding God's love is at the root of all our problems. His love is the cure for whatever problems we're going through. To properly understand God's kind of love and how it affects all our thoughts and actions, let's take a closer look at God's truth and some of the misconceptions the world has about who God is.

God's Love is Multi-Dimensional

The Apostle Paul said a prayer that has a profound impact on how different God's love is toward us:

For this reason [seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ], I bow my knees before the Father {of our Lord Jesus Christ,} for Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named [that Father from Whom all fatherhood takes its title and derives its name]. May He grant you out of the rich treasury of His glory to be strengthened {and} reinforced with mighty power in the inner man by

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the [Holy] Spirit [Himself indwelling your innermost being and personality]. May Christ through your faith [actually] dwell (settle down, abide, make His permanent home) in your hearts! May you be rooted deep in love {and} founded securely on love, That you may have the power {and} be strong to apprehend {and} grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it]; [That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, which far surpasses mere knowledge [without experience]; that you may be filled [through all your being] unto all the fullness of God [may have the richest measure of the divine Presence, and become a body wholly filled and flooded with God Himself]! (Ephesians 3:14-19)

There are different breadths, lengths, heights and depths to God's love. This process of discovering all the dimensions of God's love will last our lifetime. Most of us have an intellectual knowledge of God, and not a revelation of it. We say, "Yes, I know God loves me," but then our lives don't demonstrate the reality of that. The difference comes when we have a *revelation* of God's love. Verse 19 tells us "[That you may really come] to know [practically, through experience for yourselves] the love of Christ, ..." This revelation will totally transform everything about us. It changes our attitudes, motivation, emotions, and actions. It is the cure for whatever ails us!

The Sovereignty of God

To properly understand God's love we must review again one of the basic misunderstandings about how God oper-

ates. Most of us were taught that God is in complete control of everything that happens to us; that nothing happens to us without it passing by God to get His stamp of approval before it happens. This is not upheld biblically. God gave man freedom to make his own choices. Throughout the Bible we see choices given to us to make. God will not override our decisions, nor the decisions of others that also impact our lives.

God doesn't want bad things to happen to us. God loves us so much that he gave His only Son to die on our behalf to restore a personal relationship with God. God is a giver, not a taker. Yes, God can and does use the bad things in our lives to teach us lessons and to grow us; but He doesn't bring these things upon us. God doesn't want us sick, depressed, addicted, jobless, poor, angry, bitter, or self-centered. Jesus shows us in John 10:10 the difference between the motives of Satan (the thief) and Himself: *"The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have {and} enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows)."*

I am not disputing the sovereignty of God. The sovereignty of God indicates the supreme rulership of God. This is best analogized to that of the different levels of command in the military. God is the highest rank. He rules over everything. However, He does not control man's responses to Him, because He has given that authority and power to man to use. In the beginning God gave to man the authority and power to rule over the earth; to make his own decisions. God also gave him instructions not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If God had complete control over man, He wouldn't have to instruct him to not make a bad decision because God would control that decision-making process. You can see how faulty this line of thinking is. Since God gave man authori-

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ty to make decisions, God cannot now override His decision and take it back.

Once we understand this concept, it takes away some of our excuses, and it also empowers us to take action to change our situation. Instead of saying, "God has brought this terrible addiction upon me to teach me a lesson," we can take responsibility for our own bad decisions and start making right choices. We can stop seeing God as someone who is angry with how we act and is bringing all these trials upon us to either punish us or make us act right.

God's Unconditional Love

Another false doctrine we've learned is that God loves us according to how good we behave. If we're good, then God also treats us good. If we're bad, then God treats us bad and withholds His love. This is also not supported by Scripture. Some of this faulty thinking comes from applying principles in the Old Testament to our lives, when those principles have been replaced by new ones under the new covenant of the New Testament.

Under the Old Testament, God waited for certain performance by us before He moved. In the New Testament, God moves (loves) and because of it, we act according to His ways. Thus, holiness is the fruit of our walk with God, not the root (which requires that we be holy first).

Some interpret New Testament Scriptures to reflect that in order to know God we have to keep His commandments (1 John 2:1-3). However, these verses really state that when we know God, then our lives will reflect this by keeping His commandments. God doesn't make our ability to know Him based upon our performance. It is based upon the unconditional love He offers to us because He is love. We don't have to do anything to earn this love. It is freely given to us.

God woos us to Him through His love, not by putting us through terrible circumstances. Lots of people say, "Why did God do this?" or "Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen?" Who says it was God doing it? God gets blamed for many things He did not create. In fact, He grieves to see us go through some of the unnecessary trials. These are not His will for us. Remember, He came to give us abundant life—not to bring upon us horrible things to teach us how to get in line with His plan. That's not how love acts!

If we can get a revelation of how much God loves us and wants good things to happen in our lives, we will recognize our false beliefs in this area and begin to experience God in a new way.

Sharing God's Love

You can't give away what you don't have. But even if you have a little revelation of God's love in you, then you can, and should, share it with others. Once we become a Christian we have the Holy Spirit living inside us. The Holy Spirit is part of the trinity of God (God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit). Therefore, we do have all of God's love sitting inside us since God is love. We don't need to ask God for more of His love, but that we will learn how to manifest that love through active faith.

Knowing that God's love is already living inside us takes away our apprehension of whether we're good enough to receive God's love. This is a major shift in our thinking. Instead of trying to be a good person so God will love us, we can focus on knowing that God's love is already inside us and ask God to help us tap into that love.

Are you focused on learning techniques and tools on how to love others or on how to release God's love already inside you? There is a big difference. We can learn certain actions or words to help us relate to others, but that

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doesn't guarantee God's love will be released through us. Certain things in our life stop the flow of God's love. These include anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, fear, pride, self-centeredness, habitual sin, and unbelief. However, once we receive a revelation of the depths and height of God's love, we begin to deal with these things and God's love flows freely from us.

Many support groups teach a twist on this doctrine. They say you can't love someone else until you love yourself. Although they say you can't give away what you don't have, they're talking about loving yourself first, versus having a revelation of God's love for you. A couple of questions to consider when looking at this viewpoint is, "How much do I have to love myself before I'll be able to love others?" and "When will I know that I've reached that point?" No definite answers are available! The problem with this faulty doctrine is that a person with low self-esteem will stay stuck in a rut because the only way to raise our self-esteem is to reach out and love and serve others. We raise our level of confidence in who we are "in Christ" as a by-product of our actions of loving others with God's love, and serving them through utilizing our passion in life. When we get ourselves involved in a project bigger than "me, myself, and I" our outlook on life and ourself takes a drastic change for the better.

How To Receive a Revelation of God's Love

What do you focus on? Do you focus on *not* doing something, or on what you *don't* have in your life, or on all the negative stuff in your life you want to get rid of? Are you trying to shovel all the darkness out of your life to let some light in? Are you focused on what the devil is doing to you or how he is deceiving you? Do you spend more time on the above than you do learning about who Jesus Christ is, soaking in His presence and then going out and doing

what He tells you to do?

Imagine yourself in a dark room. How do you get rid of the darkness? By turning on the light. You flip the switch and instantly the darkness is gone. You didn't have to learn everything there is about darkness or learn how to get it out of the room. You just simply flipped the switch and the darkness disappeared.

To get rid of the darkness in your life, all you have to do is turn on the light! Jesus Christ said, *"I am the Light of the world. He who follows Me will not be walking in the dark, but will have the Light which is Life"* (John 8:12). We spend too much effort and time examining the darkness in our life and trying to figure out how it got there. Then we go through a phase of rebuking Satan. Then we finally realize that if we focus on drawing close to God and gaining knowledge and understanding of who He is, then the darkness flees!

Jesus explained this contrast of darkness and light and how it operates in the world:

The [basis of the] judgment (indictment, the test by which men are judged, the ground for the sentence) lies in this: the Light has come into the world, and people have loved the darkness rather than {and} more than the Light, for their works (deeds) were evil. For every wrongdoer hates (loathes, detests) the Light, and will not come out into the Light {but} shrinks from it, lest his works (his deeds, his activities, his conduct) be exposed {and} reprov'd. But he who practices truth [who does what is right] comes out into the Light; so that his works may be plainly shown to be what they are—wrought with God [divinely prompted, done with God's help, in dependence upon Him]. (John 3:19-21)

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We turn on the Light in our life every time we obey God. We put action to our beliefs, despite how we think or feel about our worthiness to accomplish the task God sets before us. When we do so, God moves and provides, and we are amazed at how much He loves us that He would work through us.

We stand in awe that God gives us a second chance, a third chance, a fourth chance, etc., etc. He never gives up on us. He is always faithful to us. It's time to begin to recognize how good God is and how well He treats us and blesses us. When we begin to see how God treats us because of His love for us, we will begin to treat others the same way. We won't focus on the little things that irritate us. We'll be quick to forgive and forget. We'll recognize that God doesn't continually point out our faults and make us feel bad because we're not perfect. This frees us to treat others with this same attitude.

When you receive a revelation of God's love for you, you'll no longer care what others think about you. You won't be codependent any more (looking to others to give you your self worth). You will be so full of God's love that you will instantly forgive others when they hurt you and you will keep on doing what God has shown you to do.

This principle is set forth at 1 Peter 4:8 where we are told, "*Above all things have intense {and} unfailing love for one another, for love covers a multitude of sins [forgives and disregards the offenses of others].*" First, we recognize that this is how God's love toward us operates. Then we love others by applying this action to our situation—we quickly forgive and disregard (don't think about) the offenses of others.

Many times we end up rehashing throughout the day (or for the entire week!) some wrong that was done to us. All this does is fuel our emotions to keep us upset and

cranky and then we use it as an excuse for our behavior (words we speak in anger to others, or turning to our addiction to run from the pain of our emotions).

I remember one morning when I went through the drive-thru of the local fast-food chain. My order was completely messed up and it took two more tries at the pickup window before they got it right. By the time I finally got the correct order in my car, I was fuming! But as I drove away, I remember telling myself that I had a choice to either forgive and forget this incident, or I could allow myself to rehash this injustice and keep myself upset all day long! I chose to forgive and forget. I immediately felt a release in my spirit. My anxiety level dropped and I was surprised how quickly I turned my thoughts to the day before me and became happy again.

This example of turning on the Light in my life reminded me that this is how God loves me. He doesn't rehash all day long everything I've done wrong and get Himself into a bad mood and decide to punish me out of revenge! No, His desire is for me to recognize my sin, repent of it, then move on with my life. He wants to show me His love more than I want it to be revealed to me. He waits for opportunities to shower me with His love. He gets excited when I do things with an attitude of expecting to see Him work in the situation. He can't wait to bless me! He is thrilled when I ask for His help and guidance. He gets ministered to when I just spend time with Him. That's how two people in love respond to each other.

Is Love Only a Feeling?

Many times we hear a husband or a wife say they no longer love their spouse and think their relationship can never be restored and that divorce is the only answer. The majority of the time they're talking about their feelings. Since their feelings of love have gone, usually replaced by feel-

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ings of anger or bitterness, they think that love has vanished. But is love only a feeling?

There are four words in the Greek to express different kinds of love. They represent a brotherly, friendship, sexual, or agape type of love. God's love toward us is the agape. This type of love is one of the will rather than the emotions. Therefore, it is not conditioned upon a person's actions before the love is given.

When we become born again, we receive the Holy Spirit; thus, we now have the ability to operate in this type of love agape toward others. We must learn that our feelings lie to us and we need to act according to God's truths. What helps us best in this transition is when we have a revelation of God's love toward us.

Receiving a revelation of God's love is not always an emotional experience. In fact, the majority of the time we will walk in faith in this area. Yes, God does give us times of emotional experience of His love, but He does not intend for us to remain at that level forever. Most of us can remember a time when we had a real *high* experience of His love. Perhaps it was at a weekend retreat or during a special prayer time, or seeing God work in a miraculous way. During those times we wanted to live in that euphoria forever. We didn't want to leave that place of peace, warmth, comfort and closeness to God. But we knew it would fade as we got back into the daily grind of living. Yet, God doesn't want us to spend all our time seeking after those type of experiences. In fact, He tells us that we are more blessed if we accept His love by faith rather than having to see a visible manifestation of it (see John 20:24-30).

If we build our relationships with the agape type of love, then when our feelings get hurt, we don't abandon our love. We can learn how to continue to love a person, even through our hurt. Now, hearing that love can be

taught is a new concept to many of you. But God demonstrates this principle in his Word. Note in the following Scriptures the references to what can be *taught* to others:

But [as for] you, teach what is fitting {and} becoming to sound (wholesome) doctrine [the character and right living that identify true Christians]. Urge the older men to be temperate, venerable (serious), sensible, self-controlled, and sound in the faith, in the love, and in the steadfastness {and} patience [of Christ]. Bid the older women similarly to be reverent {and} devout in their deportment as becomes those engaged in sacred service, not slanderers or slaves to drink. They are to give good counsel {and} be teachers of what is right {and} noble, so that they will wisely train the young women to be sane and sober of mind (temperate, disciplined) and to love their husbands and their children, to be self-controlled, chaste, homemakers, good-natured (kind-hearted), adapting {and} subordinating themselves to their husbands, that the word of God may not be exposed to reproach (blasphemed or discredited). (Titus 2:1-5)

Older women are told to teach younger women to *love* their husband and their children. We know we can teach others how to do housework or cooking, but how to love? The instructions here are to "older women." Usually women who have had a long relationship with the Lord have already gone through the trials and struggles of learning godly living. They had to learn how to love others beyond what their emotions dictated.

Thus, those who have already learned the lessons are capable of teaching younger women these principles, and

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hopefully how to avoid the pitfalls they went through. Kind of like what I'm doing by writing this book to show you ways to live and to avoid the pitfalls that I had to go through in trying to overcome my addiction. I've made it and I *know* that you can make it too! Permanent change is possible in your life, not based upon my experiences, but based upon the truth of God's Word and learning how to apply those principles to your life. Yes, you can live the abundant life too!

How Love Affects Everything We Do

We're going to look at both how God's love toward us affects how we live, and how our goal of loving others affects us.

When we have a revelation of God's love, it gets rid of all fear, doubt, worry, reservations, or wondering whether God will do something for us. The Bible says there is no fear in love (1 John 4:18). If we have a negative attitude toward life, then we don't really know the depth of God's love toward us. If we're still focused on "me, myself and I," then we haven't experienced God's love.

God's love is the only thing that satisfies. It is the whole reason we were created—to have a love relationship with God and to share that love with others. God's love will never fail us. Others will fail us at one time or another, that is a guarantee. Knowing this ahead of time helps us to handle it when it happens. Where do we turn when we get hurt or abandoned? We turn to God and bask in His love. That will mend our broken heart better than any addiction will! But you have to let God love you. You have to allow Him into your heart and let down the walls you've built up. Trust Him. He will never fail you!

Once we've received a revelation of God's love, we can begin to share it with others. Actually this should come quite naturally because of our experience of His love.

Therefore, in order to make this a new lifestyle, we must continually think upon God's love by reading and obeying the Scriptures. The Bible is the only book that is *alive* to those who are born again. It sustains us and gives us life every day. There are always new dimensions of God's love to experience; therefore, we must continually draw close to God for His daily bread.

Impact of R.A.D.I.C.A.L. Principles

How do the biblical principles in previous chapters integrate into this principle that love binds everything together?

Radical Breakthroughs—Instead of focusing upon shoveling the darkness out of your life (your addictions), you take action to turn on the Light in your life. You focus more upon drawing close to God and getting a revelation of His love for you. When His love is revealed to you, then you will recognize that what was causing you to abuse was your lack of love. Yes, you may have been running from hurt or rejection, but you were also running from life because you didn't think that the kind of love you needed—unconditional love—was available. Now you know the truth, that it is available through Jesus Christ, and the choice is up to you. God wants to shower you with His love more than you want Him to reveal it to you. God's love is the cure for whatever ails you. It's time to take a radical move and step out in faith to follow God's plan for you.

Relationships—This entire chapter is about the main ingredient that creates healthy relationships—God's kind of love. Only God's love fulfills you completely. And when you have this love, it will begin to flow naturally from you to others. It will impact how you interact with everyone you come into contact with.

Attitudes—God's love is the greatest motivator you'll ev-

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er have. You may get passionate about specific things going on in your life. But that passion may wane and wear over time. But God's love is with you every day to keep you fulfilled and motivated to share His love with others.

Disciplines—Once you get a taste of God's love, you will discipline yourself to do whatever it takes to experience more of it. Although you may not always be seeking the emotional high, you will seek God's love by putting action to your faith. When you do this, then the more you see God at work in you and in the situations around you, your motivation snowballs and keeps you moving in the right direction—to follow God and not even think about returning to your addictions!

Inspired Living—God's love inspires you to rise above your mediocre living and reach for the *big* vision He has given you. One aspect of God's love is that when He asks you to do something, He enables you to be able to do it. So if He has given you a big vision, He has also given you what you need today to begin working toward reaching your goal. God doesn't give you a vision and then leave you on your own to carry it out. He gives you the vision, asks you to write it down and begin planning how to accomplish it, and He will guide you through the process, giving correction in the course if needed. Knowing that God is one hundred percent behind your dream inspires you to push through the rough times.

Clean Heart—God's love cannot be released if you've still got junk in your heart—anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, hatred, self-centeredness, etc. The junk in your heart will also make it harder for you to receive God's love. Therefore it's important to understand how all these principles interlink. Go back to the picture of the brick wall. If the brick that represents your heart is not clean, then it will repel the mortar (love). It will not become part of the

overall bigger picture. The sooner you can get the soil in your heart clean, the sooner all the other principles will be able to come together in your life.

Abundant Fruit—God's love manifests itself inside you by displaying "joy (gladness) peace, patience (an even temper, forbearance), kindness, goodness (benevolence), faithfulness, gentleness (meekness, humility), self-control (self-restraining, continence)." These characteristics form inside you first and then cause you to reach out and share God's love with others. The whole purpose of developing your character to be like Jesus Christ is so you can lead a life like Christ—in complete obedience to God and to love and serve others just as Christ did.

Impact of the Sower & Seed Parable

The end of the parable shows that God's ultimate goal is to get you to the point where your life is producing abundant fruit. In fact, He loves you so much that when you do things in accordance with His ways, He increases the production of fruit to bless you. Throughout the parable God shows you His love by showing you how you get sidetracked from receiving everything God wants to give you. He points out the things that look good on the outside and appeal to you, but don't produce God's kind of fruit. He shows you that your battles are in your mind. You think the things of the world will provide you with what you need. This is how Satan deceives you—through your thoughts. Therefore, the more time you spend thinking upon God and His love toward you, the less room you allow for Satan to influence you, and the more opportunity you give God to love you and bless you with abundant fruit.

Application Questions

1. Sometimes we hide from the pain of not finding the unconditional love we seek. Is this one of the reasons you escape into your addiction?
2. Who have you been looking to for this unconditional love and that person has not been able to provide it? Can you now relate to that person in a different manner, knowing that only God can meet your deepest needs? What words or actions will change toward that person?
3. Have you experienced God's unconditional love toward you? In what ways and in what instances?
4. Look at your life—can you see how love binds everything together? Write down specific examples.
5. God's love is multi-dimensional. Have you seen His love from different perspectives? How has it changed your life?
6. God *is* love—He doesn't bring things upon you to teach you a lesson. You are not a puppet in God's hands. Therefore, what things in your life are you responsible for that you used to blame God for?
7. God woos you with His love; He doesn't wait until you perform a certain way before He will love you. Have you been performing in order to obtain His love? Explain.
8. God isn't rehashing all the wrongs that you do. What things do you keep rehashing? Now stop it!
9. In order to share God's love with others, you must not stop the flow. What kinds of things stop this flow? Are any of these present in your life?
10. If you have received even a small revelation of God's love, how can you *regularly* share that with others?

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11. Is your love toward others based only on *feelings*? How can you change to reflect a commitment to pass on God's unconditional love toward others?
12. Since love forgives and disregards the offenses of others, how can you apply love to even the little things that upset you? Think of all the things your spouse may do that irritate you—now, next time immediately forgive and *show* love.
13. If you left a relationship because you *felt* the love was gone, how can you restore that relationship?
14. Do you need to *learn* how to love others? If so, find someone whom you see demonstrates love and ask that person for some input. Don't be afraid, they'll feel honored that you asked them. It may take several sessions before you fully understand what to do.
15. Identify how love (or lack of love) affects everything you do. What are your specific reactions to each?



WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

I probably don't have to tell you what doesn't work. You've already tried a lot of different things to get yourself out of your addiction. Perhaps you were successful for a little while, then relapsed. So let me be bold and refresh for you what doesn't work:

- Following the Twelve Steps program
- Attending a support/recovery group every week
- Telling yourself not to do your addiction
- Focusing only on solving your problem(s)
- Adding spiritual principles without eliminating the world's ways
- Waiting for God to miraculously take away your addiction

You can probably add more to this list. But that's not what we want to focus on. Let's take a look at what does work. For some of you this whole spiritual realm may be new to you. Besides learning new biblical principles and identifying the world's ways of solving problems so you can put aside those ways, there are also spiritual laws.

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Just like the Law of Gravity that exists in our world, spiritual laws also exist. There are many spiritual laws, but we will only look at ten which are directly related to the theme of this book for overcoming your addictions.

Law of Thinking

Law: Thinking precedes manifestation.

Thinking is the first step that leads to everything we do. Thoughts originate, we dwell upon them, we add emotion to our thoughts, we visualize the outcome, we mentally fight against ourselves if what we are thinking about is something we should not do, then we add more emotions to our thoughts to convince ourselves that we really need what we're thinking about, and then we think of our perceived emotions or material benefits as a result of doing our actions. Finally, we act upon our thoughts.

Let's look at the different parts of this process. What initially starts our bad thoughts? As indicated earlier, it states at James 1:14-15 that we are tempted when we are drawn away from staying close to God and seeking after His will in our life and obeying Him every day. Two outside forces are at work here. One is Satan who tries to deceive us into thinking that God won't meet our deepest needs. The other is our own sinful desires and lusts.

We are inherently evil. Ever since Adam and Eve sinned in the beginning, everyone is born with this sinful nature. Our natural lusts and physical passions trigger our evil thoughts. We cannot understand the wickedness of our heart, only God can (see Jeremiah 17:9-10).

The above Scripture in James indicates that our evil desire is "conceived." This relates to our thought life. As indicated above, after we struggle in our mind, one side ends up winning (conceiving). Whoever wins this battle brings forth the corresponding action.

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So how do we as Christians win this battle? We stop the process at its very beginning. When we recognize that our thoughts are drawing us away from God, we need to return to God and ask for His help to turn our thoughts around. When we recognize the first negative or evil thought, we must immediately replace it with thinking upon godly things. We can only think one thought at a time. We can use this same thought process to conceive good things. We can add the positive emotions to our thoughts about our future. We can use the thoughts and emotions connected with the perceived good outcome to pull us in that direction.

While everything we do stems from our thinking, our thinking stems from our beliefs. The process is identified as follows:

Beliefs—Thoughts—Emotions—Actions

Sometimes we need to backtrack into this process to find out what is really going on. If you do something and you're not sure why you're doing it, ask yourself the following questions:

What emotions triggered my actions?

What thoughts triggered my emotions?

What beliefs triggered my thoughts?

Are those beliefs true or false?

Now you must take those beliefs and test them against what the Bible says. Are they accurate? If not, then you need to spend time meditating upon God's truth revealed to you and see how it affects the way you think and ultimately act. The Bible tells us that we must renew our mind by the reading of the Word (Romans 12:2). Our thoughts get changed when we discover our false beliefs and replace them with God's truths.

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Our circumstances or our environment do not dictate how we act—our thoughts do. Therefore, we have the ability to change what we focus upon and thus change our actions. You may have a lot of false beliefs that need to be uncovered. Some have already been identified in this book: addiction is a disease and you'll never be able to escape it; you'll never be able to get out of the rut you're in; no one will ever love you; you'll never get a second chance; you'll never be good enough for God to love you or help you; etc.

Our negative self-talk needs to be replaced with God's truths. This is why memorizing Scripture is so important. When we realize we are telling ourselves negative thoughts, we can immediately replace them by quoting Scripture.

Now we have the opportunity to change our thinking onto "*whatever is true, whatever is worthy of reverence {and} is honorable {and} seemly, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely {and} lovable, whatever is kind {and} winsome {and} gracious, if there is any virtue {and} excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think on {and} weigh {and} take account of these things [fix your minds on them]*" (Philippians 4:8). As you read the Bible you'll find quite a few references to our thinking and our need to change what we focus upon.

Law of Speaking

Law: Whatever is spoken (good or bad) has power to create.

A man's [moral] self shall be filled with the fruit of his mouth; and with the consequence of his words he must be satisfied [whether good or evil]. Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and they who indulge in it shall eat the fruit of it [for death or life]. (Proverbs 18:20-21)

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Following closely behind the Law of Thinking is the Law of Speaking. God has put the power of life or death in the words we speak. Remember, God created the world and everything in it, including us, by the words He spoke. He first thought about what He wanted, then He spoke it into existence. This power isn't limited only to God. God tells us that we, too, have this power to create with our words.

What are you creating by your words? Are you speaking forth doubt or confidence? Take a moment to review what words you have spoken for the last seven days. Were your thoughts supported by false or true beliefs? This will help you identify places to start changing your beliefs, thoughts, and words.

Law of Faith

Law: Active faith releases God's power.

So also faith, if it does not have works (deeds and actions of obedience to back it up), by itself is destitute of power (inoperative, dead). (James 2:17)

Once we learn God's truths and think upon them, speak forth the words in order to create, then we must put action to our faith. When we speak words about things that have not yet occurred, we do so by faith. Faith is believing that what you don't see will become reality (Hebrews 11:1). Remember, just because you don't see it doesn't mean it doesn't already exist. Many things exist in the spiritual realm that are not manifested in our reality until we speak them forth and act accordingly.

One example could be as follows: You have read the truth that says now that you are a Christian you have been set free from being a slave to sin (your addictions) (see Romans 6:16-22). You dwell upon this truth rather than tell yourself you'll never overcome your addiction.

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You begin to verbalize the words "I am set free from my addictions." Then you act in accordance with this new belief by physically doing something to replace the time and effort you normally would have spent on your addiction. Hopefully, this would be working on the goals toward reaching the vision God has given you for your life. When you take that first action step, then God releases His power to enable you to take the next step and continues to guide you and provide everything you need to follow His will.

Law of Success

Law: Learning, understanding and doing God's principles brings success.

Let's first define what success is according to Scripture. Throughout the Bible God gives us commandments for us to follow. When Jesus Christ was asked what was the greatest commandment, He answered, "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect). This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as [you do] yourself. These two commandments sum up {and} upon them depend all the Law and the Prophets*" (Matthew 22:37-40). It also mentions in Romans 13:8-10 that love fulfills the law. Therefore, we are not under the rules and regulations (laws) of the Old Testament. Only the law of love shall rule our lives.

These goals are definitely not mentioned in anything we hear on the TV or radio! As Christians we have a different perspective on what motivates us and sustains us during our times of trial—relationships. First, our relationship with God and second, our relationship with others.

The principles set forth in this book center around building our relationship with God, learning how to build

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healthy relationships with others, and finding our purpose in life through a project that reaches out and loves and serves others. Everything boils down to once we have a revelation of God's love for us, we want to obey Him in everything we do and we can't wait to share His wonderful love with others.

When we do things God's ways, God blesses us. As a by-product of doing the above, the problems in our lives lose their control and disappear and we find the abundant life God offers. Yes, we will still go through trials, but with God and His love pouring through us, we can now handle any trial that comes our way.

How do we know if we are *successful* in these relationships? By the fruit we bear and the increase in fruit that God provides (thirty, sixty, or hundredfold!). Therefore, this journey that you and I travel holds our landmarks of successes, not the actual attainment of any particular goal.

Let me briefly review the three aspects of this Law of Success: learning, understanding and doing.

Learning occurs when we read the Bible and the Holy Spirit reveals God's truths to us. We also learn from other methods of input whether it be prayer, people, circumstances, books, etc.

Understanding means to grasp hold of the meaning of what you're learning. It is more than mere intellectual knowledge. It is heart knowledge. Without this type of knowledge, Satan will come along and steal away from you what you have learned. The parable of the seed and the sower is also stated in Matthew's Gospel. There, it adds a note that is not mentioned in Mark's account. It deals directly with the need for us to understand what we hear: "*While anyone is hearing the Word of the kingdom and does not grasp {and} comprehend it, the evil one comes and*

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snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the roadside" (Matthew 13:19).

Earlier I mentioned how we get seeds embedded into our heart—by our actions. The third element of this Law of Success is *doing*. This action part turns our knowledge into understanding and it gets rooted deep in our heart.

Law of Blessing

Law: God blesses those who bless others.

Since the beginning of time God has been honoring His promise to Abraham: *"And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you [with abundant increase of favors] and make your name famous {and} distinguished, and you will be a blessing [dispensing good to others]. And I will bless those who bless you [who confer prosperity or happiness upon you] and curse him who curses {or} uses insolent language toward you; in you will all the families {and} kindred of the earth be blessed [and by you they will bless themselves]" (Genesis 12:2-3).* This original promise has been carried on throughout time.

Have you ever reached out to help someone and when it was all done you felt like you were more blessed than the person you helped? You were experiencing the effects of this Law of Blessing. When we die to our selfish desires and reach out to love and serve others, in turn we get more blessed than the one we're giving to (see, Luke 6:38).

God knew what He was doing when He created this law. In order for us to better ourselves, it must come as a by-product of our loving and serving others. What is surprising about this law is that we can never predict the outcome. That is God's surprise waiting for us.

Law of Sowing and Reaping

Law: You reap whatever you sow.

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Do not be deceived {and} deluded {and} misled; God will not allow Himself to be sneered at (scorned, disdained, or mocked by mere pretensions or professions, or by His precepts being set aside.) [He inevitably deludes himself who attempts to delude God.] For whatever a man sows, that {and} that only is what he will reap. For he who sows to his own flesh (lower nature, sensuality) will from the flesh reap decay {and} ruin {and} destruction, but he who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. And let us not lose heart {and} grow weary {and} faint in acting nobly {and} doing right, for in due time {and} at the appointed season we shall reap, if we do not loosen {and} relax our courage {and} faint. (Galatians 6:7-9)

This law has been the subject of this book and doesn't need any more explanation here. But you do need to take a close look at what you are sowing, or have sown in the past, to help you realize the outcome of that particular behavior. Before we can change, we first must recognize we are doing something wrong. So in addition to adding God's seeds, we need to recognize what we're doing wrong so we can stop it.

It's also important to be aware of our consistency in planting seeds and the quantity of seeds we plant.

[Remember] this: he who sows sparingly {and} grudgingly will also reap sparingly {and} grudgingly, and he who sows generously [that blessings may come to someone] will also reap generously {and} with blessings. (2 Corinthians 9:6)

Law of Submission

Law: You become a slave to whoever or whatever you

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submit yourself to.

Do you not know that if you continually surrender yourselves to anyone to do his will, you are the slaves of him whom you obey, whether that be to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience which leads to righteousness (right doing and right standing with God)? (Romans 6:16)

This submission shows up in several types of action.

- It all begins with submitting to your thoughts and the emotions you attach to them. Remember, this applies to both good and bad thoughts.
- The first obvious submission is to your addiction (or whatever habitual sin you submit to). You submit to it and you become its slave.
- You submit to pleasing someone else in order to obtain their approval and/or love (Proverbs 29:25). Sometimes it involves doing something contrary to God's will. The world calls this codependency.
- You submit to your own selfish desires and lusts. You love the darkness more than the light (John 3:19). Some of these things include excessive eating, sex, gambling, lying, gossiping, backbiting, pride, laziness, drugs and alcohol, etc.
- You submit to the world's pressures to conform and succeed according to their ever-changing standards. You try to keep up with the neighbors, or surpass them.
- Once you know God's truth, you submit through obedience.

When we submit to God's guidance, then we receive what we were seeking through other means. Proverbs 11:25 states, "...he who waters shall himself be watered."

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- When we submit to loving others, we find love.
- When we submit to blessing others, we receive an even greater blessing.
- When we submit to putting others first, we find our inner desires are met.
- When we submit to encouraging others, we receive encouragement.
- When we focus our dreams on loving and serving others, we also receive love and the abundant life we desire.
- When we submit to forgiving others, we receive inner peace and tranquility.

However, instead of doing the above, we submit mostly to our emotions. We fail to recognize that our emotions lie to us! Our emotions are very demanding. We think we don't have any control over them, but we do. When we submit to our emotions, we lose control. This only adds to our problem of already feeling out of control because of our addiction.

To overcome this particular submission, we must recognize the lies that our emotions are feeding off of, counter those lies with God's truth, and then act accordingly. It's not going to be easy. Our emotions don't give up right away. And it doesn't help that society is telling us to do things that make us *feel* good, whether it's right or not.

Earlier in this book I mentioned that only two spiritual realms exist—God or Satan. If you're not submitting to God, then you're submitting to Satan. There is no neutral ground (see James 4:4). Satan tries to make you think that because part of his enticement contains a little bit of God's truth, that the entire process is godly. However, that is how we get deceived—by not knowing God's truth in order to recognize Satan's lies.

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We must be able to distinguish everything we do as either obeying God or obeying Satan.

Law of Submitting to God

Law: When you submit to God, God will draw near to you and Satan must flee.

Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. (James 4:7-8, NKJV)

This law also ties into the Law of Submission, but it has such great significance to our daily living that it needs to be looked at separately.

Earlier I showed where Scripture tells us that we get tempted when we are drawn away from our close walk with the Lord. It all starts with our thoughts, then if we don't bother to verify the truth of our thoughts against the Bible we end up believing them, attaching emotions to them, and then acting upon them. What follows next? We get mad at ourselves for giving in. We feel guilty, hopeless, and stuck in a rut. We mentally fight against ourselves and against Satan.

But this spiritual law says that we don't win the battle by battling against ourself, others, or by only rebuking Satan. We must submit to God first, and then Satan leaves. We can only submit to one thing at a time. When we submit to God, this also entails us recognizing the sin(s) we have committed, asking God for forgiveness (which gets rid of our guilt), and then committing to stay close to God (resisting Satan).

This ties into what was said earlier about turning the light on to get rid of the darkness, instead of trying to shovel out the darkness in our life. This is a major shift in our thinking. We can't shovel away the guilt, only God takes it away. We can't shovel out the temptations, but

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when we submit to God we are able to resist them. In addition to having the darkness removed from our lives, we need to recognize how God wants to fill that empty space.

Law of Wisdom

Law: Obtain godly wisdom and you will understand the ways and purposes of God.

The Wisdom [godly Wisdom, which is comprehensive insight into the ways and purposes of God] of the prudent is to understand his way, but the folly of [self-confident] fools is to deceive. (Proverbs 14:8)

Notice we are talking about God's wisdom, not man's. God's ways are opposite of man's ways. Perhaps some of the things you've read so far don't make sense to you because they're opposite of how you think. All of us have been taught the world's ways on how to handle our problems and how to live. When we become Christians, we now have to turn our thinking upside down to be in line with how God thinks. The only way we will do this successfully is to trust God and do it.

However, unless you are a Christian and have the Holy Spirit living inside you to reveal God's ways to you, you won't understand God's wisdom.

*But the natural, nonspiritual man does not accept {or} welcome {or} admit into his heart the gifts {and} teachings {and} revelations of the Spirit of God, for they are folly (meaningless nonsense) to him; and he is incapable of knowing them [of progressively recognizing, understanding, and becoming better acquainted with them] because they are spiritually discerned {and} estimated {and} appreciated.
(1 Corinthians 2:14)*

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What happens often is that when a person becomes a Christian they try to add God's way's to man's ways and get even more frustrated. What we need to do is identify the world's ways, stop following them and start following God's guidance. We cannot do both and expect to see long-lasting, permanent change.

How do we obtain God's wisdom? We ask for it. *"If any of you is deficient in wisdom, let him ask of the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally {and} ungrudgingly, without reproaching {or} faultfinding, and it will be given him" (James 1:5) (see also James 1:6-8).* Also read the entire Book of Proverbs for a greater understanding of the importance of obtaining God's wisdom and the benefits of it.

Law of Love

Law: Love never fails.

Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end]. (1 Corinthians 13:8)

If you reach a dead end in any situation and you can't figure out what to do, then let love come into the picture and manifest. God says it will never fail. Why? Because it is the fulfillment of any law there was or is.

Love never fails what? It never fails to provide a solution to whatever our problem is. When we're frustrated with someone, if we turn to loving them then our frustration leaves. When someone hurts us, instead of getting angry or retaliating we can forgive them and instantly love them. The moment we choose to love rather than focus on the wrong done to us, our anxiety leaves and peace floods our heart.

God's love toward us also never fails. God *is* love. Therefore, He can never fail to love us. Nothing can ever separate us from God's love (see Romans 8:38-39).

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When we feel lonely and unloved we can always go to God and receive His love. Knowing that His love is always there and that He will never leave us is comforting during our times of struggle.

Applying These Spiritual Laws

Now that you know there are spiritual laws (and these were only a few of the many), you can begin to apply them to your life.

On the paper you've been keeping notes on as you read this book, write out each of these laws leaving space beneath each. Under each spiritual law write out how you can apply it to your life, being very specific in identifying beliefs, thoughts, emotions and actions.

Fight the Right Battle

When we become a Christian our heart and our eyes are opened to the reality of our real battle. It is a spiritual battle rather than a battle against people or our circumstances. We must learn the strategies of our enemy (Satan) and about our new weapons of warfare.

The following excerpt from Ephesians gives us some insight into our spiritual battle and our armor.

In conclusion, be strong in the Lord [be empowered through your union with Him]; draw your strength from Him [that strength which His boundless might provides].

Put on God's whole armor [the armor of a heavy-armed soldier which God supplies], that you may be able successfully to stand up against [all] the strategies {and} the deceits of the devil.

For we are not wrestling with flesh and blood [contending only with physical opponents], but

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against the despotisms, against the powers, against [the master spirits who are] the world rulers of this present darkness, against the spirit forces of wickedness in the heavenly (supernatural) sphere.

Therefore put on God's complete armor, that you may be able to resist {and} stand your ground on the evil day [of danger], and, having done all [the crisis demands], to stand [firmly in your place].

Stand therefore [hold your ground], having tightened the belt of truth around your loins and having put on the breastplate of integrity {and} of moral rectitude {and} right standing with God,

And having shod your feet in preparation [to face the enemy with the firm-footed stability, the promptness, and the readiness produced by the good news] of the Gospel of peace.

Lift up over all the [covering] shield of saving faith, upon which you can quench all the flaming missiles of the wicked [one].

And take the helmet of salvation and the sword that the Spirit wields, which is the Word of God.

Pray at all times (on every occasion, in every season) in the Spirit, with all [manner of] prayer and entreaty. To that end keep alert and watch with strong purpose {and} perseverance, interceding in behalf of all the saints (God's consecrated people). (Ephesians 6:10-18)

Our enemy is not our addiction or the people who upset us. No, it is Satan who is trying to destroy us, steal from us what is rightfully ours as an adopted child of God, and

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attempting to kill us. Christians are the enemies of Satan—especially Christians who pray and stand victoriously in their trials!

The thief comes only in order to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have {and} enjoy life, and have it in abundance (to the full, till it overflows). (John 10:10)

The Bible warns us about Satan and his strategies:

Be well balanced (temperate, sober of mind), be vigilant {and} cautious at all times; for that enemy of yours, the devil, roams around like a lion roaring [in fierce hunger], seeking someone to seize upon {and} devour.

Withstand him; be firm in faith [against his onset—rooted, established, strong, immovable, and determined], knowing that the same (identical) sufferings are appointed to your brotherhood (the whole body of Christians) throughout the world.

And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace [Who imparts all blessing and favor], Who has called you to His [own] eternal glory in Christ {Jesus,} will Himself complete {and} make you what you ought to be, establish {and} ground you securely, and strengthen, and settle you. (1 Peter 5:8-10)

Let's look at what the above verses in Ephesians teach us about some of the ways of *how* to fight this battle:

- Be strong in the Lord. Get our strength from Him.
- After we have done everything needed to handle the crisis, stand firm. Even though we can't see the solution to the problem, trust in God to show us what to do or say at the moment we need guid-

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ance.

- *Tighten* the belt of truth—spend more time reading the Bible. We need all the wisdom and spiritual strength to withstand the battle.
- Pray at all times, not only for ourself and our situation, but intercede on behalf of all saints.

Now let's look at some of the ways from the verses in 1 Peter on how to avoid being attacked by Satan.

- Be well balanced. This pertains to all areas of our lives. When we get out-of-balance we give Satan an open door to attack us in our weak areas.
- Be vigilant and cautious at all times. Be watchful to avoid danger. If we listen, the Holy Spirit will show us when to be vigilant and when danger is approaching.
- Draw close to God and thereby resist the devil. When we stay connected to God we receive the continuous strength we need to be aware of Satan's strategies and to stand firmly against his schemes.
- Stand firm in the faith. We must do whatever we can to establish our relationship with God and deepen it as much as we can as fast as we can; otherwise Satan will steal the seeds planted in us.
- Be strong against Satan's attacks. Once we are established we have the ability to be strong, immovable in what we believe and determined to follow God rather than believe Satan's lies.

Since Satan is subtle in his strategies, how can we determine what is from Satan, what is from God, and what is from our own fleshly desires? The way to identify lies is to be so familiar with the truth that lies become very obvi-

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ous. This is why it's so important to study the Bible and memorize Scriptures. Even the Scriptures tell us to test everything we hear or see against what the Bible says.

BELOVED, DO not put faith in every spirit, but prove (test) the spirits to discover whether they proceed from God; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world.

By this you may know (perceive and recognize) the Spirit of God: every spirit which acknowledges {and} confesses [the fact] that Jesus Christ (the Messiah) [actually] has become man {and} has come in the flesh is of God [has God for its source];

And every spirit which does not acknowledge {and} confess {that} Jesus {Christ has come in the flesh} [but would annul, destroy, sever, dis-unite Him] is not of God [does not proceed from Him]. This [nonconfession] is the [spirit] of the antichrist, [of] which you heard that it was coming, and now it is already in the world.

Little children, you are of God [you belong to Him] and have [already] defeated {and} overcome them [the agents of the antichrist], because He Who lives in you is greater (mightier) than he who is in the world. (1 John 4:1-4)

This last verse reminds us that God who lives in us (through the Holy Spirit) is mightier than he (Satan) who is in the world. Remember, even though there are only two spiritual realms, they are not equal in their power, authority or purposes.

Application Questions

1. Identify things you've tried that haven't helped you overcome your addiction. It's necessary to identify

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these so you can stop doing them in order to have energy and time to follow God's instructions.

2. Law of Thinking—Can you identify this process happening in your life? How far into the process do you go before you're aware of it? Consciously strive to become aware of it in its beginning stage so you can stop it.
3. Law of Speaking—What are you creating by your words? Write out phrases to speak that create your future. Say them several times every day.
4. Law of Faith—Believing the things you speak forth about your future is one thing, but now add action to each statement. What specifically can you do?
5. Law of Success—Compare what you used to think as success against God's view of success. In what areas can you change?
6. Law of Blessing—Whatever you're seeking, give it away first. Love someone. Bless someone. Tithe your money and give money to others. What do you need?
7. Law of Sowing and Reaping—What do you need to stop sowing? What do you need to start sowing? How can you increase what you sow?
8. Law of Submission—Who or what are you a slave to? Do you submit to your emotions? Do you submit to God or Satan?
9. Law of Submitting to God—Are you submitting to God or trying to shovel out the darkness in your life?
10. Law of Wisdom—Read the Book of Proverbs and write down all the benefits and attributes of godly wisdom.
11. Law of Love—When everything you try fails, how can you put love into action? Give specific actions.
12. Explain how you fight spiritual battles.



HOW TO GET STARTED

You may have picked up this book only because you wanted to know how to get out of your addiction. But I hope God has opened your eyes to realize how much God loves you and that He created you for the love relationship that only He can fulfill. He also has a personal vision He designed specifically for you to fulfill and He's waiting for you to get involved with Him to carry it out.

We have looked at the two main principles which give us a starting point on how to live the abundant life God offers and how to overcome *all* our problems:

- God wants a loving relationship with each of us. This relationship then carries over into us developing healthy, loving relationships with others.
- God created each of us for a specific purpose. This purpose always entails a project whereby we love and serve others utilizing our God-given passion in life!
- When we focus on living out the above two biblical principles for living, our problems get resolved as a by-product.

So where do you start with all the information you've

learned about these seven radical principles for living? By answering the application questions at the end of each chapter you gained some insight of what needs to be worked on. Hopefully you have already begun to implement these changes.

Winning The Initial Battle

The first battle you have to conquer is the one in your mind. If you don't change your thinking, or be *willing* to change it, then you won't make much progress in your other efforts. Ask God to help you be willing to see things from His perspective and to obey His guidance, no matter how contradictory His instructions may appear.

The Battle In Your Mind

A person stuck in their addictions also has a mind-set focused only on themselves. Even if you find out what caused you to get into your addiction, that knowledge is not enough to get you out of this mind-set. To overcome this internal focus you must choose to flood your mind with new material:

- Learn all you can about God and Jesus Christ. *Every day* listen to preaching and teachings from preachers who are well known for their correct interpretation of Scriptures (see the Appendix for a few resources). Read the Bible and purchase Bible Studies to help you learn how the Word applies to your life.
- Begin to identify your passion in life and seek God's guidance on how to turn it into a project whereby you use it to love and serve others. If you already know God's vision for your life, *every day* do something toward accomplishing your goals. Flood your mind by constantly thinking about your vision and reading books to motivate you in this area.

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Getting these two areas started gives you something to turn your thinking towards whenever you find yourself getting tempted by your addiction. Remember, you can't wait until you *feel* like doing these things. You must daily, sometimes hourly, choose to think upon these things.

Spiritual Battle

The spiritual battle also takes place in your mind. Your battle is not the people around you or your circumstances. Satan does everything he can to put doubt and fear into you. But when you know God's truths, you can verbalize them and Satan must flee. God who is in you is stronger than Satan!

You must gain an understanding of your new authority and power in Christ. With the Holy Spirit living inside you, you now have the ability to walk away from your addiction and work toward fulfilling God's call upon your life. You must stand strong against Satan's attempts to steal away your dreams for a bright future and a life of purpose that impacts many people.

Satan is able to steal from you when you don't have God's truths in you. Satan takes a little bit of God's Word and adds his deception to it and then entices you to believe it. Therefore, in order to recognize Satan's lies, you must know as much of God's Word as you can.

You Don't Fight Alone

You don't have to handle this battle by yourself. As Christians we are to help each other by praying, encouraging, coming alongside to strengthen a person, doing whatever is necessary to help another Christian grow in their spiritual walk. This is a two-fold command—we do it to other Christians, and they do it to us.

Therefore, you need to find Christians who are like-minded. Find a church and a home fellowship where you

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can start making new friends who will help you understand God's promises and instructions. And don't forget to get out of your focus on yourself and reach out and help them in their Christian walk—even if all you can do is love them!

Two are better than one, because they have a good [more satisfying] reward for their labor; for if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up! Again, if two lie down together, then they have warmth; but how can one be warm alone? And though a man might prevail against him who is alone, two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12)

One of the things Satan loves to do is keep us isolated. He tells us that nobody will understand what we're going through, so don't tell anybody your problems. Some people keep their addiction a secret, while inside they're fighting to keep a "happy face" mask on to fool people.

God knows all your secrets. He is waiting to help you. He wants you to receive His love and find the fulfillment you've been looking for through your addiction. Being in love with God and fulfilling His vision for your life is the biggest "high" you'll ever get! I still remember the first time I realized that following God's vision for my life was the greatest high I ever had in life. After the first time you recognize this, you will seek after following God, rather than seeking after any high that an addiction could give you.

You have to be willing to step out in faith and put action to your new beliefs. And when you do, God is there to give you all the power and strength you need to continue walking the path He puts before you.

While you don't fight your battles alone, it is up to you

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to fight. Nobody will fight your battles for you—only you can decide to do whatever is necessary to get yourself out of the hell hole you're in, even if you don't know where God is leading you. So let's get started!

How To Get Started Today!

What can you do today to begin climbing out of the dark hole you're in? What specific things will help you the most and the quickest? If you're on the verge of wanting to give in to your craving for your addiction, what can you do right now?

Refuel Your Dream!

- Pull your dream for your life off the shelf and begin working on it. Everyone has had a dream for their future at one time. What was/is yours?
- How do you "work" on your dream?
 - You put it in writing, including all the emotions attached to attaining the different stages of it. DREAM BIG!! Our God is big and His resources are limitless!
 - Figure out what you need to do first—do you need more training, education, fellow workers, money, office space, equipment, etc.?
 - Start figuring out what steps need to be taken and in what order.
 - Review chapter 5 and your answers to the application questions.
- Where can you volunteer on a weekly basis where you will utilize your passion in life? Determine when in your schedule you can volunteer. Remember, if you have times when you are more vulnerable to turn to your addiction, that is the time slot when you want to volunteer. Call the organization

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and get the details on volunteering.

- If you don't know what your passion is, then find a place to volunteer doing something you really enjoy.
- Keep your mind so occupied with this vision and thinking about it coming true because God will help you, that time passes and you don't have any time left to think about your addiction. Go to bed still talking to God about your dream and asking Him for His insights and guidance.
- When you wake up in the morning, before you even get out of bed, your first thoughts should be to talk to God and to also review everything you did the day before when you worked on your vision.
- Let your emotional high you get from dreaming about your dream motivate you to stay on track and do whatever is necessary to fulfill this God-inspired vision. Remember, with God's hands-on involvement, nothing is impossible!

Many plans are in a man's mind, but it is the Lord's purpose for him that will stand. (Proverbs 19:21)

The steps of a [good] man are directed {and} established by the Lord when He delights in his way [and He busies Himself with his every step]. (Psalm 37:23)

May He grant you according to your heart's desire and fulfill all your plans. (Psalm 20:4)

Discover New Friendships

After reading this book, do you need to find new friends and perhaps avoid being around others with addictions? If so, find a church where you fit in and which has a home fellowship where you can meet new people. You may need

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to visit several churches before you find one you're comfortable at.

Let me warn you, this won't be easy to let go of hanging around your friends. But if they're holding you down, you have to do whatever it takes to make your life better. No one is going to do your work for you. You have to decide to take up God's challenge to live a life according to His ways and follow His guidance if you want the fulfillment that only He can provide.

Let me explain my reasons for suggesting you attend a home fellowship through a church rather than a support group. A home fellowship is a group of Christians gathering together to learn about God through Bible study, worship, prayer, sharing of testimonies, encouraging one another, confrontation, accountability and loving one another. The group consists of people at different points in their spiritual maturity level. Not everyone there has heavy-duty problems.

In contrast, the overall focus of a support group is *only* the common problem or situation which brought the people together. The downfall of most support groups is this narrow focus. Even Christian support groups use the resources of secular groups and add Scriptures, without changing their overall focus or testing the underlying message against God's Word. Most support groups also lack good role models.

Think about this aspect—how many healthy people attend a support group on a regular basis? Probably none! Why? Because their focus isn't on rehashing an old problem they had, which they overcame a long time ago; they are now focused on pressing forward to live the abundant life God offers. Which life do you want to live?

See Your Life From God's Perspective

Before God ever created you He had a specific purpose for your life (see Jeremiah 1:5). You were designed to carry out God's plan at this time in history and under the conditions and circumstances surrounding you. You have gone through certain experiences to equip you to carry out this vision. Nothing in your life will keep God from fulfilling His purpose in you once you decide to follow His plans.

Why is it important for you to understand this? Because God's plan for humans is different than Satan's plans. When you recognize that God has great things planned for you (see Jeremiah 29:11-13), your attitude changes, you're filled with hope, you become bold in approaching God with your concerns and desires, you become motivated to follow God. You take on God's challenge to live for Him and conquer Satan's schemes (see Romans 8:37).

Are you ready for the challenge of your life? One that will provide full satisfaction when you obtain the victory? The challenge presented to you by God is to follow the radical breakthroughs presented in this book. This is not the entire realm in which God will work in your life; this is just the beginning. As stated earlier, this book is to give you the overall big picture of how God wants you to live. There are many more spiritual principles and spiritual laws than what is presented here.

To help you gather together and assimilate the very basics of how God wants us to live I presented material to help you see that your problems (whatever they are) will mostly be resolved as a by-product of following the elements that make up the acrostic R.A.D.I.C.A.L.

Review the Principles

Let's take a brief review of the principles discussed herein.

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Remember that everything is focused around the parable of the sower and the seed. In order to change you must make the soil of your heart ripe to receive the seeds of God's Word and then properly tend to the seeds until they are ready to harvest.

Relationships

Your relationship with God is the primary source of receiving the unconditional love you seek. You were created for this love relationship.

Once you receive a revelation of God's love for you, then you can share it with others. You develop healthy, loving relationships by getting rid of self-centeredness, putting the needs of others first, be responsible for your own actions and reactions, and choose your friends wisely.

You must prioritize your time to accomplish the above relationships.

Attitudes

Your attitude will make you or break you. Once you change your belief to the truth that addiction is a sin (rather than a disease), then your attitude will brighten. Because sin is something you can change in your life, you can move beyond the survival mode!

We choose our attitude. How's your attitude toward God, of contentment, submission, putting others first, humbleness, trusting God, and your attitudes toward the world? Expect opposition from Satan when you change your attitude, but remember that God is greater than Satan. Draw close to Him and Satan must flee!

Disciplines

Disciplines prepare us to do or say the right thing at the right time. Spiritual disciplines include Bible study, prayer, and prioritizing our time. Our physical disciplines

include aligning our will with God's, renewing our mind, controlling our emotions, verbalizing our future, and controlling the desires of our flesh.

Disciplines are a *must* if we want to change. We can't keep doing the same things over and over and expect change. That's called stupidity.

Inspired Living

This key element is missing in all support groups. This is the principle that provides the motivation to pull you out of your rut.

Have you identified your passion, your spiritual gifts, God's specific vision for you? Have you captured it in writing, being aware of the 18 characteristics of a vision? Determine how you can keep your dream fueled. Are you ready to find volunteer work in the area of your passion? This single act will do more to turn your life around than everything you've tried to date.

Clean Heart

Besides cleansing the soil of your heart from the big trees such as false beliefs, self-centeredness, unforgiveness and labels that stigmatize you, don't forget to take care of the little things in life that bug you. If needed, take time to bask in God's love to replenish the soil of your heart.

Abundant Fruit

How much fruit are you producing? Internal fruit consists of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. External fruit is when our internal fruit flows out of us for the benefit of others. These include unconditional love, words of encouragement, our testimonies, sharing God's truths, giving, serving, our attitudes, kindness, forgiveness, self-control, and using our authority and faith in Christ to

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help manifest things in a person whose faith has not manifested to that level.

Like all crops and fruit, there are seasons to go through before the final harvest: plowing, seed planting, waiting and weeding, harvesting, and pruning. Where are you at in the seasons of the various seeds of God's truths planted in your heart?

Love

Love binds everything together, just like mortar holds a brick wall together. However, since God's love is multi-dimensional, we will never comprehend the fullness of it until we reach heaven. Once we receive a revelation of God's love we can share it with others. Remember, love is not only a feeling. It is a decision and a commitment and affects everything we do.

What Works and What Doesn't

We discussed ten spiritual laws to help you progress in your spiritual maturity and ultimately overcome your addictions. These include the Laws of:

Thinking	Sowing and Reaping
Speaking	Submission
Faith	Submitting to God
Success	Wisdom
Blessing	Love

You must also fight the right battle. Your enemies are not other people or your circumstances, but the spiritual battle that Satan fights to draw you away from God.

Aim For the Long Haul

Once you reach a point where your addictions are no longer a part of your life, don't slack off! You now have a challenging life before you. But you must purposely stay

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on the right course and make the tough decisions to keep you there.

Satan is waiting for you to give him a foothold in your life. Just as he never quits going after us, we must never let our guard down. Remember, we are enticed to sin when we are *drawn away* from God and seek other things.

When you answer the questions in this book, put them in writing for future reference. Being able to re-read the insights God gives you at this time in your life will help you recognize areas where you tend to get stuck in a rut. Whether it's your attitudes, unforgiveness, believing Satan's lies, or whatever God reveals to you, can you see a pattern of this in your past? If so, these are areas to stay aware of throughout your life.

Knowing that battles await you shouldn't make you want to retreat. It's exciting to watch how God works in us and around us for us to be victorious. The more battles you see God helping you win, the stronger you become in carrying out the vision God has given you.

This new lifestyle is a radical one! But once you're totally involved in following God, receiving God's love for you and passing it on to others, you won't care what others say about you. Your only concern is that you are pleasing God by your love and living a purpose-filled life.

My prayer for you comes from Philippians 1:11:

May you abound in {and} be filled with the fruits of righteousness (of right standing with God and right doing) which come through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One), to the honor and praise of God [that His glory may be both manifested and recognized].

God doesn't have a program—He has a Son. Through Jesus Christ ALL things are possible if you believe!

My Journey

When I became a Christian in 1980 I was addicted to pain medicine due to a medical condition that surfaced six months prior. I was also in a very deep depression. I'm grateful I sat under excellent Bible teaching in the beginning. But after a year I felt like I was bulging at the seams with all this great love and hope I received from God, but no place to share it with others. I was still struggling with my addiction and depression.

A friend had recommended I volunteer at a Christian-based crisis hotline in Southern California (where I was born and lived most of my life). When I started, the staff at the hotline didn't know I was still suicidal. But within three to four months my life dramatically changed.

I came out of the dark hole I was in and began to really enjoy life again. However, I was still vulnerable to return to my addiction if I didn't stay focused on obeying God and looking to my future. When I began volunteering I chose Saturday night because that was when I was most vulnerable (I was single and lonely). Later I added a second shift on Sunday afternoons, another vulnerable time. During the week if I struggled in the evenings, there was always a church service I could attend.

Shortly after starting on the hotline I realized I found my passion in life—helping hurting people apply biblical principles to overcome their problems. I recognized that God gave me lots of discernment and insights into people and their problems, as well as distinguishing between the world's ways and God's ways on how to handle problems and the purpose for living.

In 1984 I felt God call me to open up my own hotline. I just didn't know when or where. God knew I wasn't ready then because I still had things in my heart I needed to get rid of. My addiction was no longer a problem, but I still

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had bouts of depression.

In the 1980s I went back and forth, living in Arizona and California. When I wasn't able to be in a ministry where I could use my God-given gifts, I would begin to slip back into my depression, wanting to take pain pills to escape. I was frustrated; I knew God had called me to the crisis hotline ministry, but doors weren't opening.

Finally in late 1989 my break came. I got involved with Christian Helplines International and learned how to open my own crisis hotline. For five years I taught lay counseling classes and had the Christian-based crisis hotline open for two years.

When I stepped out to start the hotline, I knew I was doing what God designed me to do—help hurting people. It was a big enough project to get me out of my mind-set of "me, myself and I." I was more blessed by giving than seeking to receive.

This project turned my whole life around. Even though I knew God for ten years at that point, it wasn't until I put action to my faith did those seeds take deep root in my heart. I knew who I was in Christ and I have never returned to my former ways.

When the doors of the hotline closed in 1995 on that season in my life, God showed me the next season—to take all my insights, godly wisdom and experiences and write books to help people learn God's ways for overcoming problems and to find their God-inspired vision for their life.

After being divorced for 25 years the Lord sent me a wonderful, godly husband who has the same desire to share God with hurting people. We were married in 2002.

I continue to apply these R.A.D.I.C.A.L. principles to my life because I want to fulfill the vision God gave me.

Free At Last!

Bonnie Compton Hanson

Huddled, imprisoned, helpless and caged
My hopeless and broken heart ranted and raged,
"Why, dear God, why must this pain and despair
Overwhelm me and conquer me? Life isn't fair!
Or don't You care?"

"I feel so unworthy and chained to my life
Of downfalls, addictions, wrong choices, and strife.
Folks say there's no hope; I should just give up now.
But I want to do better and please You, I vow!
I just don't know how."

God wrapped His love all around me that day.
Drying my tears, He said, "You're Mine to stay.
I know that alone you scarce can break free,
But together we'll do it, you wait and see!
Just trust in Me."

So I fed on His Word and learned to obey—
And slowly those cage bars just melted away!
I lifted my wings, scarce daring to try,
Yet they fluttered and stretched out toward the sky.
Praise God, I could fly!

So when the world reminds me of my old cage
Of sins and of weaknesses, despair and rage,
I point to my Savior, who died for that past,
And made all things new. I'm now free at last!
Praise God! Halleluiah!
I'm now free at last!

Look carefully then how you walk! Live purposefully {and} worthily {and} accurately, not as the unwise {and} witless, but as wise (sensible, intelligent people),

Making the very most of the time [buying up each opportunity], because the days are evil.

Therefore do not be vague {and} thoughtless {and} foolish, but understanding {and} firmly grasping what the will of the Lord is.

And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but ever be filled {and} stimulated with the [Holy] Spirit.

Speak out to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, offering praise with voices [and instruments] and making melody with all your heart to the Lord,

At all times and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Ephesians 5:15-20

APPENDIX

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If you have been helped by this book, I would like to hear from you. Please write me or send me an email describing how this book helped you. Thanks.

Kathryn E. Williamson

Kathy has been a Christian since 1980. She accepted Christ when she was in the middle of major medical problems which led to an addiction to pain killers and a deep depression. Her struggles on her drug addiction continued for another four years. Her depression and low self-esteem continued for another ten years. She is personally familiar with the struggles to overcome addictions. But she is also aware of the victorious life in Christ which overcomes addictions and all our problems and gives us the abundant life available through a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

Her life totally turned around when she began developing a Christian-based crisis hotline. It was a project which used her passion in life (to love and help hurting people) and it was big enough to pull her out of the mind-set of "me, myself and I." As a by-product of that activity, most of her problems were resolved.

Since becoming a Christian she has always been involved in some type of ministry work to help hurting Christians return to the Bible to find the true source of their help.

Kathy has been a lay counselor on Christian-based crisis hotlines for over 12 years, including developing her own hotline in the early to mid-1990s. She has also taught classes on how to be a lay counselor. That ministry gave her opportunities to do various outreaches to the community.

Kathy's heart's desire is to work with hurting people to guide them to the Bible for learning how to draw close to

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God and live the abundant life He offers. She loves to encourage people and help them become the best person that God wants them to be. She also strongly believes in the power of prayer and the life of faith through speaking God's Word (the Bible).

Her husband, Jeremiah Williamson, is the Chaplain and Director of Men's Program at the Bridgeport Rescue Mission in Connecticut.