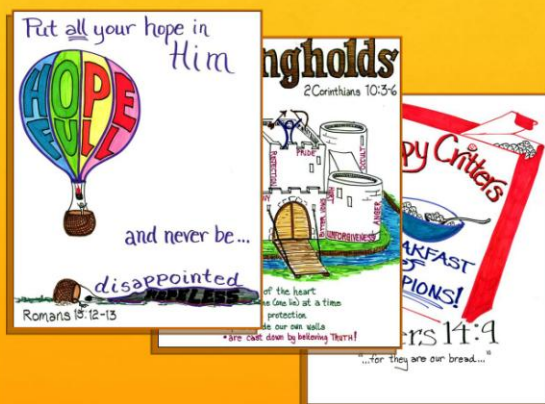


An Illustrated Guide to the Spiritual Life



The River of Peace Series Vol. 1
Living by the Spirit in the Grace of God

STEVE EVANS

AN ILLUSTRATED GUIDE TO THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

Illustrations

[The Valley of Decision](#)

[Keys to the Kingdom](#)

[Crispy Critters](#)

[Feeling Unplugged?](#)

[Get the Look!](#)

[Image Bearing](#)

[Two Hearts in One Believer](#)

[Run to Home Base](#)

[Stronghold Protection](#)

[Fruit and Roots](#)

[The Silent Killer](#)

[Hope in Him](#)

[The Pick Ax of Praise](#)

[Which Reality?](#)

[Your Choice of Coverings](#)

[Root of Bitterness](#)

[The Pit of Depression](#)

[Plans A, B and C](#)

[Bring the Hammer Down](#)

[God's Acceptance](#)

[The Occult Counterfeit](#)

[One Addiction, Three Lies](#)

[Sandwiched!](#)

[Poseidon Adventure Living](#)

Appendix

[Healing Streams Ministry](#)

[Books from Forerunner](#)

[About the Author](#)

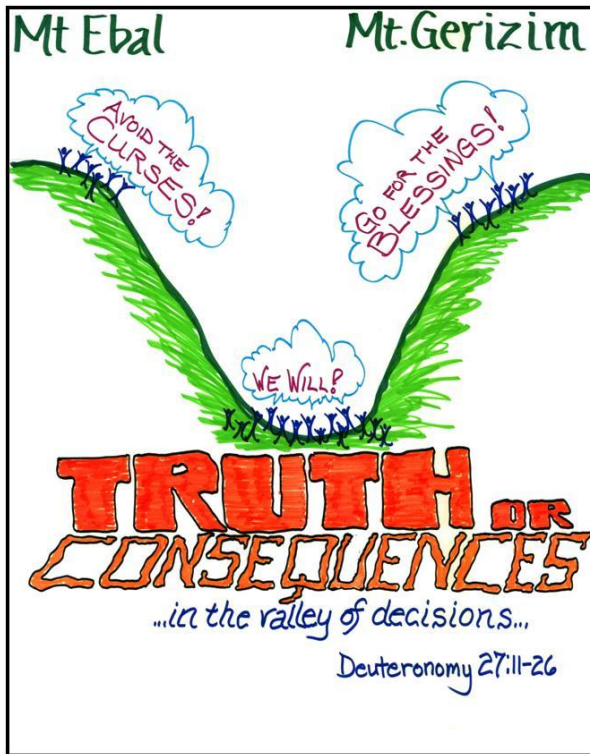
PREFACE

An *illustrated* guide to the spiritual life? How can those elusive, invisible realities be captured on paper? Perhaps paper cannot hold them, but the imagination can! Images enhance spiritual sight, giving *insight* into truths we can't "see" yet. Surely that's why our Lord used so many images in His parables, even putting children in front of his disciples as object lessons, when they couldn't "get it" any other way.

Almost all of the images in this collection grew out of sketches first drawn on dry-erase marker boards during seminar sessions in a playful attempt to convey the truths under discussion. Never intended to provide a comprehensive panorama of the spiritual life, they are simply snapshots of specific ideas that floated through my mental landscape like wandering butterflies. No attempt has been made to "professionalize" them and my complete lack of any artistic training has ensured their amateur quality. However, since Jesus lauded a childlike entrance into His Kingdom on earth, explore these simple images in the same spirit, looking to see if they might lead you "like a little child" beyond your present horizons of thought (Isaiah 11:6).

These illustrations are intended for the general reader as well as being a companion booklet to *The Missing Peace: Recovering a Whole Life in a Broken World*. May you enjoy exploring them in your imaginative journey as much as I did in the creative process!

THE VALLEY OF DECISION



We live in a real world that is also a moral and spiritual universe. Every thought, word and deed whether good or bad, right or wrong, intended or unintended, has consequences in our lives and in the lives that surround us. Blessings—the positive consequences—abound whenever we consciously or unconsciously "do the right thing." The "curse of the law"—the negative consequences—arrive when we depart from God's way or God's truth (Deuteronomy 27-28). The "Valley of Decision" we face is not just a onetime choice to follow God. We are in that valley and faced with that choice every moment of the day

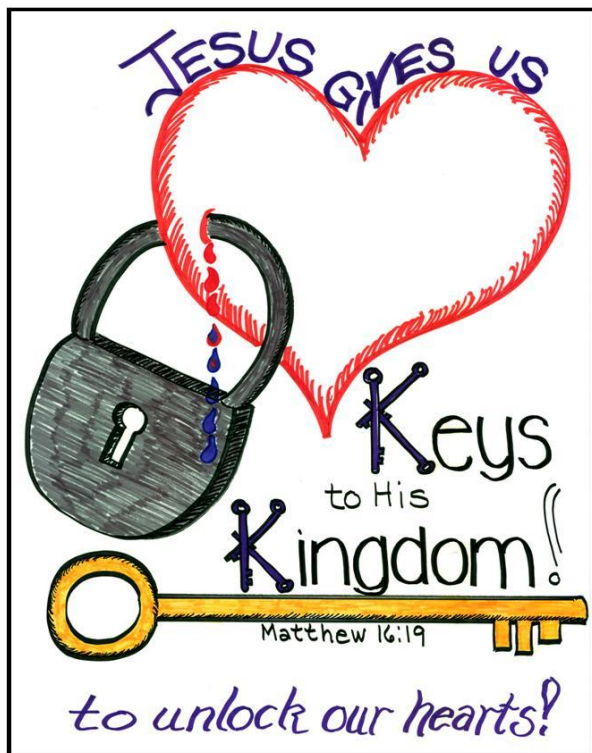
whether we realize it or not! Will we live by His truth or will we “choose” to suffer the consequences?

“I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days.”
Deuteronomy 30:19-20

Prayer

Father, wherever I have believed that I can live without consequences, forgive me. I renounce that false view of Your world and of my life. Whenever I thought that You were punishing me by what You allowed as my consequences, forgive me for shifting the blame for my own choices to You. I take authority and responsibility over my life. Thank You that You have given me sovereignty over my heart and have placed me with freedom of will in a real world. Help me to listen to Your Word, learn from my consequences and turn to Your ways.

KEYS TO THE KINGDOM



Due to an accumulation of life's hurts that we did not release, we left childlikeness behind by binding the pain and injustice of the past to ourselves. Outwitted by an invisible enemy, we locked ourselves in a dungeon of emotional pain and bondage, trapped behind walls erected within our own hearts.

Unforgiveness is the number one block to healing and to the Kingdom's peace and power. According to Jesus it leads to unanswered prayer, un-received mercy, hardness of heart, spiritual bondage and painful inner torment (Mark 11:25; Matthew 18:34-35). Hidden and unrecognized unbelief can

also bar our entry into the Kingdom, because it “hardens” the heart before God just as powerfully as un-forgiveness does (Hebrews 3:12-19).

Jesus gives us grace-forged keys to His Kingdom of peace and joy, keys that will unlock our true potential and restore childlike vitality. Let’s get really good at using them!

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

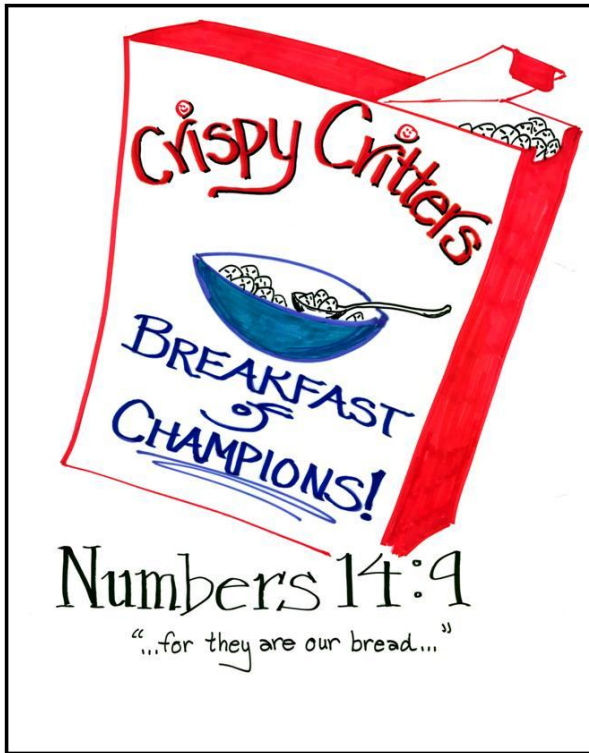
Matthew 16:19

And calling to him a child, he put him in the midst of them and said, "Truly, I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:2-3

Prayer

Father, thank You for translating me out of darkness and into the glorious Kingdom of Your Beloved Son! I repent of and renounce all false ideas about where the joy and peace are to be found. You have placed it all around me and within me! Thank You for giving me the keys to Your Kingdom. Help me to get really good at using them to unlock my heart from un-forgiveness towards myself and others and from all the ways in which I have not been believing in who You are and what You have promised. Thank You that it is Your desire to lead me into this Kingdom!

CRISPY CRITTERS



Did you know that you have a personal enemy, even legions of enemies, who know all of your weaknesses and will stop at nothing to bring you down? Sure these creatures will burn “to a crisp” one day, but in the meantime we have been given free will in a real world that is besieged by an invisible enemy (Ephesians 6:12). None of us volunteered to be involved in this war—we were born into it! We can learn to fight in the great battle of our age, or we can be rendered ineffective, taken captive, or destroyed. In his day Joshua embraced the call as he understood it to “fight the good fight of faith.” He boldly declared that the giants they were facing

would be "bread for us" and demonstrated this principle of the spiritual life: that by learning to overcome the enemy we actually grow stronger!

"Only do not rebel against the Lord. And do not fear the people of the land, for they are bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the Lord is with us; do not fear them." Numbers 14:9

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. Ephesians 6:11-12

Prayer

Father, You know that part of me would prefer not to have to fight these battles of the spiritual life. Whenever it is possible take this cup from me; nevertheless, may Your will be done. I ask for every grace that You supply, especially courage and patient perseverance, and timely reminders to put Your armor on! Thank You for all of the ways that You are training my hands and my heart for those conflicts with the enemy that cannot be avoided. May I always trust that You are also fighting with me and for me. I fully accept this calling upon my life: to fight the good fight of faith.

FEELING UNPLUGGED?



We have an enemy actively “seeking whom he may devour,” always working to separate us from our God by weakening our trust connection or by diverting us from the path of obedience (1 Peter 5:8). We must be ready to “plug back into the Lord” whenever we start losing the peace and confidence He gives us, or we will quickly discover our lives embroiled in stress, anxiety, despair or other signs of captivity to the enemy. Every fresh challenge presents us with an opportunity to grow spiritually *into Christ* or to fall backwards into reliance *upon Self*—our former graceless and unfruitful way of life.

Remembering this, recognizing the opportunity and taking advantage of it, means that we need some *principle of simplicity* to ingrain the new ways. **A.C.T.!** fast to reconnect by 1) admitting that you need His help, 2) calling on His Name, 3) trusting your situation to at least one of His promises, 4) acting upon guidance He may give you by His Word or His Spirit, and 5) thanking Him for helping you even before the final resolution arrives. Restored peace is always His sign to you of a solid faith connection on your part.

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.
Colossians 3:15

Prayer

Father, thank You that I don't have to face life's challenges and temptations alone for You, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are always with me! Help me learn to recognize when I am losing Your peace—that is always the sign that my faith connection is being nibbled on by the enemy. Strengthen me to fight back by calling on Your Name and by seeking a Spirit-graced promise to believe so that my trust can be restored. Then enable me to go all out in seeking You for a step of guidance that will lead me through to victory.

GET THE LOOK!



The secret to keeping a positive emotional state (peace, bright hope, readiness for joy and confidence in God) is learning how to see in Jesus the very thing you need to see in Him in order for your trust to be restored. Do you need forgiveness, rescue, assistance, comfort, wisdom? Look to Jesus and keep looking until you reconnect with His grace. We call this "getting the look that gives the shift."

What gets your focus will inevitably gain control over your emotional state. That's why *beholding* Jesus is the key to our transformation. We become more grace-filled, mercy-giving and loving whenever our inward faith focus is upon

Him. Since the enemy has proven himself all too adept at getting our eyes off Jesus and stuck on our own problems, our pain and other people, let's fight back by learning to refocus quickly on the One we can always trust. Let's get really good at getting our eyes back on Jesus. The rule is "Eyes off? *Eyes ON!*"

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. 2 Corinthians 3:18

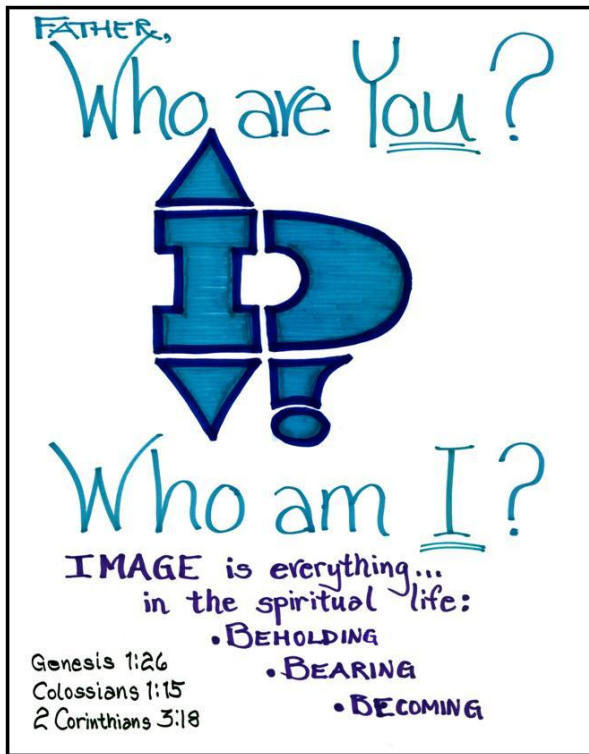
"Look to me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else." Isaiah 45:22 WEB

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith. Hebrews 12:1-2

Prayer

Father, I renounce trying to change myself by my own stress-filled efforts. Your way of grace is so much better! By beholding Jesus I am actually transformed as I trust Him and follow His path of peace. Help me get established in this! Alert me when my heart turns away from beholding Him. Losing peace is a sure sign You are calling me to return, but I so often ignore it. Save me from falling back into my old patterns! Enable me to keep "getting the look that gives the shift" as often as it takes until it becomes my new way of life.

IMAGE BEARING



Who we are is entirely defined in relation to God who created us. As a people created to be bearers of the divine Image, we are destined to become like what we behold. One terrible effect of the Fall was that in dying spiritually, Adam could no longer behold his God. Both the Image of God and the image of man fell from his sight. In becoming “spiritually blind” Adam could neither see God as He truly was nor could he rightly see and know himself: Adam hid in fear and shame from the very One who wanted to save him.

Jesus has come to restore both our lost vision and our

true identity. By *beholding* Jesus with eyes of faith we *bear* God's image afresh—and that begins "*birthing*" His way of life in us (2 Corinthians 3:16-18). We become *beings of grace* as we behold the grace-filled One. This awesome power of beholding is what the Father is using to save and transform the world!

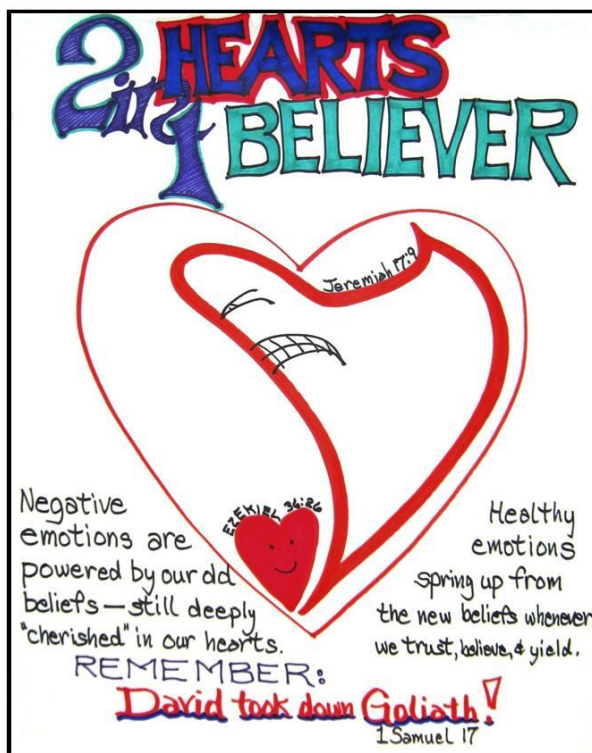
He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation... and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.
Colossians 1:15, 3:10

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

Prayer

Father, thank You for revealing Jesus Christ to me as my Savior and as my new inner life. Deep down I am just like Jesus! As I behold Him I see what I'm really like, so help me recognize and bring to repentance anything I see in me that doesn't match up with Him. Enable me to resist carrying any image of You that is different from the love, grace and mercy that I see in Him. Help me cast down all false images so that my heart can thrive as I behold and bear these divinely-restored right images of myself and of You.

TWO HEARTS IN ONE BELIEVER



When we accepted Jesus as our Savior, God—who is always true to His Word—placed a new heart and a new nature within us (Ezekiel 36:26). We are already just like Jesus deep down at the core of our being! However, the person we are now has to keep choosing moment by moment to stay surrendered, submitted and committed to the Lord for that New Creation to be raised to the surface; otherwise the heart of the old nature takes over (Jeremiah 17:9). The "old man" (our former self) comes back to life and we end up living stressed-up and grace-less, far below our true inheritance. But just let your new heart fully

surrender all things to Jesus at all times and you will watch in amazement as that "little" David—the New Creation you fortified by Christ in you—takes down the Goliath of your old ways *every time*.

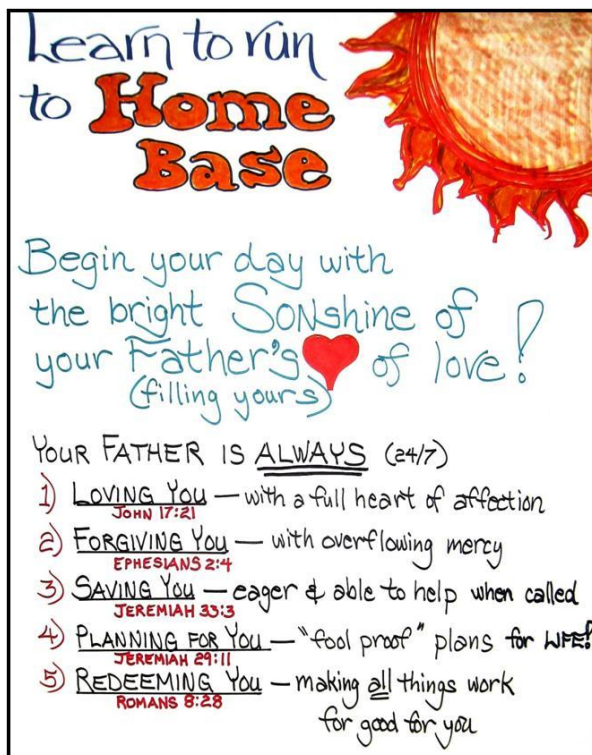
Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
2 Corinthians 5:17

I have been crucified with Christ... it is no longer I who live, but Christ... lives in me; and the life I now live in the body I live by faith in (by adherence to and reliance on and complete trust in) the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me. Galatians 2:20 AMP

Prayer

Father, as a New Creation I cannot define myself by anything less than who I now am in Christ without damaging my self-image, security, sense of worth and purpose. I will therefore accept no lesser definitions of who I am: I am a New Creation with a new heart and a new spirit. I will no longer regard myself according to the flesh—by believing that any of my old ways are the real me. But I will need Your help recognizing and resisting my old ways that don't match up with the new me. Some of them are giants! Grant me the courage and faith of David to take those Goliaths down as I repent, call on Your Name and look to You to lead me into the new life.

RUN TO HOME BASE



Jesus came to reveal our glad-hearted Father, who is the Source of life and love (John 14:8-10). Consider carefully the five truths listed in this illustration which display His abundant grace. Because this is who God really is *to you* and *for you* then actually knowing and believing these truths will produce joy and peace *in you*, as well as love *through you* any moment of your life in which you touch this living reality by faith.

Faith is what puts us in touch with reality, God's reality—the greatest reality of all. Not to live such a faith is to be caught in a bad dream from which One Day we will all be

awakened in His Presence. Why not awaken now? School your heart in these five glorious truths and begin each day by basking in the bright Sonshine of your Father's Heart of love!

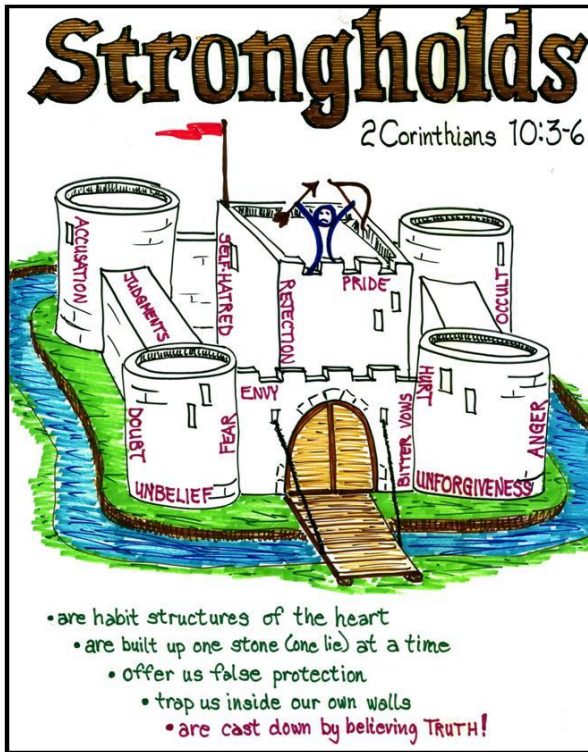
There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because he first loved us.
1 John 4:18-19

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

Prayer

Father, I confess that in many ways I have not believed that You are as loving and merciful as Jesus. Like Adam I have hidden in shame. Like the prodigal son I have been slow to return, fearing I would have to work my way back into Your good graces. Thank You for never being angry with me, despite my unbelief in You. Thank You that whenever I look to Jesus and see what He is like, I can also look through Him to see You smiling in my direction. Forgive me and break the power of unbelief and anything else that is keeping me from running home to You. I rest my heart fully on the love I see in Yours. Alert me whenever I begin to lose sight of Your true Image. From now on I will fight to believe in the truth about You that Jesus is revealing to me and I will seek Your grace even in my places of deepest disgrace. May Your perfect love cast out all of my fears!

STRONGHOLD PROTECTION



Jesus is our true stronghold, the One that we run to when threatened by sin or danger. David couldn't say enough about trusting the Lord as his powerful Protector, Provider and Pardoner (Psalm 18:2). However, counterfeit strongholds are un-surrendered, un-healed or un-crucified areas of the old nature or self-life. They rise up and resist the Spirit-given life—also called the life of the Spirit, Christ's life, or the life of the New Creation in us. Self-protection and self-promotion built and maintain them, aided by the lies and temptations of the enemy. We are to resist these strongholds of the flesh by pulling them down. The walls we built may

make us feel secure *at times*, but they trap us inside loveless strongholds *always*. Let's do some holy demolition!

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. Psalm 18:2

For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

Prayer

Father, I have lived inside the walls of my strongholds for so long they have become a part of me. I hardly know how to begin taking them down. But I do want to find out what life in Your Kingdom is like on the other side of these walls. I desire that childlike life of simplicity and trust. So, I ask You to help me take down all of my strongholds stone by stone, untruth by untruth, and rebuild with Your truths the godly walls of love, mercy, faith and grace around the renewed heart You are giving me. What I can't tear down, will You? Come charge my walls! Send, allow, withhold. Do whatever it takes so that our two hearts can meet and live as one—in this life.

FRUIT AND ROOTS



Basic discipleship and inner healing restrain strongholds. Basic discipleship is the part we play in clearing out "bad fruit"; this is steadily accomplished by doing our best to trust and obey with the faith and self-discipline available to us. As we abide in Christ, the Father prunes bad fruit away. The essential disciplines (prayer, Bible study, worship, fellowship, service) act as a restraint upon the power of temptation similar to the way that mowing grass restrains weeds.

Inner healing, on the other hand, reduces temptation's power because it gets at the root issues which caused strongholds of the flesh to form in the first place. Where

there is fruit there's a root! As inner healing brings release from pain and ungodly beliefs rooted in our hearts stemming from past traumatic events, bad fruit disappears from our spiritual tree. We need both fruit pruning and root removal in the spiritual life!

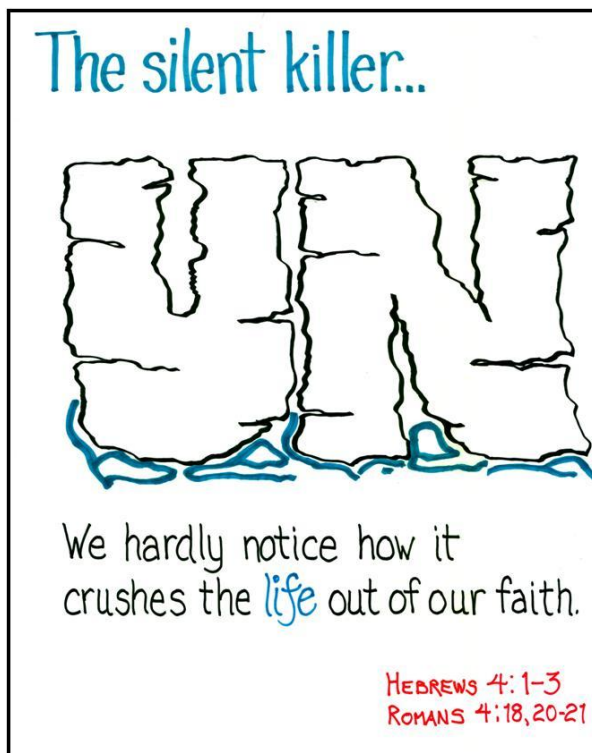
"I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of mine that does not bear fruit he takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit he prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." John 15:1-4

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled. Hebrews 12:14-15

Prayer

Father, I ask for grace to persevere with You in pruning back my old ways. Help me also get at the roots: What am I really angry about? Why do I feel so guilty and ashamed? Work with me to fully forgive others and fully receive Your forgiveness. What am I really afraid of? Help me match Your truth to my deepest fears until all of my fears are released.

THE SILENT KILLER



Unbelief is a silent killer stalking the Christian's land of promise. This should not surprise us, because it was unbelief that kept the children of Israel out of their Promised Land. And yet we are believers! We know that Jesus is Lord and has been raised from the dead. We believe that the Bible is His Word, that we have been forgiven, and that we are heading to heaven—all of which is gloriously true! But have we been "blinded by the light" we have received? Are we failing to see what we don't yet believe? Do we fully believe all that we need to? The truth is that whenever we lose bright hope for our future, or confidence in God's love, or deep

peace or joy, we have been robbed! Since it is unbelief that the thief uses to crush the life out of our faith, the main thing we need to work at is keeping our hearts alive by fully believing what God's Word tells us—just as Jesus commanded us to do (John 6:29).

Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God... And to whom did he swear that they would not enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief. Hebrews 3:12, 18-19

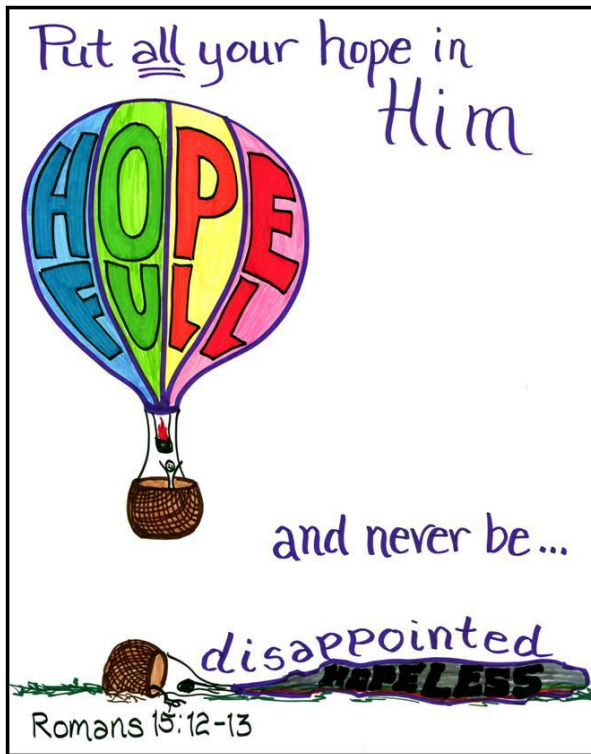
Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." John 6:29

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" Mark 9:24

Prayer

Father, it is not my faith that saves me. I am being saved by Your calling, Your love, Your truth, the Blood of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit's power. Forgive me for taking credit for what I believe for You alone opened my eyes. Forgive me for turning a blind eye to what I have not been believing that You have already shown me to be true. I cast down all past pride and fear. I want to become able to see this hidden stronghold when it is blocking me, so help me to fully believe what You believe. I do believe, but please help me recognize and overcome my unbelief!

HOPE IN HIM



The joy that hope releases happens automatically within us whenever our hearts are beholding the unchanging reality of who our God is to us and who we are in Him. Those who learn how to hold fast to their hope in Him will “not be disappointed” (Romans 10:11 WEB). This has nothing to do with seeing our desires come to pass, for “hope that is seen is not hope” (Romans 8:24). It has everything to do with seeing Jesus, the Source of our hope and the End of all our desires. Since this far greater reality never changes, all of our hopes can be safely anchored in Him (Hebrews 6:19). Place your hope in this: that Jesus will ultimately have His way

with you and with the situation that concerns you. Cast that care on Him, then take your joy back!

O Israel, hope in the Lord from this time forth and forevermore. Psalm 131:3

Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. Jeremiah 17:7-8

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

Prayer

Father, only You know how often I have been wounded by setting my heart and my hopes on things that never came to pass. I have put my hope in others, in myself, in things working out a certain way, but what heartache I could have been spared if I had only placed all of my hope in You! You want Your joy to be complete in me. You want my cup to overflow. What am I afraid of? I need to trust You with my heart and my hopes for there's no other place of safety. I choose by an act of my will to put all of my hope in You and Jesus, having Your way with me in all ways!

THE PICK AX OF PRAISE



Thanking God for blessings is child's play compared to what is actually set before us as the answer to life's hardest problems. What do you do when you are reeling from the blows of adversity and emotional pain? The Word tells us to thank God *in* all things and *for* all things. He does not causes evil, but He can overturn it, bringing a greater blessing out of it than any evil the enemy put into it in the first place.

Thanking God *vigorously* in the midst of a situation that we hate or fear, radically shifts our perspective and liberates our heart by restoring us to a wholesome sense of God's sovereignty over the adversity we are facing. It takes a firm

resolution to learn how to swing the “pick ax of praise,” but for those who do, fountains of living water are released!

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

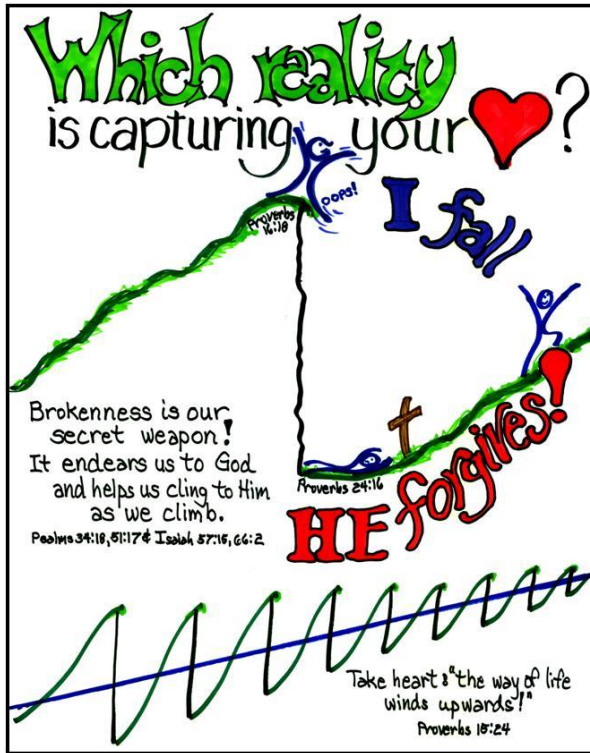
Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is... giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 5:17, 20

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Hebrews 13:15

Prayer

Thank You Father that You want to help me learn to swing this “pick ax of praise.” So here I go with this thing that I have hated and feared: _____. Thank You that it was not Your will or desire that caused it. Thank You that You have grieved with me. Thank You that You haven’t been angry with me over all the bad attitudes and acting out I’ve done because of it. Thank You that You have redemptive purposes that will be worth the pain of this passage. Thank You that this is being steered in a good direction. Thank You that it is teaching me to walk by faith in what I can’t see. Thank You that the pain and the problem won’t last forever—only Your love will have the final word!

WHICH REALITY?



The Accuser would prefer for us to focus on what is wrong, rather than what is gloriously right. It is true that we fall and that we should seek to keep from falling. But God doesn't want us to beat ourselves up over the recurring reality of our fallenness! Instead, each time we fall, or even start to stumble, can be an occasion for rediscovering the wonder of His total forgiveness and regaining genuine humility through fresh recognition of our brokenness. Wouldn't it be fun to learn to let our failings springboard us into greater confidence in God's love rather than sink us into greater self-despair? Which reality is capturing your heart?

Cast down the Accuser: Grace rules!

And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brothers has been thrown down, who accuses them day and night before our God."

Revelation 12:10

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

Prayer

Father, since we reap what we sow, help me truly repent of all the accusing thoughts I have cherished towards others and all of the hurtful, accusing words I have spoken. Grant that I would become an intercessor for, not an accuser of others. As I become more of a grace-giver who shows mercy to others, may Your mercy capture my heart even where my own sins and sinfulness are concerned. Teach me how to "look up" and let even my failings springboard me into greater joy in Your salvation. Help me gain the grace-based confidence that You are loving me—especially in my times of brokenness, weakness and failure. Save me from being stuck on the sight of my failings, rather than being captured by the vision of Your mercy!

YOUR CHOICE OF COVERINGS



Every day we have an important choice set before us that we may not even realize we are making. If we are believers, God offers us the all-inclusive covering of His mighty grace: He has accepted us in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6), forgiven all of our sins at the cross (Colossians 1:14), and has freely justified us through the Blood of His Son (Romans 8:24). *God doesn't want us to feel guilty!* And yet, if we aren't careful, feelings of guilt may follow us, seeking to crush us under the weight of trying to keep "the law" perfectly (whether it's God's rules or ours), to get everything right in our own strength, and to live frustrated with ourselves when

we don't. Instead, why not choose to trust perfectly in the grace that is being perpetually offered to you? Let's learn to live "light and bright" under His mercy!

So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian.
Galatians 3:24-25

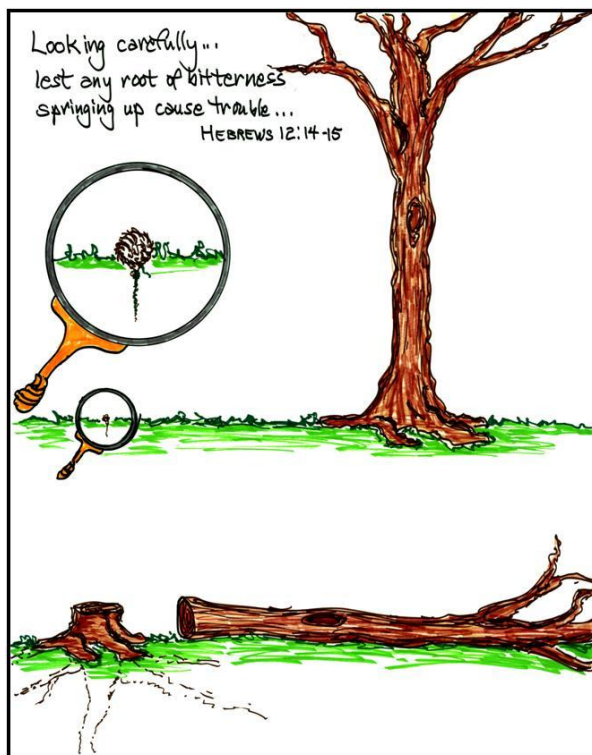
For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire and darkness and gloom and a tempest [Law]... But you have come to Mount Zion... to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel. [Mercy] Hebrews 12:18, 22-24

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

Prayer

Father, I have been trying to "cover" myself with the tattered garments of my efforts at perfection and it has kept me so stressed within myself and made me so judgmental of others. Forgive me! It is as if I haven't really believed that the Blood of Jesus was a sufficient covering for me or for anyone else! You don't want me to feel so guilty or to be putting guilt, blame or shame on others. I renounce all unbelief in Your perfect covering of grace and mercy. Help me repent and believe the good news!

ROOT OF BITTERNESS



There is a process to forgiving and it can be as hard as cutting down a tree, hauling off all the branches, then digging up the stump. It doesn't always happen just by saying the words. Setting your will, finally choosing to agree with God and forgiving the hurt or offense is like cutting down the tree. This really clears the air! But as the days go by you may discover your "feeling system" is still lying on the ground and needs to have the decision of your will reinforced with repeated declarations, similar to clearing away the trunk and branches. Once everything is released to God, including any hurt that has "stumped us" over why He

allowed it to happen, all of the pain in our memories is removed. Forgiving “from the heart” can be hard work, but it is extremely rewarding!

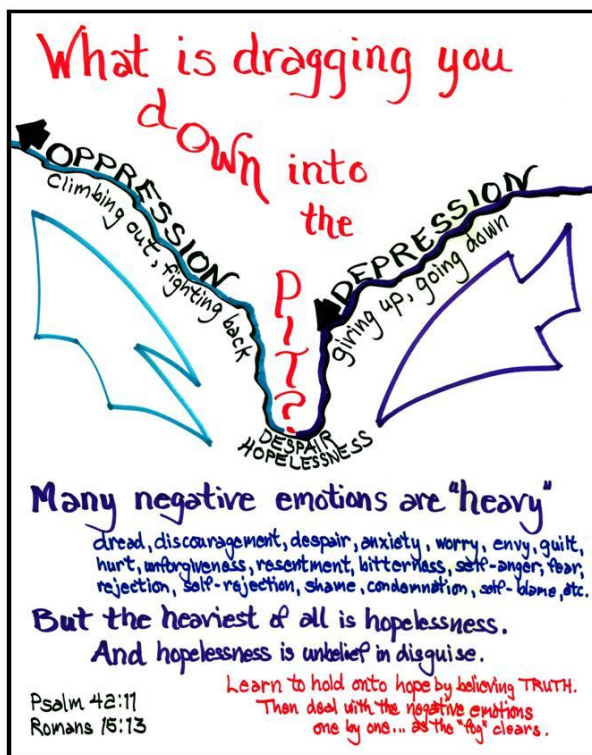
Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled. Hebrews 12:14-15

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses.” Mark 11:25

Prayer

Lord, make me willing to be made willing to obey You fully from the heart. Help me want what You want (forgiveness) and hate what You hate (un-forgiveness). I would rather be free on the inside, than bitter. I will set free anyone I must in order to get free. What was done to me is nothing compared to what bitterness is doing to me now. I am not bound by the past, only by my bitterness about it. Whatever the reasons are for being bitter, they are not as good as freedom feels. I will turn the key of forgiveness and walk away. I therefore choose to forgive _____ and release him/ her from all my bitter judgments. I am giving _____ to You along with all the pain and injustice for You to redeem. I am trusting You with it all.

THE PIT OF DEPRESSION



There is a difference between oppression and depression. Both conditions represent a life under attack, a heart and mind encumbered by many negative emotions, yet there is a crucial difference. For the person letting go of hope, each new assault slides them deeper into the pit of depression. How different it is for those who refuse to let go of hope! They can withstand the same load of problems and emotional assault without sinking into despair or depression, because they are learning how to persevere with an active faith that keeps their hope alive. Despite the weight of troubles upon them, they are living as genuine overcomers

and are actually climbing out the other side of the pit (1 John 5:4-5; Revelation 21:7)!

Why are you cast down, O my soul, why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation and my God. Psalm 42:11

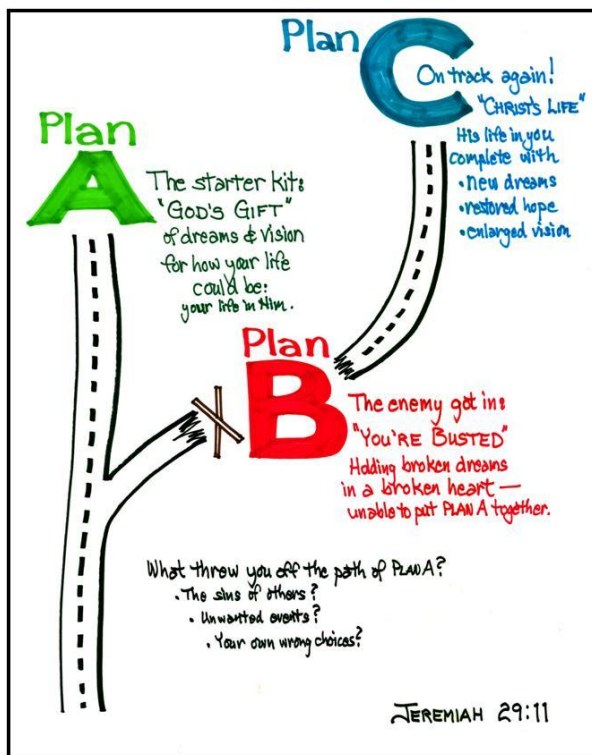
“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

So that... we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain. Hebrews 6:18-19

Prayer

Forgive me Father that in the pain and darkness of depression and despair, I have been letting go of the hope that You have given me. My hope was never meant to be in me or in my circumstances; it is in You and in the reality of Your unending love and never-failing plans to give me a future and a hope. I renounce all my previous unbelief in You and Your promises of love and redemption. I repent of focusing on myself in self-pity. I choose by an act of my will to fight to hold on to every hope that Jesus shows me in Your Word.

PLANS A, B AND C



It is hard to go forward carrying the past with us, especially broken dreams. Because those dreams gave us hope and vision for our future, we can't imagine how our life can work now that they are broken beyond our ability to repair them. Take heart! The Father is never at a loss for new dreams to give us—dreams of a restored life and a fresh start. Our life could go like this: Plan A began as a gift from God with dreams pointing us in the right direction to travel; Plan B came from the enemy who "busted" those Plan A dreams through our own sins or those of others, and now we feel there is no going back; Plan C unfolds as we

surrender everything to Christ our God, fully forgive and release the past, and stand ready to walk into a bright future following Jesus step-by-step with a new God-given vision for a restored life!

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

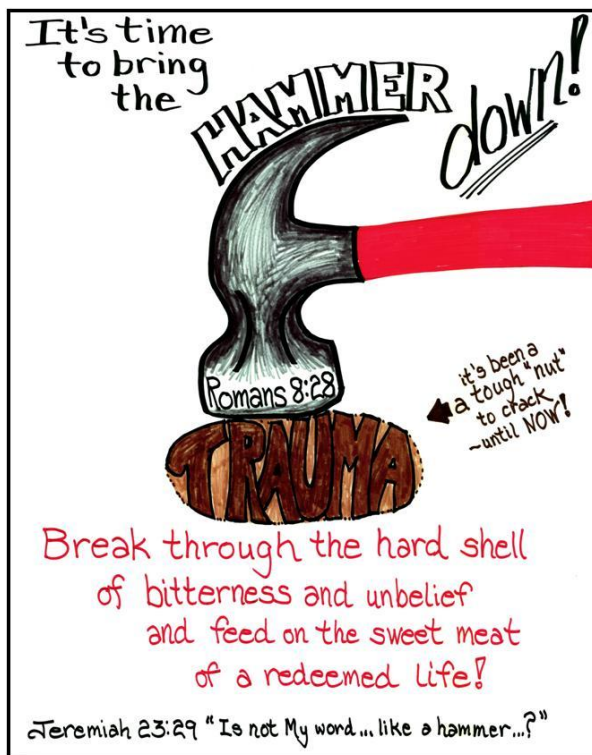
And he said, "Hear my words: If there is a prophet among you, I the Lord make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream." Numbers 12:6

“For still the vision awaits its appointed time; it hastens to the end—it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come; it will not delay.” Habakkuk 2:3

Prayer

Father, thank You for the dreams You gave me. How they nourished my heart and pointed my life in right directions as I began my journey! Thank You for not holding the breaking of those dreams against me and I choose to not hold it against myself or anyone else. I choose to freely give those precious dreams back to You now in hopes of receiving new ones. I am ready to go forward with You into the future You have in mind! I believe You have new dreams, even greater dreams to bestow, so I open wide to the possibilities of a fully redeemed life with You. Help me to trust and follow Jesus step-by-step.

BRING THE HAMMER DOWN



If you have experienced a traumatic event long enough to have sufficiently grieved it, then it is high time to bring the hammer of God's Word down on it. The Magnificent Promise assures us that God can and will bring a greater good out of anything the enemy intended for evil (Romans 8:28). This is the astonishing power of the redemption Jesus won for us, but it does us little practical good if we don't believe it over and above our areas of hurt and loss. Fall totally out of agreement with the perspective that the enemy tried to feed you. Your past now represents a treasure trove of future blessing—once you give it to God. So, forgive all,

release all, repent of unbelief, and confess the truth until your heart fully believes God's promise of redemption. Leave no room for doubt or self-pity. Feed instead on the sweet meat of a redeemed life!

"Is not my word like fire, declares the Lord, and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" Jeremiah 23:29

"As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." Genesis 50:20

And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

Prayer

Father, You have given me this promise of total redemption so it must be true; You have commanded me to forgive everyone so that must be what needs to happen for my life to be healed and restored. I choose by an act of my will to forgive the people in my past who have hurt me or wronged me, including myself. I release them from all my bitter judgments and give them to You for You to redeem. I also repent of my unbelief in Your Word and now choose by an act of my will to believe that the promise of Romans 8:28 is true for me—that greater good will come out of my past than all of the pain and loss the enemy sowed into it. I choose to believe in You!

GOD'S ACCEPTANCE



God's acceptance of those who are in Christ is so complete that He is always ready to meet us *right where we are* and *just as we are* with the embrace of His perfect love. The only problem is we are often not willing to meet with Him on the same basis! We have a hard time accepting that God really does love us just as we are. These unbelieving feelings are often rooted in the very real rejections we have experienced from others and even from ourselves. The way back to close communion with God is to fully forgive those who have rejected us, fully accept ourselves *just as He does*, release all past feelings of rejection, and embrace this

liberating truth of our total acceptance by Him. God made up His mind about us long before we were born: It's time we did too!

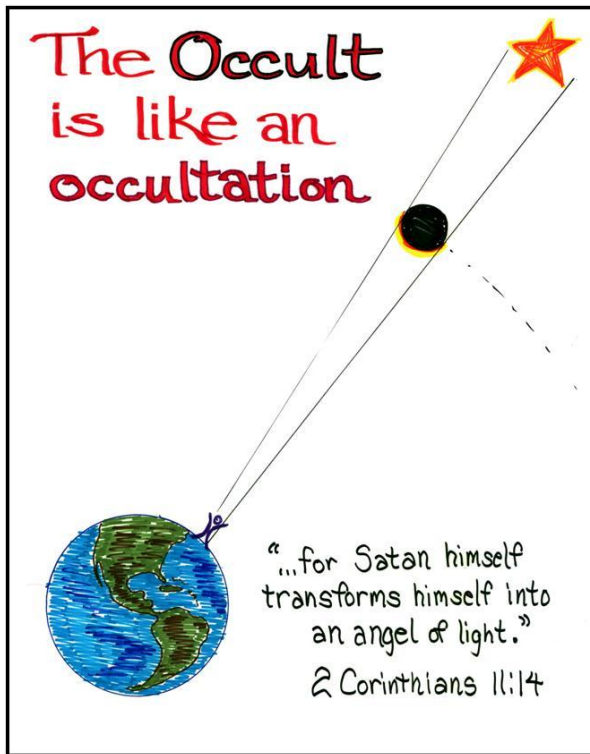
All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world... Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself... wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6 KJV

Prayer

Father, You are so good at loving and accepting me! Thank You for all that Jesus did to clear the way for Your love to reach me and that I can "come boldly" to Your throne of grace for mercy and help at a moment's notice. Please enable me to become really proficient at turning to You, releasing my hurts and fears, and allowing Your perfect acceptance of me to liberate my heart so that I can get a fresh start with You anytime I need it!

THE OCCULT COUNTERFEIT



The occult counterfeits true spiritual power and light (truth). The occult is like a planet crossing in front of a star. An occultation in astronomy is an obscuring of the desired object by something that crosses in front of it, much like a planet that gives off light but has no fire of its own, yet it still obscures the true light of stars behind it. The occult thrives on what is dark, hidden, secretive, or falsely revealed. It is something spiritual that looks good, appears to be full of light, boasts of great powers, but actually hides the One True God. The occult and its spawned religious cults always distort the Person and the saving work of Jesus Christ.

Know what the truth is—stay clear of the occult counterfeits!

And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. 2 Corinthians 11:14

But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. Galatians 1:8

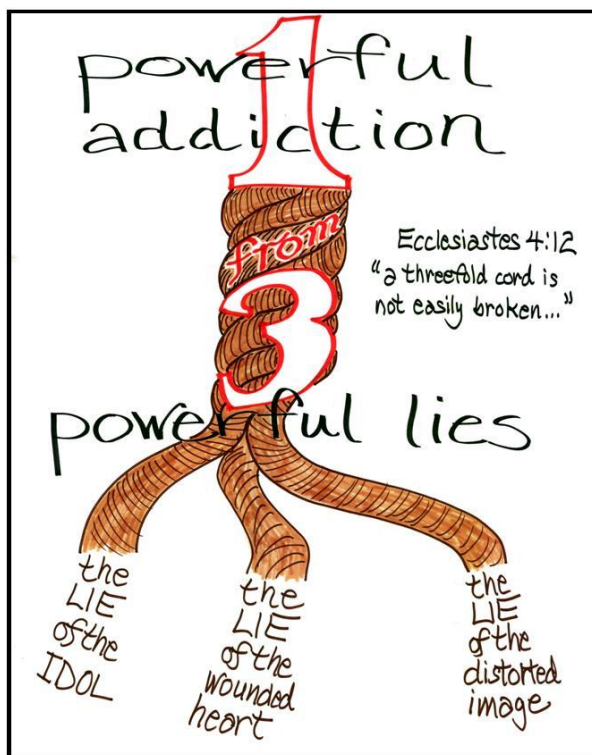
There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death. Proverbs 14:12

Prayer

Father, thank You that You have both the power and the loving desire to cleanse me from all of my transgressions in these areas. Jesus, thank You for the Blood that You shed which is my liberation and the enemy's doom. Holy Spirit, thank You for working to lead me into all truth by removing the veil of deception that blinded me in the past. I ask for and gratefully receive all of Your ministry to me in this area. Please continue in every way to lead me out of darkness into Your glorious Kingdom of Light!

I renounce any occult practices in the generations of my fathers and I repent of having walked in them myself. I repent of my own involvement or contact with _____. Forgive me and break its power over me and my generations. Wash me with the Blood of Christ and with Your Word. Fill me and seal me with Your Spirit.

ONE ADDICTION, THREE LIES



Satan is a liar from the beginning. His lies are very convincing and once they have had a chance to impact our “feeling system,” they become very powerful strongholds within us. Our task is to recognize and renounce those lies and then come into agreement with God’s truths. This is war so be prepared to go to your battle station at a moment’s notice. Call on His Name to set His rescue in motion. Then, renounce and resist the lies coming to you from the idol (the demon behind the addiction), the wounded places in your heart (which craved a godless cure) and any distorted image of the Father you may have. Don’t tarry in the pigpen like

the prodigal son did. Race to your Father at the first sign of weakness, going boldly to His throne of grace (Hebrews 4:16). Learn to let your place of disgrace reveal your Father's greater grace!

For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Romans 10:12-13

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Hebrews 4:16

Prayer

Father, thank You that You are loving me with perfect, unconditional love even now! You are not holding my weaknesses against me. What an amazing God You are! Your gentleness is making me great, giving me strength to face the hard realities of my life. Your strength is even now being made perfect in my weakness, helping me to carry wrong desires and ungodly thoughts to You. I am truly finding Your grace in my place of dis-grace! Keep coming to my rescue as I call on Your Name.

SANDWICHED!



Suppose that it really is true—that no matter how you feel about it you are always being loved full throttle by your heavenly Father and that no matter what happens He will always work with everything you will ever experience of your own sins, the sins of others and the enemy's attacks to make sure that an overwhelming blessing overturns the effects of the curse, *every single time*. Wouldn't that be sufficient reason for finding joy in the Lord each and every moment of the day? Now take all of your life and everyone you love and put them between these two magnificent promises, then taste and see how good your God is as you live with a heart of

active faith “sandwiched” between His promises.

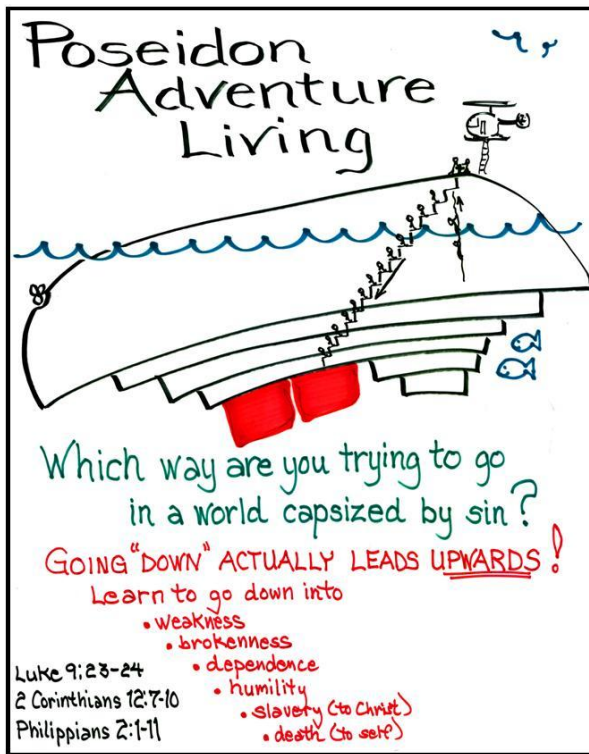
And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:37-39

Prayer

Father, I confess that in many ways I have not believed the Magnificent Promise of redemption. Forgive my unbelief and break its power over me. I utterly renounce that view of my world and Your universe and I choose by an act of my will to believe that the truth really is that a greater good will always come out of everything that goes wrong—because You love us enough to promise it. I rest my heart upon Your Word and turn to live with hope-filled expectations of good things to come. Make me alert to run to You and reach for this sword of truth whenever the devil tries to tempt me to doubt the work of Your Hands!

POSEIDON ADVENTURE LIVING



Movies often mirror spiritual truths. Like the stunned passengers on board the doomed ship Poseidon, there is a "dazed" tendency in us to also go the wrong way. Tragically, Poseidon's passengers went deeper into the depths of the ocean in a misguided effort to escape "upwards" above decks, but did not realize that those decks were now submerged. Like the Poseidon our world has been capsized by a "tidal wave" of sin, yet it still makes sense to us to head the wrong way, trying to build life around ourselves, our strengths, our abilities and our successes. We try to "save" our lives and lose our souls in the process—*just as Jesus*

warned. Under the new order of redemption, all reliance upon Self has to be abandoned in favor of trusting Jesus. That's why every step of growth in Christ begins with a fresh recognition of our fallenness and our weaknesses. The way down actually leads us upwards toward new heights in the Lord!

“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up, who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy: "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite.” Isaiah 57:15

Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?" Matthew 16:24-26

Prayer

Father, I am so afraid of “going down” that I keep rising up to take control, even though I know that it’s the wrong way to go now that I have You, Jesus and the Holy Spirit to entrust with my life. It seems so much easier to trust myself! Forgive me and break the power of this rebellion against Your leadership off of me. Make me willing to be made willing to surrender everything to You. I cast my heart, my life and my hope on the grace that I see in You!

HEALING STREAMS MINISTRY

Healing Streams is a ministry of liberation and transformation founded by Steve Evans and his first wife, June, the year before she died. It is now being carried on by Steve and Eunice Evans. Through Biblical teaching we seek to help people find freedom from the negative emotions that rob inner peace and damage health. Our main healing lessons form a 24 part series, *Matters of the Heart*, which can be accessed for free through our website as individual, downloadable teachings in PDF and MP3 formats or viewed on our Youtube channel. In addition to our presence on the web, we host “live” weekday and weekend seminars in beautiful Savannah, Georgia.



Contact us at

info@healingstreamsusa.org

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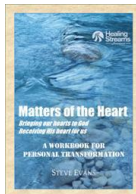
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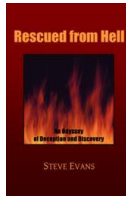
If you enjoyed this *Illustrated Guide*, purchase paperback copies for friends at createspace.com and keep exploring the spiritual life through these other insightful books by Steve Evans, available at Amazon.com and Healingstreamsusa.org.



Matters of the Heart is a 24 lesson workbook designed to guide believers through the basic understandings necessary for releasing emotional damage from the past and gaining a grace-based restoration to wholeness. Each chapter is filled with exercises, prayers and “tools” for practical application. 276 pages. Paperback: \$20.00.



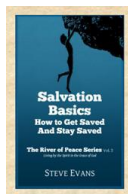
The Missing Peace includes all of the 24 lessons of the *Matters of the Heart* teaching series, but without the workbook’s other material, focusing instead on a stream of scriptural revelation that will show you how to bring your heart to God and receive His Heart for you in return. 194 pages. Paperback: \$15.00.



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118 pages. Paperback: \$7.00. The River of Peace Series, Vol.

3.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Steve Evans came to faith as one brought back from the dead after a decade of occult oppression and torment. His passion is to see people everywhere released from emotional pain and brokenness and restored to their full inheritance. Through [Healing Streams Ministry](#) he and his wife Eunice teach believers how to recover their emotional freedom and master their inward state. He has authored five books: *The Missing Peace*, *Matters of the Heart: A Workbook for Personal Transformation*, *An Illustrated Guide to the Spiritual Life*, *Good Grief* and *Rescued from Hell* which tells the story of his own harrowing descent into inner darkness and ultimate restoration. Steve is an ordained minister and a former carpenter, craftsman and missionary.